



THE **STANDARD BEARER**

**A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine**

All the converts that the church will ever make by softening down its doctrine, and by becoming worldly, will not be worth one bad farthing a gross. When we get them, the next question will be, "How can we get rid of them?"

See "No Compromise" — page 275

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In This Issue ...

G.K. Chesterton once described the Calvinist (which Chesterton was not) as the man who, like Gideon, thinks that the ranks of the church ought to be thinned, not swelled.

There is truth to the gibe.

The Calvinist sees the glory of the church to be its gospel of truth, not the size of its membership. He is impressed with the teachings of the Bible and church history that the true church is always a "remnant" — the remnant according to the election of grace. He is fearful of the presence in the congregation and denomination of members who fill the pews, keep the budget down, and loudly bewail the church's doctrinal rigor and practical narrowness.

Particularly, the Calvinist dreads the spirit and program of that evangelistic fervor that pursues the policy of church growth by adulterating the gospel and relaxing the standards.

There is reason for this Calvinistic dread in our day.

So was there in the days of the great English preacher, Charles Haddon Spurgeon. Therefore, as a faithful minister, the last of the Puritans addressed the temptation in his own inimitable way: "Eagerness for numbers, and especially eagerness to include respectable people, has adulterated many churches, and made them lax in doctrine and practice, and fond of silly amusements."

Thin the ranks, if need be.

But there is a surprising lesson to be learned from the experience of Spurgeon's church: sound, solid doctrinal preaching and insistence on the high standards of the Bible filled the church.

In the mercy of God, in a day of half-filled churches in the morning service and empty churches at night, this is the experience of the Protestant Reformed Churches today.

The readiness to thin swells.

Read Spurgeon's "No Compromise."

—DJE

Judas the Betrayer

Judas, one of the twelve.

Matthew 26:47

The nefarious sin of Judas Iscariot was only aggravated by the fact, repeatedly mentioned in the Scriptures, that he was one of the twelve most intimate of Jesus' disciples.

The name Judas has the beautiful meaning of "Jehovah be praised." Yet, because of its association with this man, it bears a stigma that cannot be ignored. Who would want to be called Judas?

He was distinguished as Iscariot because he came from the city of Kerioth in Judea. Since all the other disciples were from Galilee, he was the only one from Judea. This also distinguishes him from the other disciple with the same name whose surname was Thaddeus.

Whenever the names of the twelve disciples are recorded in Scripture, the name of Judas always appears last.

How painful it must have been for Jesus, knowing that Judas would be the betrayer, to choose him as His disciple. It was even more painful to have in His company day after day this proud, dishonest, ambitious individual, who played the part of a deceiver so well that he remained undetected by the other disciples even until the end.

Fully aware that Judas was greedy and dishonest, Jesus still entrusted to him the purse that contained the funds of the small band of disciples.

When Jesus sent out the twelve into Judea to preach the kingdom of heaven Judas was with them, and likely was also given power to perform miracles. One can only wonder who was his companion on this mission, and who associated with him as they traveled from place to place.

At the turning point of the Lord's Galilean ministry, when the bread-hungry multitude forsook Him, leaving only the twelve with Him, Jesus put the question to them, "Will ye not also go away?" Here was the opportunity for Judas to leave, but he stayed.

Peter had answered, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure, that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." Judas would have no part of that confession, yet he showed no sign of dissent.

At that trying moment Jesus unburdened His soul, saying, "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" Yet Judas failed to heed the warning.

When the chief priests and rulers in Jerusalem turned against the Christ and sought to kill Him, Judas must have had second thoughts, but did not show it.

When Jesus went to Perea to escape the wrath of the Jewish leaders, Judas went along. When word came to them from Bethany that Lazarus had died, and Jesus was determined to return to Judea to raise him from the dead, Thomas said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." Judas went along, certainly not with the intention of dying with Jesus, but likely pondering a way of escape.

All this time Jesus put up with the

traitor, knowing what was going on in his soul. It is painful for a father to see unbelief cropping up in his family, it is distressing for a minister to find that his labors are being rejected, yet how much more grievous it must have been for the holy Jesus to experience that His preaching was despised, and that there was one among His very disciples who preferred the glamour of the moment above the glorious treasures of the kingdom of heaven.

Yet Jesus knew that what applied to the scribes and Pharisees was also true of Judas, "Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep." He was aware that the Scripture was being fulfilled that said, "Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up the heel against me."

It was finally at the Last Supper that the Lord exposed the traitor and sent him out into the night to perform his evil purpose.

* * * * *

We ask ourselves: Why did Judas become a disciple of Jesus, and why did he stay as long as he did?

Having heard Jesus preach and having seen His miracles, Judas concluded that Jesus was the promised Messiah who would crush the power of the Roman emperor and restore the earthly throne of David.

Now it is true that the other disciples, as well as Jesus' mother, were expecting an earthly kingdom and still held to that expectation even after Jesus arose from the dead. But there was a difference. They believed that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God, in whom they had eternal life. Judas was an unbeliever.

Rev. Hanko is a minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches.

The others all clung to Jesus even when the hope of an earthly kingdom vanished. Judas had set his heart on an earthly kingdom, and even dreamed of holding some prominent position, possibly Secretary of the Treasury.

When that dream began to fade, particularly at Jesus' rejection in Galilee, his disappointment filled him with anger. The situation worsened when the leaders in Jerusalem sought to kill Him. By the time the entire company left Perea to return to Judea the soul of Judas was like a troubled sea, seething with hatred against Jesus.

He revealed a bit of his inner feelings in the house of Simon the leper, where Mary anointed Jesus with precious ointment. There he muttered loud enough for Jesus to hear him, "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?" John adds the comment, "This he said, not because he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and took away what was put therein."

Five days later, on Wednesday of the passion week, Judas went off by himself to barter with the chief priests and rulers in their plot to kill Jesus. Having settled on a reward of thirty pieces of silver (never realizing that this also was foretold in the Scriptures) he agreed to make no attempt to carry out their plot until after the Passover, to avoid an uproar among the crowds that attended the feast.

The next day, on the way to the upper room, some of the disciples vied for the position of honor next to Jesus at this last feast. After the Lord reprimanded them they all avoided this place, so that Judas, who must have kept his distance from Jesus, had no choice but to recline next to Him.

About half way through the meal Jesus, sorely troubled in spirit because of the betrayer at His side, and aware that His hour had come, astounded them all by declaring, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me."

Not one of them looked at Judas or directed a questioning glance at his

neighbor, but each one pleaded, "Is it I, Lord?" Each one, that is, except Judas. Rather belatedly he tries to cover up, yet avoiding the name Lord, by saying, "Is it I, Master?"

Offended by this horrible duplicity, Jesus exposed his treachery, and added, "That thou doest, do quickly."

At that moment the devil took personal charge of Judas to make sure that he would not falter. He entered into the deceiver and accompanied him on his mission. Hastily the chief priests and rulers, a band of Roman soldiers, and the temple guard, as well as a crowd of people, were aroused, equipped with swords and clubs, to go out to the garden to take Jesus prisoner.

It is amazing that Judas and his company could be so blinded in their sin that they failed to realize that they could never capture Jesus against His will, no matter how large their company nor how well prepared they were to fight. On the other hand, little did they realize that, since His hour had come, one man alone could have gone out to take Him prisoner.

Let us pause a moment to consider the pernicious power of sin and unbelief, the woe of him who becomes a tool of Satan against the living God. Consider and weep, lest we become proud in our own conceits. Consider that you and I are incapable of any good whatever, and inclined to all evil. Except for the grace of God, you and I would be walking the same path to destruction.

* * * * *

Judas, the betrayer, was a complete failure!

The first blow struck when he stepped up to Jesus and planted a kiss on His cheek. The address of Jesus, "Friend" (do you play the friend to the very last?), cut deep into his guilty soul. Added to that were the scornful, condemning words, "Betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?"

The second blow followed at once.

The Lord struck down the entire company that came against Him, so that they lay helpless at His feet. He showed that Judas' betrayal was useless. He could readily have walked away and escaped from their hands.

Jesus did cause them to arise, and freely surrendered Himself into their hands to be bound and led away as their prisoner.

The final blow came to Judas when it was all over. The remorse of hell began to torment him. He could no longer live with himself. The reward of iniquity burned in his pocket. He hastened to the temple and sent the coins ringing along the temple floor, with the anguished cry, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood." But even his accomplices despised the traitor and wanted nothing to do with him.

He was alone, bitterly alone. What could he do but find a rope, and a branch of a tree that extended over the precipice, to hang himself. Evidently the rope slipped, or the branch failed to hold his weight, for he fell down and "burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out."

Thus another Scripture was fulfilled, "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value, and gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me" (Zech. 11:12, 13).

Judas went to his own place, where not so much as a drop of water is granted to cool the tip of his tongue even for a split second. He is still receiving His just reward, and always will.

Having loved His own, our Lord loved us even unto the end. He bore it all, including Judas, even unto the accursed death of the cross, that we may have life eternal with Him in glory! Unchanging love, boundless mercy, infinite grace! □

*Except
for the grace
of God,
you and I
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walking
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to
destruction.*

The Nose of the Camel (1)

The Arabs have a proverb, so we are told, that one must keep the nose of the camel out of his tent. Failing to keep out the nose, the Arab will soon have the entire camel in his tent.

The proverb expresses the rule, well-known in Latin, "*Obsta principiis!*" — that is, "Resist the beginnings!"

Applicable to all of life, the rule is especially urgent for the church. If the beginnings of corrupt doctrine, impure worship, unsound government, or an unholy life are permitted in the church, later it will prove to be impossible to withstand the evils in their fully developed forms. Once the nose of the camel is securely thrust into the ecclesiastical tent, the rest of the bulky beast is sure to follow.

Examples abound. Tolerance of the explanation of the days of Genesis 1 as long periods of time has led to theistic evolution and the rejection of the historicity of the first eleven chapters of Genesis. The "well-meant offer," with its universal grace in the preaching, has resulted in the teaching of universal atonement and universal election. Introduction of choirs, soloists, and dialogue into the public worship, in disregard of the second commandment's regulative principle of worship, has been followed by liturgical dance. The remarriage of the "innocent party" has opened the way to the

wholesale acceptance of divorce and remarriage for any reason or for no reason at all.

Do business with an intrusive camel at the point of his nose.

The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands ("Liberated" — hereafter GKN-Lib) have recently ignored the wisdom of this proverb. They have done so in a synodical decision that is significant not only for themselves and those churches that are in fellowship with them but also for all Reformed churches that are fighting to resist the powerful influences of feminism. Breaking sharply with the Reformed tradition and overturning their own past synodical decisions, the GKN-Lib decided that women have the right to participate in the congregational meetings as voting members. This was the decision of their General Synod of Ommen 1993.

The synod gave four grounds for the decision. All of the grounds are lengthy. I give them here only in a summary. The complete text of the grounds can be found in English translation in the Liberated publication, *Lux Mundi* (Dec. 1993, pp. 6-8), and in the Canadian Reformed magazine, *Clarion* (Nov. 5, 1993, pp. 465, 466). The Sep-

tember 18, 1993 issue of the Liberated magazine, *De Reformatie*, gives a noteworthy analysis and defense of the decision in Dutch.

*Do business
with an
intrusive
camel
at the point
of his nose.*

The first ground examines the Scriptures on the issue. The ground begins with the statement that "the Scriptures do not give a direct answer to the question whether or not the sisters are to participate in the election of officebearers." In an important section, the first ground adds yet another negative declaration: "The Scriptures do not give a general order for the women to be silent in the congregation." This is an odd statement of the issue at a crucially important point in the first ground. Are there indeed Reformed people who hold that "the Scriptures ... give a general order for the women to be silent in the congregation"? Is this indeed the reason why the Reformed tradition has always held that women are not to participate in the congregational meeting, particularly by voting for ministers, elders, and deacons, namely, that the Reformed churches thought that "the Scriptures ... give a general order for the women to be silent in the congregation"?

In demonstrating this odd, negative declaration, the first ground of the General Synod of Ommen appeals to Acts 2:17, 18 and Acts 21:9 as proving that women receive the gift of prophecy; to I Corinthians 11:5 as proving that women may pray and prophesy "provided it takes place in a manner that concurs with her (*sic*) position"; and to Acts 18:26, Romans 10:16ff., and Philippians 4:3, 4 as proving "an active involvement and participation of women in the service of the gospel."

This section of the first ground concludes with interpretation of the two passages of Scripture that are fundamental, not only for the issue of women voting at the congregational meeting but also for the issue of women holding office in the church. These passages are I Corinthians 14:34-36 and I Timothy 2:11-15. According to the decision of the Liberated synod, I Corinthians 14:34-36 only forbids women, during worship, to judge prophets: "I Cor. 14:34-36 denies women the judging of prophets during worship, because that would give those women authority over them." I Timothy 2:11-15 only prohibits women from exercising authority during the worship services of the church:

I Tim. 2:11-15 forbids women to speak in a position of leadership and authority during worship, since that causes her to abandon her own position and to usurp the place of the man.

The second ground of the synod in support of opening participation in the congregational meeting to women attempts to establish that the congregational meeting in the life of the Reformed church exercises no ruling authority. "In an election the congregation does not govern, not even for a part." "The election is in the nature of a calling to office ... and not in the nature of exercising authority or power."

The question whether the congregational meeting exercises authority, particularly by its election of officebearers, is, of course, at the heart of the controversy over the participation of women. If the meeting of the congregation to elect officebearers is an aspect of the government of the church, participation by women is forbidden. For the apostle "suffer(s) not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence" in the life of the instituted church (I Tim. 2:12).

In defending its contention that the congregational meeting does not exercise authority, the synod makes

another curious statement: "In voting the congregation has no authority over the consistory." This wording of the issue evades the point of the objection by the Reformed tradition against women voting at the congregational meeting. The Reformed objection has not been that the congregational meeting has authority over, or governs, the consistory, so that women voting at the congregational meeting will be governing the consistory. But the objection has been that the meeting of the congregation *shares in* the government of the church with the consistory, so that voting women will cooperate with the consistory in governing the church. The Reformed have looked at the congregational meeting, in fact, as not truly a "congregational meeting" but rather a "public meeting of the consistory at which the members of the congregation are present" (Joh. Jansen, *Korte Verklaring van de Kerkenordening*, in explanation of Art. 29 of the Church Order of Dordt concerning ecclesiastical gatherings).

The third ground argues that the women may participate in the congregational meeting since the Spirit chooses officebearers through the "voice of the congregation." This "voice" is made up of the women as well as of the men. To express this "voice," the women are given the gifts of the Holy Spirit no less than the men. This ground has interesting implications. First, Reformed women *must* vote at the congregational meeting. For women to fail or refuse to do so is neglect of their calling. For a church to forbid women to vote at the congregational meeting is interference with Christ's calling of women. The Scriptures that in the first ground were quite unclear whether women are to participate in the election of officebearers have suddenly become perfectly clear, that it is the solemn duty of believing women to participate in this election.

Second, by disallowing women participation at the congregational meeting all these years, the Reformed churches have been sinning, not so much against the women members of the church as against the Word and

Spirit of Christ in the church. At the very least, the "voice of the congregation" has been muted, if not distorted, in the vital matter of the election of officebearers.

The fourth and last ground deals with the objections that permitting women to vote at congregational meetings is concession to the feminist movement in the world and the first step toward opening up the offices in the church to women. This ground flatly denies that "the granting of voting rights to the sisters should ... be considered a first step on the road toward the opening up of the office of minister or elder to the women." It assures the members of the GKN-Lib that this decision is not to be "regarded as a concession to a drive towards a false spirit of emancipation."

Notwithstanding these assurances, there is indication in the last ground that the GKN-Lib made their decision under pressure both from the world and from the churches. The General Synod of Ommen spoke a good word for the "spirit of the times": "The spirit of the times does not necessarily always have a negative impact." There is veiled warning of problems both within the congregations and as regards relations with other churches, if women are not permitted to vote at the congregational meeting:

When the Scriptures do not forbid women's voting rights and yet it is withheld from them, this could lead to an unnecessary alienation with respect to the gospel, both inside and outside the church.

The GKN-Lib plainly do not want the camel of feminism in their church tents.

They have, however, accepted her nose. □

— DJE

■ Still the 7,000

I express my sincere appreciation for the *Standard Bearer*, to which I am a recent subscriber. The very existence of this publication comes to me as a most pleasant surprise.

Biblical Christianity firmly rooted in the Pauline-Augustinian-Calvinist

tradition is in most of this country, and throughout the world, an almost invisible presence. Arminianism dominates, and Arminianism is a half-way house to outright secularism. So it is perhaps well that in this darkened day Calvinism is not the stuff of common currency. It is a good day to be "*contra mundum*."

I wish to assure you that there are yet more than 7,000 who have not bowed the knee to Baal and pray that you keep up the good work.

James C. Prude
Wyoming, MI

The Reader Asks

Government Aid to Christian Schools

For the past few years the State of Illinois has sponsored a Pupil Transportation Reimbursement program. Illinois, and perhaps other states in similar programs, offer parents of non-public schools a partial reimbursement for costs of busing their children to Christian schools, if the school confirms attendance. There is also talk about tuition vouchers becoming available to parents of our Christian schools. The argument is made that these forms of government aid are merely permissible assistance to the parents rather than government aid to our schools. What should be our position regarding receiving such aid?

Garrett Flikkema
Lansing, IL

We have asked James Lanting, editor of our "Church and State" column to respond to this question.
— Ed. Comm.

RESPONSE:

Some Reformed Christians refuse

any governmental aid or benefits as a matter of principle. This would include a refusal, I suppose, of Medicare, Medicaid, social security disability payments, flood disaster relief, farm assistance programs, college tuition grants, low interest loans for college education, etc.

But perhaps a more reasoned approach toward government aid or cost reimbursement (especially education costs which Christian school taxpayers pay twice!) would be for Christians to deny or refuse such aid when the aid is accompanied by a realistic threat of corresponding and unwanted government control over the recipient or the use of the funds.

This threat has always made parochial and private schools wary of receiving government direct aid for tuition and books. The old adage of "He who pays the fiddler calls the tune" is generally applicable to substantive government aid programs. And if tuition vouchers payable to parents would necessarily entail the threat of government intrusion and regulation causing us to compromise our Reformed educational principles or relinquish control, it would seem

prudent to refuse these vouchers.

This is not to say, however, that all cost reimbursement programs should be summarily rejected. For example, it is hard to see how school milk subsidy programs or the Illinois Pupil Transportation Reimbursement program (\$80 per year reimbursed to parents busing children more than 1½ miles from non-public school) pose a realistic threat to government control over the schools these children attend. Moreover, the fact that the school officials must notify the parents of this program annually, and certify attendance by the pupil, hardly raises the specter of dreaded government control.

Finally, your specific concern regarding the Illinois Pupil Transportation Reimbursement program now appears to be a moot point. The Illinois legislature has not appropriated any funds to this program for the '93/'94 school year and the Reimbursement Office of the State Board of Education recently informed me that this program has been abandoned for lack of funds.

James Lanting

Season(s)

On the fourth day of the creation week, God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years" (Gen. 1:14). The word seasons in this verse does not refer exclusively to our four seasons; in fact, it refers to the four seasons only potentially, since our seasons did not begin until after the flood. But there are many other kinds of periods or seasons that are controlled by God through the heavenly bodies, especially the moon. "He appointed the moon for seasons" (Ps. 104:19). Included here are the woman's period, the tides of the seas, bird and animal migrations, animal estrus seasons, optimum time for planting, and so on. God rules providentially through the sun and the moon, governing these day-to-day affairs of His creatures.

The seasons of the year began after the great, universal flood at the time of Noah. When the "fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven opened," the earth was tilted on its axis twenty-three and a half degrees from normal. The result of this tilting is that the pathway of the direct rays of the sun is not endlessly upon the equator, but the sun's pathway "moves" between twenty-three and a half degrees north (our Summer solstice) and twenty-three and a half degrees south (our Winter solstice), passing the equator only on the vernal and autumnal equinoxes. Thus, when God had received as a sweet smelling savor the burnt offerings of Noah and his family after 375 days of confinement in the ark, God promised that while the earth remained "seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease" (Gen. 8:22). From the time of creation until the flood, not only did it not rain (Gen. 2:5, 6), but there were no seasons either. Seasons, rain, the water cycles, and storms all belong to the world that now is, rather than to the world that then was (II Pet. 3:6, 7). It is likely that during prediluvian history there was a universal, warm climate; this would

explain the presence of fossils of tropical life forms, both flora and fauna, in the Arctic regions.*

Scripture also uses the term seasons figuratively to represent a period of time, determined by God, and characterized by a definite set of circumstances. We may read of seasons of rain (Deut. 11:14), the season of the wilderness wanderings (Josh. 24:7), the fruitful season of the righteous man (Ps. 1:3), the night seasons and their tears (Ps. 16:7, 22:2), animals given their meat in due season (Ps. 104:27), a time and a season for every purpose under heaven (Eccles. 3:1), that God changes the times and the seasons (Dan. 2:21), a season of convenience (Acts 24:25), a season of sorrow (II Cor. 7:8), the saints reaping of a reward in due season if they faint not (Gal. 6:9), the requirement that the Word of God be preached in and out of season (II Tim. 4:2), the times and seasons just before the Lord's return (Acts 1:7, I Thess. 5:1), the pleasures of sin which satisfy but for a season (Heb. 11:25), a season of heaviness brought on by manifold temptations (I Pet. 1:6), and the season of Satan's loosing (Rev. 20:3). The child of God may always be confident that the length of all these seasons, as well the circumstances that define them, are ordained by God for his temporal and eternal welfare.

Someone has asked, a bit impatiently, "If Winter's here, can Spring be far behind?" Granted, most people do not enjoy the Winter as much as the other seasons. But it is God who "giveth snow like wool; he scattereth the hoarfrost like ashes. He casteth forth his ice like morsels: who can stand before his cold? He sendeth out his word, and melteth them: he causeth his wind to blow, and the waters flow" (Ps. 145:16-18). Winter ought not to be the season of our discontent. There is beauty in "the sweep of wind and downy flake." The crisp air is invigorating and conducive to work. Home life is enriched with simple pleasures. (Remember J.G. Whittier's *Snowbound*

from American Lit. class?) Favorite books are found and re-read; new books are given a careful reading. And the snow itself teaches us what we are through the blood of Jesus Christ. Even whiter than that!

* For a thorough, fascinating, and biblically-sound study of the flood and related matters, purchase and read A.M. Rehwinkel's *The Flood*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1951. 352 pages, paper.

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

A Cloud of Witnesses

Prof. Herman Hanko

Caspar Olevianus:

Author of the Heidelberg Catechism (2)

Introduction

In the last article we introduced our readers to Caspar Olevianus who, along with Zacharius Ursinus, authored the Heidelberg Catechism.

Our readers will recall that we discussed Olevianus's early life in Trier, the city of his birth, his studies for law in France, his studies in theology and preaching in Geneva, and his subsequent return to the city of his birth.

Although Olevianus was hired in Trier as teacher in the local school, and was limited to teaching philosophy in Latin, his conscience still plagued him that near death in the Auror River in Bourges, France he had vowed that he would preach the gospel in Trier if God would save him.

Work In Trier

Because few people in Trier could

understand Latin (even most of the students were not very proficient in the language) Olevianus, though able to slip in a few Reformed remarks from time to time, could scarcely be an effective teacher of the truths he had learned to love.

In his discomfort over his vow and his determination to reach the people, he decided to hold a public lecture in German, the language of the people. It was subsequently announced. A large crowd assembled. The success of the lecture was the beginning of a series of lectures in the German tongue, lectures which became expositions of a Reformation Catechism.

Because the people received what he had to say eagerly and because the crowds continued to grow, he asked permission of the council to preach to the people, which permission was reluctantly given. He chose for this sermon the subject of justification by faith, which he ably set forth in a crowded room, and which became an occasion for him to attack various Romish practices. At last he was beginning to keep the vow he had

made to God in the river of Bourges.

Although the town clerk supported this public proclamation of the gospel, Olevianus was brought before the city council, which was less receptive to the idea. Somewhat reluctantly, and probably because the city council did not really understand what was at stake, the men of the council voted to permit him to preach.

The crowds grew rapidly, and soon a Protestant and Calvinistic congregation was organized. But Archbishop John, a cleric in the church of Rome as well as Elector of that region, heard reports of what was going on. He knew the significance of it, and soon, marching with a number of soldiers to the gates of the city, he demanded that such "nonsense" stop. When the city refused to open the gates to him, he took up headquarters near the city and began to harass the citizens by taking away their status as a free city, burning their crops, seizing and attacking citizens as they traveled to and from the city, issuing many fierce threats, cutting off the city's water supply, preventing supplies of food from entering the city,

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and summoning more soldiers to make a determined march on the city.

Finally John attacked the city, threw Olevianus into jail, banished all who upheld Protestant practices, and restored Roman Catholicism. It was a total triumph for Rome. To add insult to injury, John instituted an annual "Olevian Procession" to celebrate the banishment of this man of God. It was nearly 250 years before any worship services other than Romish were held in this city.

Olevianus was held in prison for ten weeks and was finally released only at the insistence of the Elector Frederick the Pious, who paid an enormous ransom for the release. Olevianus never again returned to the city of his birth.

He had thought (and promised) to preach the gospel in Trier; he kept his promise, though only for a short time; God had need of him elsewhere. The year was 1560; Olevianus was only 24 years old.

Work In Heidelberg

Although Olevianus had many offers to work elsewhere, he chose to go to Heidelberg at the invitation of Frederick. In Heidelberg he became leader and director at the college. There he completed his doctoral studies in theology and was appointed to the chair of dogmatics. For use in his lectures, he made a summary of Calvin's *Institutes*, which book was the major textbook in the class.

His abilities were not, however, primarily the abilities of a professor; he was above all a preacher. And so, when Zacharius Ursinus came to the university, Olevianus moved out of the chair of dogmatics to make room for Ursinus; and Olevianus became chief pastor in St. Peter's Church and later in the Church of the Holy Spirit. Here, on the pulpit, expounding God's Word, he felt at home. Here God used his gifts to the advantage of the church.

And so it was that both a professor, gifted in theology, and a preacher, eloquent and faithful in the pulpit, were, under God's providence, chosen to write the Heidelberg Catechism. Ursinus was 28 years old; Olevianus

was 26. It is hard to believe that they were so young. The Catechism gives evidence of authorship by spiritually and theologically mature men. And so they were. Maturity before one's thirties — that is the measure of their God-given abilities.

The Catechism is a professor's book and a preacher's book. It is systematic doctrine covering the whole of the Christian faith. It is however not the doctrine of the classroom or lecture hall, but the doctrine of the pulpit and the faith of the people of God. The systematic theology of the creed reflects the gifts of Ursinus; the passionately pastoral approach of comfort in doctrine is the delicate touch of the preacher.

Olevianus's work on the Catechism was by no means all he did in Heidelberg. His congregational responsibilities were enough to keep him busy, but he was also deeply involved in continuing reform in the Palatinate. He was instrumental in bringing into the Palatinate hundreds of Reformed teachers to teach in the schools and preachers to preach in the pulpits. He was deeply involved in the defense of the Reformed faith over against Lutheran and Roman Catholic attacks. He was especially instrumental in solidifying genuine biblical church government in the Palatinate — although not without a bitter battle with those who wanted the State to rule the church.

The Last Years

But even such good things as Olevianus's work in Heidelberg had to come to an end.

There are so many things in God's eternal purpose that seem all wrong to us. Just at that point when so many battles seemed to be won and when Heidelberg was becoming a center for Reformational studies, God stopped it all.

In 1576 Frederick died and his son Ludwig came to the throne of the

Palatinate. Ludwig was an ardent Lutheran who hated anything Calvinistic. The pulpits and schools were the first objects of Ludwig's attacks. Olevianus was fired from his post and put under house arrest. When this arrest was lifted it was only to

banish from the entire Palatinate anyone who breathed a Reformed word. Over 600 preachers and teachers, including Olevianus and Ursinus, fled, and the Calvin Reformation came to an abrupt halt.

Olevianus went for a short time to a castle of a friend in central Germany to tutor his son and help in the Refor-

mation work which was being done in that area. In 1548 he went to Herborn, another city in Germany, as the chief preacher of the church there and as promoter of the Reformation. The result was that, although Lutheranism was the dominant faith in Germany, there were various places where Calvinism flourished and a Reformed church grew strong.

In the same year that Olevianus came to Herborn he started a Seminary, more properly, an Academy, for the school taught also the subjects which were necessary for pre-theological studies. Olevianus once again occupied the chair of dogmatics. Under his labors and leadership the Seminary expanded and grew with incredible speed. A year after it had been started, the famed Piscator came to the school, along with 12 other teachers of prominence in the Reformed movement. The student body was a cross-section of Europe's Calvinists.

But we near the end of the story.

Though only 51, Olevianus was worn with labor and toil in the cause of the gospel. As he lay dying, he confessed: "I have only learned to know in this sickness what sin is, and how great is the majesty of God." He spoke of a dream he had had: "Yesterday I was filled for more than an hour with unspeakable joy. It appeared to

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me that I was walking in a meadow resplendent with light, and while I was moving about, heavenly dew fell on me, not in drops but in streams. Both my body and soul were filled with exceeding great joy."

Piscator, hearing this, said: "So the good Shepherd has led you into His green pastures." Olevianus replied: "Yes, he has led me to the fountain of living water." He requested that Psalm 42 and Isaiah 53 be read to him. He asked that those at his bedside sing a Reformation hymn, and he joined with them in a weak voice. He died shortly after, telling those around him: "I would no longer postpone my journey to the Lord. I desire to depart and be with Christ." He said his farewells to his wife, his aged mother, his children, and his friends, taking the time to bless each of them. And so, living and dying in

that "only comfort in life and in death," he went to be with the Lord.

Olevianus's power was in his preaching. Nevertheless, one more accomplishment, and that in the field of theology, must be mentioned. He wrote a book, undoubtedly the best of all his writings, entitled "The Covenant of Grace." What is so striking about this book is that, although Olevianus often spoke of the covenant as a pact or an agreement (an idea in keeping with his times), he also, amazingly, spoke of the covenant as a bond of friendship and fellowship, an idea which was not to be fully developed in all its beauty until the theology of Herman Hoeksema. Such is a measure of the stature of this eminent man of God through whose hands God gave us our Heidelberg Catechism. No wonder that in that very Catechism should appear

the profound truth: "Are infants also to be baptized? Yes: for since they, as well as the adult, are included in the covenant and church of God; and since redemption from sin by the blood of Christ, and the Holy Ghost, the author of faith, is promised to them no less than to the adult; they must therefore by baptism, as a sign of the covenant, be also admitted into the Christian church . . ." (Q. & A. 74).

(Note: Thea B. Van Halsema has published a short story of the three men [Frederick III, Ursinus, and Olevianus] who were instrumental in writing the Catechism. The title is: "Three Men Came To Heidelberg." An unpublished syllabus entitled: "The Heidelberg Catechism: Origin and History," written by Fred W. Klooster, has much material of value in it.) □

Bring the Books

C.H. Spurgeon

No Compromise*

This is the suggestion of the present hour: if the world will not come to Jesus, shall Jesus tone down his teachings to the world? In other words, if the world will not rise to the church, shall not the church go down to the world? Instead of bidding men to be converted, and come out from among sinners, and be separate from them, let us join with the ungodly world, enter into union with it, and so pervade it with our influence by allowing it to influence us. Let us have a Christian world.

To this end let us revise our doctrines. Some are old-fashioned, grim, severe, unpopular; let us drop them out. Use the old phrases so as to please the obstinately orthodox, but give them new meanings so as to win philosophical infidels, who are prowling around. Pare off the edges of unpleasant truths, and moderate the dogmatic tone of infallible revelation: say that Abraham and Moses made mistakes, and that the books which have been so long had in reverence are full of errors. Undermine the old faith, and bring in the new doubt; for the times are altered, and the spirit of the age suggests the abandonment of everything that is too severely righteous, and too surely of God.

The deceitful adulteration of doctrine is attended by a falsification of experience. Men are now told that they were born good, or were made

so by their infant baptism, and so that great sentence, "Ye must be born again," is deprived of its force. Repentance is ignored, faith is a drug in the market as compared with "honest doubt," and mourning for sin and communion with God are dispensed with, to make way for entertainments, and Socialism, and politics of varying shades. A new creature in Christ Jesus is looked upon as a sour invention of bigoted Puritans.... That is what "modern thought" is telling us; and under its guidance all religion is being toned down. Spiritual religion is despised, and a fashionable morality is set up in its place. Do yourself up tidily on Sunday; behave yourself; and above all, believe everything except what you read in the Bible, and you will be all right. Be fashionable, and think with those who profess to be scientific — this is the first and

* An excerpt from the sermon of this title preached in 1888 by Charles Haddon Spurgeon. This excerpt is taken from the printed copy of the sermon distributed by Chapel Library in Pensacola, Florida.)

great commandment of the modern school; and the second is like unto it — do not be singular, but be as worldly as your neighbours... thus is the church going down to the world.

Men seem to say — It is of no use going on in the old way, fetching out one here and another there from the great mass. We want a quicker way. To wait till people are born again, and become followers of Christ, is a long process: let us abolish the separation between the regenerate and unregenerate. Come into the church, all of you, converted or unconverted. You have good wishes and good resolutions; that will do: don't trouble about more. It is true you do not believe the gospel, but neither do we. You believe something or other. Come along; if you do not believe anything, no matter; your "honest doubt" is better by far than faith. "But," say you, "nobody talks so." Possibly they do not use the same words, but this is the real meaning of the present-day religion; this is the drift of the times.

I can justify the broadest statement I have made by the action or by the speech of certain ministers, who are treacherously betraying our holy religion under pretence of adapting it to this progressive age. The new plan is to assimilate the church to the world, and so include a larger area within its bounds. By semi-dramatic performances they make houses of prayer to approximate to the theatre; they turn their services into musical displays, and their sermons into political harangues or philosophical essays — in fact, they exchange the temple for the theatre, and turn the ministers of God into actors, whose business it is to amuse men. Is it not so, that the Lord's day is becoming more and more a day of recreation or of idleness, and the Lord's house either a joss-house full of idols, or a political club, where there is more enthusiasm for a party than zeal for God? Ah me! the hedges are broken down, the walls are levelled, and to many there is henceforth, no church except as a portion of the world, no God except as an unknowable force by which the laws of nature work.

This, then, is the proposal. In order to win the world, the Lord Jesus must conform himself, his people, and his Word to the world....

... This cannot be. Hitherto the way of God with his church has been to sever a people from the world to be his elect — a people formed for himself, who shall show forth his praise. Beloved, God's plan is not altered. He will still go on calling those whom he did predestinate. Do not let us fly in the teeth of that fact, and suppose that we can save men on a more wholesale scale by ignoring the distinction between the dead in sin and the living in Zion.... If there is no need of a separate church now, what have we been at throughout all these ages? Has the martyr's blood been shed out of mere folly? Have confessors and reformers been mad when contending for doctrines which, it would seem, are of no great account? Brethren, there are two seeds — the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent — and the difference will be maintained even to the end; neither must we ignore the distinction to please men....

... All the converts that the church will ever make by softening down its doctrine, and by becoming worldly, will not be worth one bad farthing a gross. When we get them, the next question will be, "How can we get rid of them?" They would be of no earthly use to us. It swelled the number of Israelites when they came out of Egypt that a great number of the lower order of Egyptians came out with them. Yes, but that mixed multitude became the plague of Israel in the wilderness, and we read that "the mixt multitude fell a lusting." The Israelites were bad enough, but it was the mixed multitude that always led the way in murmuring. Why is there such spiritual death to-day? Why is false doctrine so rampant in the churches? It is because we have ungodly people in the church and in the ministry. Eagerness for numbers, and

especially eagerness to include respectable people, has adulterated many churches, and made them lax in doctrine and practice, and fond of silly amusements. These are the

people who despise a prayer-meeting, but rush to see "living wax-works" in their school-rooms. God save us from converts who are made by lowering the standard, and tarnishing the spiritual glory of the church!.... True converts are never daunted by truth or holiness — these, in fact, are the

things which charm them....

...Are you afraid that preaching the gospel will not win souls? Are you despondent as to success in God's way? Is this why you pine for clever oratory? Is this why you must have music, and architecture, and flowers, and millinery? After all, is it by might and by power, and not by the Spirit of God? It is even so in the opinion of many. Brethren beloved, there are many things which I might allow to other worshippers which I have denied myself in conducting the worship of this congregation. I have long worked out before your very eyes the experiment of the unaided attractiveness of the gospel of Jesus. Our service is severely plain. No man ever comes hither to gratify his eye with art, or his ear with music. I have set before you, these many years, nothing but Christ crucified, and the simplicity of the gospel; yet where will you find such a crowd as this gathered together this morning? Where will you find such a multitude as this meeting, Sabbath after Sabbath, for five-and-thirty years? I have shown you nothing but the cross, the cross without the flowers of oratory, the cross without the blue lights of superstition or excitement, the cross without diamonds of ecclesiastical rank, the cross without the buttresses of a boastful science. It is abundantly sufficient to attract men first to itself, and afterwards to eternal life! In this house we have proved successfully,

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these many years, this great truth, that the gospel plainly preached will gain an audience, convert sinners, and build up and sustain a church.

We beseech the people of God to mark that there is no need to try doubtful expedients and questionable methods. God will save by the gospel still: only let it be the gospel in its purity. This grand old sword will

cleave a man's chine (backbone), and split a rock in halves. How is it that it does so little of its old conquering work? I will tell you. Do you see this scabbard of artistic work, so wonderfully elaborated? Full many keep the sword in this scabbard, and therefore its edge never gets to its work. Pull off that scabbard. Fling that fine sheath to Hades, and then see how, in the

Lord's hands, that glorious two-handed sword will mow down fields of men as mowers level the grass with their scythes. There is no need to go down to Egypt for help. To invite the devil to help Christ is shameful. Please God, we shall see prosperity yet, when the church of God is resolved never to seek it except in God's own way. □

Day of Shadows

Homer Hoeksema

Chapter 3

The First Three Days of Creation

In this chapter we turn to the consideration of the specific creative works of the Lord our God on the first three days of creation-week. These are recorded in Genesis 1:3-13.

By way of introduction, we may note that each creative work is introduced by the significant formula, "And God said...." By these words Scripture very definitely and directly ascribes the works of creation to God Himself. Moreover, in close connection with this, the Bible attributes these works of creation to God's speech, the Word of God. That Word of God spoken produces the various creatures that are described in this chapter. God is the Creator! We should note carefully that the text of Scripture simply does not leave any room for any devious process of evolution, nor for any kind of process of development through the operation of so-called natural law and second causes, such as might be described

even by so-called theistic evolution. The Bible places God and His speech, and that, too, all alone, on the foreground. God spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast. There simply is no room in the record of Scripture for any notion of a process of any kind. This cannot be derived from the text of Scripture itself, but must needs be introduced from a foreign source. Scripture certainly presents the work of creation as immediate and instantaneous.

The Days of Creation

We may notice that with respect to all the days of creation-week Scripture concludes the record of each day with the statement, "And the evening and the morning were the first day ... the second day ... the third day," etc. And the beginning of each new day is indicated by the words, "And God said...." These two elements, which are common to all the six days of creation, are very closely related. Together they mark the beginning and the conclusion of a specific part of the work of creation.

The subject of the time-factor in

Genesis 1 is important in connection with the attacks which have been made on the meaning of the creation-narrative and the nature of the creative work. Because of the fact that the entire subject of creation versus so-called theistic evolution and the question whether theistic evolution is compatible with Holy Scripture is closely connected with this matter of the time-factor, and because of the fact that it is frequently proposed that it is not necessary in the light of Scripture to believe that creation took place in six ordinary days, but that Scripture itself leaves room for various other theories, it is important that we examine this matter in the light of Scripture.

There are various theories abroad which seek to introduce into the creation-narrative a period of time which is far longer than six days. In fact, these theories, in one way or another, want to make room in the narrative of Genesis for hundreds of millions and even billions of years. The purpose of these theories, of course, is to make room in the Genesis narrative for the unimaginably long periods of time

The late Homer Hoeksema was professor of Dogmatics and Old Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

which the process of evolution requires. Moreover, it is claimed by some that it is even a scientifically proven fact that our universe is a very, very old universe, and that we must speak of its age in terms of billions of years. In this context, there are those who attempt to maintain, on the one hand, that some kind of theory of evolution (some speak of "theistic evolution") is compatible with Holy Scripture; and, on the other hand, there are also those who claim to be strongly opposed to any theory of so-called theistic evolution, who emphasize that this theory is contrary to Scripture, but who nevertheless do not consider the question of the six days of creation an important one and do not insist that these six days were six ordinary, twenty-four hour days, but rather concede that creation may have taken place over an extremely long period of time. They do this in order to maintain that the theory of a very old universe is compatible with the belief in creation.

Thus, there are various theories concerning this time-factor. We have already mentioned one of these theories: the restitution theory. Another theory is the inter-period theory; it seeks to insert between the various days of creation long periods of time. This theory, however, is not currently very popular. A more commonly held theory is that which attempts to transform the days of Genesis 1 into long periods of millions and hundreds of millions of years, and thus to make room for the idea that the earth is several billion years old.

There are also theories which simply seek to do away altogether with the question of the time-factor. One of these is the "framework hypothesis." This view maintains that it is not the intent of Genesis 1 to present an exact report of what happened at creation, but rather that the six days of creation-week are but a literary framework, or scheme, which is designed to tell us something about the order of the work of God and to express that this work of creation is complete. Genesis 1 is not designed to tell us anything about the actual

time and the actual order and the actual accomplishment of the creative work. This theory, therefore, leaves the entire question of the exact historical events of creation and the time of creation and the duration of the creation work wide open for the claims of evolutionism and its necessary long periods of time.

Still another theory claims that what we have in the book of Genesis is the narrative of creation as Moses and the children of Israel understood it in their times and from their point of view and with their degree of knowledge, but that this does not necessarily mean that we in the 20th century must understand and view that work of creation in exactly the same way, from our point of view and with our vastly increased degree of scientific knowledge.

Now it must be emphasized that this is a very important matter. In the first place, it is important because if Scripture itself rules out these long periods of time, then, apart from any other question, the entire possibility of any process of evolution or of progressivism in creation is also ruled out. This is also to be emphasized with respect to those who claim to oppose theistic evolution but who do not insist that creation took place in six days, thus allowing for long periods of time. It should not be overlooked that this position is taken in order to cater to the claims of science that our earth is an old earth. This is rather naive. The evolutionist sees very clearly that somehow he must introduce billions of years into the context of Scripture's account of creation. The strange thing is that some Christians do not see this nearly as clearly and are willing to concede this very crucial point, failing to see that at this juncture in a very practical way the entire question is decided.

In the second place, it must be

emphasized as strongly as possible that this is solely a question of the Bible, and that, too, as the infallible and inspired Word of God. This every believing child of God ought to see very clearly. If anyone tries to convince him of the period theory, then he must tell him, "Show it to me from the Bible, and I will believe it." If anyone attempts to maintain the literary framework theory, then he must be told, "Show me in the light of Scripture, and I will concede that it is possible." If anyone attempts to maintain a so-called *Sitz im Leben* theory and to claim that what we have in Genesis 1 is the work of creation as Moses and Israel understood it, but that this does not limit us to that same literal presentation, then we must be reminded that the Bible speaks of creation not merely as Moses understood it, but as God tells us of it. And if we are to be convinced that the Lord was occupied with creation for bil-

lions of years, then we must be convinced from no other source than His own Word. This cannot be stressed strongly enough. It holds for the simplest, most uneducated person, but also for the highly learned man of science. We must not become so sophisticated and so vain in our conceits that we begin to challenge the Scriptures with outside evidence. The Word of God is absolutely true, and that Word of God is an absolute authority. Nothing may be placed next to it; nothing may

interpret or claim to interpret that Word of God for us. On this we must be adamant. We must never allow men to come to the Bible with so-called scientific proof and with their scientific theories, and then begin to question whether what the Bible says is true or whether it can be possible that the Bible must be literally understood or whether perhaps we must find some other means, some other

We must not become so sophisticated and so vain in our conceits that we begin to challenge the Scriptures with outside evidence.

way, of explaining what the Bible says. This is a fundamentally wrong approach. It is essentially the approach of the same unbelieving rationalism that has in many, many circles dethroned Scripture as the sole authority of faith and life.

Let us state the matter very emphatically as follows: If the Bible says that creation took place in six days, and if scientific man says that this is impossible and that it must have been millions of years, and if then we had absolutely no way of casting even a shadow of a doubt upon this claim of science, then by faith we must continue to say, without compromise, "The Word of God is true, and science is dead wrong."

Hence, the question is: What does the Bible say about this matter?

In the first place, negatively, let us note that there is not a single hint in Scripture which so much as suggests any of the theories mentioned. This is a very important point with a view to this question. It is especially important in the light of the truth of the perspicuity of Scripture. Note well, the question is not one of human opinions concerning Scripture. The question is not even whether the text in Scripture could possibly allow for these various theories — although also that question would have to be faced solely on the basis of Scriptural evidence. But the question is: What does the text in Genesis actually and in fact teach? That question must be faced on the basis of Scripture. Scripture — *perspicuous* Scripture — must interpret Scripture. While there have been many arguments and suggestions as to what the Genesis record possibly allows room for, sound, Scriptural argument supporting any one of these theories cannot be ad-duced.

In the second place, let us take note of the following elements in the statement of Scripture here. First of all, the text speaks of a day. And

while it is undoubtedly true that Scripture uses the term "day" figuratively to refer to other than a period of 24 hours, we must remember that even then the basis of such figurative speech rests in the literal meaning of the term *day*. Besides, there are certain factors which we must remember in this connection. One of these is the very sound principle of interpretation that

wherever possible, in the light of Scripture itself, the text must be taken in its natural and literal sense. If we depart from this literal sense, then Scripture itself must furnish the reason for understanding a given term in other than that natural and literal sense. In this context no such Scriptural reason for departure from the lit-

eral meaning can be produced; on the contrary, anyone who reads the record of Genesis spontaneously understands it literally. That is its natural and plain meaning; and anyone, from the uneducated to the learned, understands this. On any other basis the understanding and interpretation of Scripture becomes a hopeless impossibility.

Secondly, we must take careful note of the fact that in each case these days of creation-week are numbered, and numbered consecutively. Never does Scripture use the term "day" accompanied by a numeral, except to denote a literal and ordinary day.

Thirdly, we must also notice that in connection with these days the text speaks of evening and morning. By these points of reference each of the creation-days is marked off, limited. In the record of the first day, the evening spoken of is mentioned first, and it is the evening of that first day. The morning spoken of is mentioned second, and it is the morning of the following day, the beginning of which marks the end of the first day. We may most properly read the text here as follows: "And there was evening, and there was morning: day one." What a very strange, yea, altogether

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nonsensical and non-understandable method of expression it would be if the Lord our God meant to tell us that He created the work of this first day in hundreds of millions of years, and then told us that it was done in a day, limited by morning and evening. If we add to this the scriptural data that from the very first there was day and there was night, with the latter divided from the day, and that when the fourth day came with its rule of the day and the night by the two great lights which God created on that day — the sun and the moon — that also then we have the very same mode of expression and the very same terminology, without a single indication of any change, then it is abundantly plain that Scripture leaves its readers no option but to understand that God created all things in six days, days that are consecutively numbered, days limited by morning and evening, days characterized by the division of day and night, days such as we know them. If the people of God cannot read the Scriptures as we have them in Genesis 1 in that way, then it becomes wholly impossible to be assured of the meaning of any Scripture.

Finally, we must remember that when the Lord our God thus created all things, in so doing the ordinance of our week was by God increased in the universe. This, in fact, forms the basis of the injunction of the Fourth Commandment, according to Exodus 20:8ff.: "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God...." And there follows in verse 11: "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day."

The maintenance of the above position and the maintenance of the Scriptural truth of creation are inseparably connected. The latter cannot be maintained apart from the former. □

2. Wars — Sign of the End

War!

Bombs and bullets; rape and torture; death and maiming!

Even we Americans, who have not had the dogs of war unleashed on our land, on our cities, and on our homes, tremble at the horror of war. Scarcely less horrible than war is the aftermath of war: famine, pestilence, and social chaos.

War is no stranger to us. Those of us who are eighty have lived through two world wars, the Korean conflict, and the war in Vietnam. We have witnessed countless others smaller, yet violent, conflicts besides. Who knows when and where war will next erupt? If we include the strife between the races within the same country, it becomes clear how prevalent, and how near to us all, is war.

Our natural reaction to war and the rumors of it is fear, even terror. Then we quickly suppose that war is really unnecessary. How often did we not hear that, perhaps even say that, concerning the war in Vietnam? From this, we move on to the hope that war will be removed from the world and that peace will prevail.

The words of Jesus Christ on war in Matthew 24:6-8, as He continues His instruction about the end of the world, contradict our natural reaction to war:

And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers

places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.

First, the disciples of Christ have no reason to fear: "See that ye be not troubled." In Luke 21:9, we are told: "Be not terrified." Second, war is necessary: "All these things must come to pass." Third, the hope that our world will be blessed with peace is a vain hope: "Ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars ... nation shall rise against nation."

Christ now begins to answer the disciples' question: "What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" The disciples thought that the end would be preceded by one, great sign. Jesus does not deny this, as verse 30 shows, for He speaks of "the sign of the Son of man in heaven." But He teaches that there are also other signs of the end, and one of these is war.

Signs of the end of the world are events in creation, in history, and in the church that show that Jesus is coming, that the end of the world approaches, and that the end is near. Such an event in creation would be an earthquake; such an event in the church would be apostasy; such an event in history would be war. These signs are specified in the Scriptures, and they are events that take place out in the open, where they are obvious to everybody. They are not private, secret signs that are given to a few special individuals by special revelation. This, of course, has always been a characteristic of the cults. Their leaders have claimed special revelations given to them privately about

the nearness of the end of the world, and many people have been duped by these claims. The secrecy of these revelations contradicts the very idea of the biblical signs of the end, for biblical signs are open and obvious. The claim to special revelation about the end is a mark of the false prophets who try to deceive the elect in the last days, according to verses 23-26 of Matthew 24. It is the false prophets who say, "Behold, he is in the desert ... behold, he is in the secret chambers," i.e., "I have some private, secret information about Christ's coming. Listen to me and follow me."

Even though the signs of the end are obvious to all, they serve as signs only to the believer. The unbeliever, as always, sees, but does not perceive and heed. The reason is not ignorance, but unbelief. Only faith reads the signs aright and takes the warning to heart: The end is near! Jesus is coming!

The signs of the end do more than merely indicate that the end is coming. We cannot compare them, say, to a road-sign, that says, "Chicago — 99 miles." Such a road-sign does indicate that Chicago is coming up, but it does not bring Chicago any nearer. A sign of the end does bring the end nearer. It is itself a means by which the end approaches, or, to view it differently, a way in which everything is made ready for the end of the world. Rather than compare the sign of war to a sign-post that declares that a large city is so many miles away, we could compare it to the first, far-off rumblings of thunder that indicate the approach of the storm. This is

why Jesus says that the signs generally and war in particular are necessary. This is also the idea of Jesus' calling war the beginning of sorrows in verse 8.

War is one of those signs of the end. Someone will certainly observe that there have always been wars in the world. They are not limited to the period shortly before the return of Christ. This is true. One of the main lessons of history is that man's desire for peace has never been achieved. Man has constantly been warring, or preparing to wage war. But this fact only shows that Christ has always been coming. From the moment of His ascension, He has been coming again to earth. According to Scripture, the entire period from the ascension to the moment of His appearance is the last hour, and already soon after His ascension it was said, "The end is near." Wars, therefore, have always been present in the world. But as time goes on, there is an intensifying of war both as regards the extent of war and as regards its severity.

War is the product of the sinful heart of man. Wicked man is the cause of all war. The blame for it rests on him. Man's greed, man's lust for power, and man's pride spawn wars. The injustice, the ferocity, the cruelty of mankind in war are appalling. Fallen man is at war with God, and he manifests that in his enmity with other men — nation against nation, kingdom against kingdom, and race against race. Not one of us can excuse himself, therefore. It is common today for people to blame others for war. The young blame the older generation; the citizens blame their rulers. But the responsibility for war belongs to us all. Through Adam's disobedience, the guilt of which we all share, we all brought war into the good world of God. From the viewpoint that war springs from wicked man, it is understandable that the

tempo of war picks up as we come nearer to the end. Man develops in sin and becomes a more and more terrible warmonger.

But war is also the judgment of God upon sinful mankind. Wars are controlled by God and sent by God. This is taught in Revelation 6:3, 4, the well-known vision of the red horse of the apocalypse. The Lamb, the risen Christ, is sending forth God's judgments on a wicked world at the end of the ages. The bloody horse and its rider are given power "to take peace from the

earth, and that they should kill one another; and there was given unto him a great sword." The nations are seeking peace. This is in their interests. But Christ causes the red horse to run through the earth.

For wars are necessary! This is what Jesus said in Matthew 24:6: "All these things (namely, wars and rumors of wars) must come to pass." The world is always insisting that war can be banished. Peace is always just around the corner. A few more good diplomats, some more conferences, a little more good will among men.... Many religious people are in the forefront of the movements for an end to wars. They would run Jesus off their pulpits, if He were to preach today what He proclaimed in Matthew 24, namely, the necessity of wars. Once and for all, Jesus exposed man's dream of peace as a delusion. Once and for all, He refused to have the banner of His Name flown over the attempts of men, including religious men, to put an end to war. Christ did not pray and desire that there be no wars, but He willed that His people not be troubled because of the wars that would and must come.

We who are the disciples of Christ must take this seriously. We do not join in the efforts for an earthly peace; we do not pray for an earthly peace; we do not expect such a peace. We certainly do desire the abolition of

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war — the beating of the swords of the nations into ploughshares, when the nations will not learn war anymore. We long for the day when Jehovah our God will make wars to cease unto the ends of the earth (Ps. 46:9). But we desire this only in the way of the removal of sin from the earth. The desire for peace, while the nations go on in their sins and even increase in wickedness, is an attack on God's justice. It is nothing less than man's age-old longing to have sin without paying the wages of sin.

Also, the church looks for peace to be accomplished by Christ at His second coming, not before. Matthew 24 in general and verse 6 in particular contradict the notion that there will be a period of peace prior to Christ's coming, brought about by the conversion of the world. The history of the world is one of war. It must be.

The necessity of war is to be found, first of all, in the fact that it is necessary for a wicked world to be punished. It is the church's calling to make this known to the world in her preaching. The church does not underwrite the world's folly, that peace is possible for an unrighteous world. She does not cry, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace. But as Noah did to the ungodly world of his day and as Enoch did to the ungodly of his day, the church warns the world of the judgments of God's wrath. These judgments are already falling on the world in the horrors of war. The present judgments are the harbingers of worse judgments to come.

It is especially the necessity of wars for the coming of Jesus Christ that concerns us. When Jesus said that wars were necessary, He meant that they were necessary for His coming and for the end of the world. He linked wars and the end of the world, when He added, "but the end is not yet." There is a relationship between wars and the end. Wars serve the coming of the end. Wars prepare for the coming again of Jesus Christ. Jesus comes speedily through wars.

How is this the case? First, wars make impossible for a time the establishment of the kingdom of Antichrist,

so that the church has the opportunity to preach the gospel. By this preaching, the truth of God is witnessed in all nations, so that the Name of God is praised and all of God's elect are saved. When the nations finally achieve peace, they will turn against the church, to destroy her. Second, wars show the utter hopelessness of man apart from God in Jesus Christ. In the bloody history of the human race, it becomes unquestionably plain that man cannot make peace in the creation or build the kingdom characterized by peace. Third, war serves the end in this way that through the worldwide turmoil of wars and commotions there will arise a mighty leader and mighty nation which will dominate all nations and to which all the nations will yield themselves. Out of the turbulent sea of the nations comes the beast of Revelation 13. This will be the Antichrist.

Exactly because wars are necessary for the coming of Jesus, we should not be troubled by wars. This is Jesus' word to His disciples: "See that ye be not troubled." According to Luke 21:9, He tells us: "Be not terrified." Such is our natural reaction to wars and the rumors of wars. In itself, war is a dreadful evil — for the people of God too. They are exposed to all of the miseries of war. Their sons fight and die; their homes are destroyed; their lives are threatened. But they

are not shaken with doubts and fears, nor may they be, for they know that war serves the coming of Christ and the end of the world.

War is a sign of the end! It has a twofold message to us who follow Christ. On the one hand, it indicates that the end is not yet. So we read in verse 6: "but the end is not yet." The meaning is that when wars rage and the world is filled with the rumors of wars, the end of the world will not come at once. There is still much that has to happen before the Lord can return: The Antichristian world-power must arise and establish itself; wars must cease for a short while; the great tribulation must break upon God's people. Jesus stated that the time of wars and commotions would not *immediately* be followed by the end, in order to prevent a false and dangerous expectation of the end among His disciples. This has troubled the church, now and then. Even today, there are those who respond to war or some other calamity by looking for the end at any moment. Implied in Jesus' warning that the end is not yet is the instruction that endurance is the important virtue of the Christian in the last days. War is only the first, faint rumblings of the impending storm. The storm is still in the distance.

But war is the rumbling of that

coming storm. The storm is approaching. Therefore, war tells us that the end is certain, and it tells us that the end is near, so near that we may not and cannot forget about the end.

The certainty and nearness of the end, as indicated by wars, are strikingly taught by the Lord in verse 8, where He calls wars "the beginning of sorrows." The word, "sorrows," literally means "labor pains" or "birthpangs." It refers to the pains of a woman who is in labor to bring forth a child. History is now in travail to bring forth the end of the world, the coming of Jesus Christ. It is pregnant with the end. God has made it so from the moment of Christ's ascension into heaven.

The beginning of these labor pains is wars. They are terrible pains. The birth is yet in the future. The birth does not come with the beginning of the labor pains. The mother in labor knows well that worse pains must follow before she gives birth. Yet, with the onset of the pains the birth is near, and all the attention is directed to the approaching birth.

So we regard wars, riots, and all kinds of social strife. Creation and history are convulsed, convulsed to produce the day of Jesus Christ. Terrible in themselves, the pains are endured, and even joyfully endured, by those who expect the Son. □

For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.

For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope,

Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

Romans 8:19-21

God's Wonderfully Different People

It is indeed striking, and very revealing, that the apostle John presents in the Scriptures the awesome truth that in his day there were many antichrists. We do well to bear in mind that the word "antichrist" refers to those who are against Christ. That prefix "anti" means against, even as we use it in the word antifreeze, which plainly means that which is against freezing. And here John presents that word antichrist five times in his first and second epistles, referring to men who were against Christ.

In I John 2:18 we read: "It is the last time; and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time." Then in verse 22 he wrote: "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is the antichrist that denieth the Father and Son." In I John 4:3 we read: "Every spirit that confesseth not that Christ Jesus is come in the flesh is not of God; and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world." If we turn to II John verse 7 we read: "For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist." Although

nowhere else in Scripture can we find the name antichrist, there are references to his coming. In II Thessalonians 2:8 we read: "And then shall that wicked (person) be revealed." And in verse 4 it is stated of him that he "opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, showing that he is God." Also in the Old Testament, before Christ was born, we have reference to those who will be antichrists, even though they were not called antichrists. For Christ had not yet appeared.

Now those who are called antichrists by John were clearly working against Christ. Today also there are many antichrists, though they do not call themselves by that name. The apostle John was not writing about those who were outside of the church-world. Note that John, after speaking of the antichrist in verse 18, writes in verse 19: "They went out from us, but they were not of us, for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us." These antichrists had been members of the church wherein John taught the truth concerning Christ as our Savior. And they had manifested themselves as members of a false church.

We have that awesome situation so strong and revealing today. Satan is constantly striving to ruin Christ's church. He does that by causing many churches to become much more worldly. They allow not only false doctrines, but also sinful deeds, main-

taining what they formerly condemned.

That happened in the land of Canaan. There were twelve tribes that called themselves Israelites, which name means "Prince of God," or, if you will, "Ruling with God." But these twelve tribes became divided into two kingdoms, the Kingdom of Judah, and the Kingdom of Israel. Those ten tribes, with the name Kingdom of Israel, set up idols in Bethel and Dan, calling their citizens to worship contrary to God's calling. Them God caused to be destroyed as a nation, and to be swept away from the land which God had given them. They were brought into a godless nation. No longer were they called Israelites, that is, Princes of God. For they in no way, and to no degree, worshiped God.

What is more, when Christ manifested Himself as our Savior, many — and in fact most of those who were of the seed of Abraham, dwelling in that land of Canaan — crucified Christ. As John reports, they denied that Jesus is the Christ. Still more, when we look at the whole church-world today, we find churches that have been led by Satan to maintain and defend what formerly they had denied and fought against. And along with the doctrinal changes came also a defense of sinful deeds.

The Roman Catholic churches hail Mary, giving her credit for our salvation, as if she brought Christ into the

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world by her own strength. But even after their departure from the truth, many churches that came into being as Reformed churches separated themselves from the truth of God's Word, and today defend and allow sinful walks of life. However, take note of what we read in Matthew 1:21. There we read: "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins." Get that truth! He is Jesus, that is, Savior, and He shall save us, not merely from the punishment which we deserve, but from committing sin.

What is more, Christ teaches us, in what is called the Lord's Prayer, to begin our prayer with these words: "Hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." That comes *first*, and may not be omitted from our prayers. We must pray for strength to do God's will. Our Savior Himself, the day He was crucified, cried out in His prayer: "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matt. 26:39). We also must pray for strength to do God's will. And by all means we must do this no matter what the physical cost may be. We must pray to God, because we love Him, and therefore pray in love.

The salvation which we want is at times salvation from the punishment which we deserve. But it must be rooted in the longing to be saved from our sinful thoughts and desires. Even unbelievers want to be saved from afflictions, which they deserve to have upon them. Some will commit suicide foolishly, thinking that they will escape their pain and suffering. But if relief from pain and suffering is all that for which we pray and want, we are adding to our sins. Christ did not die merely to realize for us escape from the punishment which we deserve.

Go back to what God spoke the day Satan got us to fall into sin. He told Satan that He would put enmity between him and His elect. *That* is the first and basic element in our salva-

tion. Christ did not die merely, or in the first place, to realize for us escape from the punishment which we deserve. That is not then the first element of our salvation that God revealed on the day when Adam and Eve fell into sin. The basic element of our salvation is that of making us hate Satan and sin. We must, first of all, be saved from spiritual death, into which Satan led us. There can be and will be deliverance from punishment; but that is only to those whom God causes to hate sin and Satan who worked sin and spiritual death in us.

The mother promise, which is presented in Genesis 3:15, declares: "And I will put enmity between thee (Satan) and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed." Now to hate Satan means to love God. It is either ... or! There is no other spiritual love or hatred. It is love of God, or love of Satan; and walking as God wants us to walk, or as Satan got us by nature to walk.

Look up Mark 12:29-31. There we read: The first of all the commandments is this: "Hear, O Israel; the Lord our Lord is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment." Get that! This is the first commandment! Salvation is basically freedom from sin. Freedom from punishment comes next; but it can be there only when we are freed from sin. Salvation from punishment is the fruit of salvation from sin, and from love of sin.

This is so beautifully presented in the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day I. The truth found there is that our *only* comfort is: "That I with body and soul, both in life and in death, am not my own, but belong to my faithful Savior; who ... hath delivered me from all the power of the devil ... and makes me sincerely willing and ready, henceforth, to live unto him." Deliverance from Satan's power is the basic element of our salvation. It is God's gift whereby we can walk in love toward Him.

The question for us, therefore, is whether we hear that glorious truth

preached to us; and whether we consider that to be a joyful, blessed truth that causes us to become a people redeemed to perfection. That truth we find so beautifully presented in Titus 2:14. There our God through Paul wrote: "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

Now that word *peculiar* means "distinctly different" or "beyond the usual." Those whom Christ saves are, from a spiritual point of view, distinctly different. Those following the antichrists think we are peculiar, that is, odd, and therefore want nothing to do with us. But never mind what those with false doctrines have in mind.

We are a peculiar people in the sense that we differ very greatly from those with false doctrines. But the point here presented by Paul is that we are a blessed people. Take note of the fact that Paul, and our God through him, states that we are redeemed from our iniquity, purified, and made zealous of good works. In that light we must consider that word *peculiar*. As we usually use that word "*peculiar*," we mean odd. But as our God presents it here through Paul, we are presented as a beautiful people, a people that differ completely from Satan and all those of his kingdom of sin. We are like Christ, through His cross and Spirit. That we are a peculiar people presents a very comforting truth. For note that, as Paul writes, we are a peculiar people, zealous of good works. We are so different from those of Satan's kingdom of sin.

Thank God, then, for making you different from Satan and his seed. Be thankful that your peculiarity means that you are like Christ. Do not feel hurt, but rejoice and be thankful that we are a "*peculiar people*," that is, "*zealous of good works*." We have the beginning now. But presently we will in the full sense of the word be distinctly different in the glory of the kingdom of heaven.

As Peter also wrote: "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood,

a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvel-

lous light" (I Pet. 2:10). As a peculiar people we are a wonderfully differ-

ent people, a spiritually exalted people. □

Book Reviews

The Epistles of Peter, by J.H. Jowett (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1993), 174 pp., \$9.95 (paper). [Reviewed by Prof. Herman Hanko.]

Rev. John Henry Jowett was a Congregationalist preacher in England during the last part of the 19th century and the first part of the 20th. He was, from 1918 till his death in 1923, minister in Westminster Chapel in London, a predecessor of Campbell Morgan and Martyn Lloyd-Jones.

This book is not a commentary in the strict sense of the word. It is rather a collection of meditations on various passages in Peter's two epistles — 18 on the first epistle and 11 on the second. The sub-title accurately describes the contents: "A Practical and Devotional Commentary."

While the book will not serve the purpose of assisting one who engages in a careful and verse-by-verse study of the epistles, it will add to such a study a worthwhile dimension. And it can be read as good devotional reading which will surely aid in the study of this part of Scripture. ■

Elijah the Tishbite, by F. W. Krummacher. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1992. 336 pp. \$11.99 (paper). [Reviewed by the Editor.]

This sermonic commentary on the ministry of Elijah is profitable devotional reading for the layman and of some use to the preacher. It is the companion-piece to the author's similar work, *Elisha*.

Krummacher was a devout evangelical preacher in Germany in the midst of the unbelief of church and theologians in the 19th century. With commendable courage, he applied the Word of God of Elijah's ministry to

the situation of his own day. This application is fitting for our day.

The work suffers from an almost total lack of appreciation for the covenantal character of Elijah's ministry. Krummacher sees the ministry of the prophet as terminating on individuals.

The treatment of I Kings 19:18, which Krummacher explains in a chapter titled, "The Hidden Church," says not one word about the origin of the "hidden church" in God's eternal election of grace. This, of course, was the apostle's inspired explanation in Romans 11:2-10.

For commentaries as for doctrine and church, "evangelical" is not enough. It is necessary to be Reformed. ■

He Shall Have Dominion, by Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr. (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1992), 584pp., \$19.95. [Reviewed by Prof. Herman Hanko.]

While nothing essentially new appears in this book, the author, an ardent defender of the post-millennial position, outlines the basic argument for post-millennialism while attacking vehemently all forms of pre-millennialism and a-millennialism. The interesting part of the book is that in his vendetta against a-millennialism he is particularly concerned with the writings of Protestant Reformed ministers.

In the judgment of this reviewer, his case for post-mil is not nearly as effective and persuasive as Lorraine Boettner's book: *The Millennium*. But Gentry's volume goes beyond Boettner in defending the basic ideas of Reconstruction and Theonomy — something which Boettner does not do; Boettner's book was published

before reconstructionism and theonomy were developed.

Gentry, in an altogether unconvincing way, attempts to prove that post-mil was the teaching of the church fathers and of Calvin — Calvin's commitment to post-mil being supported by one brief quotation. His own argumentation from history is clear proof that post-mil ideas are of relatively recent origin. Only a post-mil could find proof for his views in the writings of pre-Reformation and Reformation fathers.

His proof from Scripture is likewise unconvincing. Some instances of this are: The covenant with Abraham is basically post-mil because, in speaking of the land which God promised to Abraham, God was speaking of the kingdom of Christ in the world, and because the fact that Abraham was to be the father of all nations is proof that the kingdom shall be earthly (pp. 192, 193). The three songs (of Mary, Zacharias, and Simeon) are also proof of an earthly kingdom. All the texts referring to salvation for all and salvation for the world point to this earthly kingdom of Christ. The great commission especially is said to substantiate Gentry's claim that Christ's kingdom will come on this earth.

Matthew 24 and the book of Revelation have already been fulfilled, and all references in Scripture to tribulation and Antichrist ("a contemporary, heretical tendency regarding the person of Christ that was current among many in John's day," p. 374) are descriptions of events that have already taken place, many at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Luke 18:8 is either a question which requires self-examination or is a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem (p. 431). II Timothy 3:1-4, 13 refers to Paul's day.

But of great concern is the post-millennial view, necessary to this position, that the great calling of the believer is to engage in social action so that he, by his work, transforms all of culture so that it comes under the rule of Christ in a kingdom here below (see, e.g., p. 361). It is this view which drags the believer away from his calling to seek the things which are above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God (Col. 3:1-3). This is its spiritual danger.

To believe anything else than this post-mil dream is to be defeatist (p. 16) and pessimistic (pp. 17, 25). How this charge can be leveled in good conscience is a mystery to me. Post-mil is the pessimistic viewpoint if there ever was one. None of the saints now living shall participate in this so-called glorious kingdom of Christ here on earth. The saints who have already gone to glory are not going to participate in it. In fact, the kingdom of Christ itself, when realized, will still be a kingdom in which is "birth, aging, death, time, sin, and curse" (p. 363). Who wants a kingdom like that? Such a kingdom is pessimistic in the extreme.

But with ardent devotion to it, the post-mil has no time or inclination to speak of the glory of the church in heaven, the hope of the believer to be with Christ, the coming of Christ upon the clouds of heaven to destroy the wicked, the final vindication of all God's works in the judgment, the resurrection of the body, and life in the new heavens and the new earth. In a book of over 500 pages, these

truths are mentioned only a couple of times and then in passing.

I ask again: Who is pessimistic? ■

A Treatise on Sanctification: An Exposition of Romans Chapters 6, 7 and 8:1-4, by Rev. James Fraser (Old Paths Publication, 1992), 493 pages, \$29.95. [Reviewed by Prof. Herman Hanko.]

It is often true that one must go back to the old writers to find worthwhile reading material. Rev. James Fraser, the author of this book, was a relatively obscure minister in the isolated village of Alness in Scotland who died in 1769. This book was not published until after his death.

Reformed theologians of our day, in their discussion of the crucially important passage in Romans 7:14-25, have fallen back on the old and rejected Arminian interpretation which holds that Paul is describing in these verses his pre-conversion state. This was the view taught by Jacobus Arminius in the Reformed Church of Amsterdam, a view which first aroused the suspicions of his colleague, Plancius. Herman Ridderbos, in his book, *The Theology of Paul*, takes the Arminian position; the same is true of Anthony Hoekema, late professor of dogmatics in Calvin Seminary.

Fraser will have none of this. Over 100 pages is spent by the author in which he gives a brief history of the interpretation of this passage as well as a thorough treatment of its correct

meaning. But not only is Rev. Fraser correct in interpreting Romans 7, he shows his firm commitment to the truth of Scripture and his loyalty to the Westminster Confessions by a clear and biblically sound interpretation of these important chapters in Romans which he discusses in the book. Another example of this is his handling of the crucial concept in Romans 6: "dead to sin."

However, a different explanation of God's covenant, especially the place of children in God's covenant, leads to an incorrect interpretation at times. Fraser was very clearly under the influence of Puritan thought. This is reflected in his view that children of believers are to be considered as unconverted until such a time as they show faith in Christ.

The interpretation of Scripture is interspersed with essays on various ideas and refutations of erroneous explanations of the text. Sinclair Ferguson probably gives good advice when he suggests that the reader, in his first reading of the book, skip "over the sections where Fraser discusses the views of commentators of his own era." He can, advises Ferguson, read these the second time through the book.

The volume is enriched by an "engaging pen-portrait of Fraser" (Ferguson) which is written by John MacPherson.

We highly recommend this book to our readers and thank Old Paths Publications for making it available. It offers valuable insights into the difficult and important subject of sanctification. □

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

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

Minister Activities

Rev. R. Dykstra, pastor of the Doon, IA PRC, declined the call extended to him from the Loveland, CO PRC. Since that decline the Council of Loveland has formed a new trio from which their congregation will call, in their continuing effort to obtain a man of God's own choosing. That trio

consists of the Revs. A. den Hartog, C. Terpstra, and G. Van Baren.

In a follow-up to a recent issue of the "Church News," we are happy to report that Prof. R. Decker, of our PR Seminary, has made a complete recovery from the emergency appendectomy he underwent in late November. He was able to resume his

teaching responsibilities at the Seminary in early January, and he was also able to begin preaching for various PR congregations in the Grand Rapids, MI area on January 30.

Congregational Activities

The midweek Bible Study group of our Trinity PRC in Houston, TX met recently to view and discuss slides of Singapore and India presented by their pastor, Rev. Mahtani. Our readers might also be interested to note that Trinity's congregation experienced some growth over the winter months, with "snow birds" (their term) arriving from our northern PRC and calling the Houston area home for all or part of the winter. And by all accounts these visitors are most welcome.

Trinity also sent me a copy of the religious page that appeared in the January 15th issue of the *Houston Chronicle*. On that page is an article picked up by the *Associated Press* under the title, "Wal Mart irks some in Iowa by opening doors on Sundays." In this article Rev. W. Bekkering, of our own PRC in Pella, IA, is quoted as being against this move by Wal Mart to open its doors on Sunday. Rev. Bekkering is quoted in part, as saying, "This violates our religious and traditional convictions against Sunday shopping." Wal Mart, which opened its doors in Pella nine years ago, believes it is simply satisfying a demand. How sad that the world today considers any objection from the church community against stores being open on Sunday as newsworthy. Today any objection seems to be the exception rather than the rule. It is also interesting to note that Rev. Bekkering's objections are being used by our Lord to serve as a faithful testimony to the world of our beliefs concerning Sunday. This news item was carried by the A.P. and apparently made its way into newspapers all over this country.

Due to the size of Hope PRC's congregation in Walker, MI, and the growing need, the congregation has begun scheduling a night nursery.

The Council of our Hope PRC in Walker, MI also called a special congregational meeting for mid-February to discuss the need for a daughter congregation. You may remember that at its annual congregational meeting last year, this planned discussion was tabled. Members were asked now to take the survey forms distributed before the meeting along to that meeting and that those be returned by February 27. We will do our best to keep you informed as to the outcome of this ongoing project.

The Building Committee of our Byron Center, MI PRC reported happily to their congregation that enough donations had been received to make it possible to order some additional pews for their auditorium. Installation may even have taken place by now.

School Activities

The Randolph, WI PR School Society recently reported that the State of Wisconsin has given approval to their building plans. Demolition work has already begun, and soon the actual remodeling and building process can begin in earnest. The Board has also adopted a name for their school, choosing to call it Faith Christian School. It has also offered teaching

positions to two teachers. Understandably their excitement continues to grow as they see the Lord prospering their way. There remains much work to be done, and all involved covet our prayers as they continue working toward their goal.

Evangelism Activities

The South Holland, IL PRC's Evangelism Committee recently sponsored an Evangelism Awareness Night. Scheduled for that evening were presentations on various aspects of their work, an introduction to the books of the "Reformed Bookshelf," and a presentation by the Trinitarian Bible Society.

Rev. R. Cammenga spent two Sundays in mid-January with the group in the San Luis Valley in southern Colorado. The core group there consists of four families with children, an older couple, and three individuals.

Food for Thought

"God has but three things dear unto Him in this world, His saints, His worship, and His truth, and it is hard to say which of these is dearest unto Him."

— Thomas Goodwin □

ANNOUNCEMENTS

TEACHER NEEDED!!!

Covenant Christian High School is urgently seeking applicants for teaching positions for the 1994-1995 school year in the following areas: Science, History, English, and Choir. Consideration will be given to both part-time and full-time applicants. Those interested should contact Agatha Lubbers, (616) 453-5048 (school) or (616) 458-2057 (home), or Rick Noorman, (616) 457-6087. Applicants may send a letter of application to the school at

1401 Ferndale S.W.
Grand Rapids, MI 49504.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Martha Ladies' Aid Society of the Hull Protestant Reformed Church express their Christian sympathy to Mrs. Tony Jansma, Mrs. John Hoksbergen, and their families in the death of their mother,

MRS. ALBERTA BLEYENBERG.
May they find comfort in the words of II Corinthians 5:1, "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands eternal in the heavens."

Rev. R. Moore, President
Marie Brummel, Secretary

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Council of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan extends its Christian sympathy to Elder Robert Pastoor and family in the death of his mother, and to Deacon Larry VanPutten and family in the death of his wife's grandmother,

MRS. MINNIE PASTOOR.

"... all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:23).

Rev. Meindert Joostens, President
Theodore S. Looyenga, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The men of the Hope Heralds would like to express our Christian sympathy to one of its long-time members, Mr. Rich Bloem, in the death of his son,

JIM BLOEM.

"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust" (Psalm 91:1, 2).

Mike Kooienga, President
Brian Kuiper, Secretary

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's Society of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church, Walker, expresses its Christian sympathy to a fellow member, Richard Bloem, and his family in the death of his son,

JAMES BLOEM.

May they find comfort in the words expressed in Isaiah 25:8: "He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces."

Pete Petroelje, President
John Kuiper, Secretary

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Council and congregation of Hull Protestant Reformed Church expresses Christian sympathy to our fellow officebearers, Alvin Bleyenbergh and John M. Hoksbergen in the death of their mother and mother-in-law,
MRS. ALBERTA BLEYENBERG.

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (II Corinthians 5:1).

Rev. R. Moore, President
Egbert Gritters, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies' Society, Ruth, of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church, Walker, expresses its heartfelt sympathy, to Mrs. Richard Bloem, and husband, in the death of their son,
JAMES BLOEM.

May their comfort be in Psalm 130:5, "I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope."

Mr. Tom L. DeVries, President
Joanne Bomers, Secretary

NOTICE!!

All standing and special committees of Synod, as well as individuals who wish to address Synod 1994, are hereby notified that all material for the 1994 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches should be in the hands of the Stated Clerk no later than April 1. Please send material to the Stated Clerk:

Rev. M. Joostens
2016 Tekonsha S.E.
Grand Rapids, MI 49506.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On March 10, 1994, our beloved parents,

HENRY and ANN MIERSMA, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. We are thankful to our covenant God for the faithful instruction they have given us over these many years. Our prayer for them is that goodness and mercy may follow them all the days of their life; then to dwell in the house of the Lord forever (Psalm 23:6).

- * Rodney and Sharon Miersma
- * Dale and Velerie Kuiper
- * Gary and DaVonna Holstege
- * Will and Nona Postma
- * Alvern and Fran Miersma
- * Gene and Daris VanBemmel
- * Carlyle and Marcia Miersma
- 28 Grandchildren
- 2 great grandchildren

Rock Valley, Iowa

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On March 22, 1994,

GERRIT and LUCY GESINK

will celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary. Their children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and fellow members of the San Luis Valley Protestant Reformed Mission rejoice with them and pray that God will continue to bless their life together. "The Lord bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life. Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children and peace upon Israel" (Psalm 128:5, 6).

- 7 children
- 22 grandchildren
- 7 great-grandchildren

Alamosa, Colorado