



THE **STANDARD BEARER**

**A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine**

It is God who is giving the Western world up “unto vile affections” in that “the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burn in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which (is) meet.” No other explanation can account for our society’s embrace of a culture of vanity, sterility, despair, and death.

See “Sodomy, Scripture, Schools, and a Sign” — p. 221

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In This Issue ...

"Gijs Foot"?

Who might this be? And how could he be of interest and
importance to the Reformed church at the end of the 20th century?

Is "God ... also behind those events that we would call evil?"
Does the church dare to confess this about the God who is good,
indeed goodness itself? May the believer know this about the
evils in his or her own life — "diseases and deaths, wars and
social upheavals"?

And why was the tree that served in the fall of the human
race called "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil"? Because
it brought man to moral consciousness and self-consciousness?
Because it would enable man to know good and evil by
the eating of it?

For the answers to these questions, read Prof. Hanko's offering
in "A Cloud of Witnesses," Rev. Key's article in "Taking
Heed to the Doctrine," and the late Prof. Hoeksema's work in
"Day of Shadows," respectively.

A question that Rev. Dale Kuiper declines to answer in his
contribution, "The Reformed View of Angels," is, "How many
angels can dance on the head of a needle?"

But then, who wants to know?

— DJE

Stirring Up the Soul to Bless the Lord

"Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits...."

Psalm 103:1, 2

This psalm is about one who, blessed of God, blesses God.

The psalmist lists numerous benefits of God towards himself, and then towards the church. He stirs up his soul to praise this God. He calls the church and all creation to join in the praise. His firm belief: God is worthy of such praise.

And indeed the church believes the same thing. The church, blessed of God, blesses God. She is a people called out of darkness into the marvelous light of God to show forth His praise. This is her psalm. Praising God is her life. Praise is her purpose. Praise is her privilege.

The psalmist and all the people of God recognize, however, how forgetful we can be. We forget God. We forget His benefits. How amazingly incongruous this is. How utterly ungrateful we can be. We forget our Savior. We delight not in our salvation. We live, and yet we do not live our true life of praise.

Concerned as he is to live the true life of praise, as is becoming a

child of God, the psalmist stirs up his soul to be revitalized in the praise of God.

Here in this inspired Word is the way for us, too, to be stirred up....

♦♦♦ ♦♦♦ ♦♦♦

We want ourselves in our souls to bless the Lord! We want to be as the psalmist! We want our love for the Lord to be rekindled, and then ever burning hot! But how?

First, notice that the object of attention and of praise is the Lord Himself. Even in recounting the benefits of the Lord, the child of God rejoices not first of all in what he gets, but in the God who gives. The Lord is on his heart. This is the reason praise is on his heart.

Who is this Lord? He is God. He is the Creator God. He is above all things, they being merely the works of His hands. He is holy. He is perfect in all His being, virtues, will, and works. He is, in a word, beautiful beyond compare.

Praise begins and is fired by such a humble and reverent consideration of such a God!

But then we praise our God also because He is *for us*, and because He gives us great benefits. And we know that this God is for us for He has a name, the psalmist declares, a name which means He is our Savior God.

What is this name? His name is LORD, that is, Jehovah! And this Jehovah God reveals His name to us in the Person of His Son who comes

in the fullness of time. The name above every other name is given to us: the name of our Savior God in the flesh — Jesus the Christ! The God who is for us is with us in Jesus who died, and is risen, and ascended on high for us.

We bless Him! Because in and through that very name Jesus we are blessed!

Such wonderful blessings — the blessings of salvation! We are saved from sin, and unto fellowship with God. We are forgiven, declared to be innocent. We are sanctified, healed and being healed of the disease of sin. We have life, eternal life. We have hope in the life to come in glory.

But more: Jehovah works to benefit us in *all* our life. Everyone in our life is for our good. Every circumstance is to enrich us. Every trial, wonderfully, is sent for our profit.

And all this because of mercy — unmerited mercy. Mercy is the fount of all the other benefits!

Why are we saved? Not because we are worthy. But because of mercy: grace to help the helpless in their need. As the psalmist says, because the Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy ... He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.

Why are we saved from such a great depth of guilt and depravity? Because, as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear him.

Rev. Dick is pastor of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Lacombe, AB, Canada.

Why are we *kept* in that salvation of God, though we sin over and over again? Because the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him...!

Blessings untold! Blessings from on high from our great God and Father. Blessings in Christ Jesus! Blessings given in mercy!

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So then: Bless the Lord!

Praise Him! That is how we are to "bless" the Lord. Bend the knee towards Him, your Maker, Redeemer, and covenant Friend! Show you are chosen of God for this praise!

Declare that mercy has visited you, and you will now open the shutters of your inner life and herald the honor of the Savior God!

Bless the Lord, O my soul! By self-conversation, exhorting myself, by faith, I will stir up my sleepy soul to praise.

Soul-praise! This means that praise is personal. A child of God is stirred in his own soul to praise, or he is no child of God. He delights to praise God. He would not let others do it for him. True, he will call others to praise God with him, but never to praise God *for* him. He will have the pleasure. He will bend the knee. Bless the Lord, O my soul!

Soul-praise! This means that praise begins in the inner man. It involves the whole person, but from the inside out. Praise is outward, to be sure. It issues forth in words and in deeds of praise. But it is inward first. True, God-pleasing, God praising religion begins in the heart, the mind, the soul, and thus involves the thoughts, desires, emotions ... all that is within us. So we say: Gather together, O thoughts, be disciplined, O will, be moved for one thing, emotions: bless the Lord!

Soul-praise! Two times in our text the psalmist exhorts himself to this. This is because true praise is fervent. The soul must not be only

partially aroused. The fire must burn hot.

Soul-praise! To be true, it issues in the soul inviting others to praise: all the hosts of the Lord, all His works in all places of his dominion. True praise takes us to the neighbor, and even to the ends of the earth to tell all of this great Savior we have, and of His great benefits.

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Praise! And forget not your God and His salvation!

Remember the blessings of God ... to you, O undeserving soul!

Remember His benefits to you in your sickness and in your health, in your poverty and in your wealth, in your single life, or in family life. Remember! God is good ... to you! Count your many blessings, one by one!

This is the psalmist's exhortation to himself, and ours to our own selves.

And how needed.

We still have a powerful, depraved nature. And the world, in its worldliness, would hinder our praise by tempting us to forget God and leave off praise.

*Even in
recounting
the benefits
of the Lord,
the child of God
rejoices not
first of all
in what he gets,
but in the God
who gives.*

So we often think on earthly things. We easily forget the spiritual. We have a natural spiritual dullness and drowsiness which we must fight constantly. We cherish so little the priceless treasures of salvation. We ruminate so easily and so corruptly about evil things. We find ourselves more easily praising ourselves or others than the living God of our salvation.

And how little we really want to talk even to our own selves about our problem. We do not want to face the inevitable conclusion to which honesty and humility would lead us: "I have been apathetic, uncaring for and unmoved in my soul by the covenant mercies." "I have forgotten my God and His benefits to me...."

So the need for the summons to self: *Awake, O my soul!* Turn to God, O my soul! Repent, O my soul! Bow down, O my soul! Praise the Lord, O my soul!

So the need, then, for grace. For what sinner can wake up himself?

O our God: awaken us by Thy grace! Tune the harp strings of our inner man that our whole life may be in harmony with thee! May Thy Spirit speak, and stir the soul!

O my soul, bless the Lord! And all that is within me, bless His holy name! □

Thou hast lit up with ardor rare
Some hidden souls, Thy special care;
Make me to them akin!
Give me what Thou to them hast given.
Their high devotion let me win,
Their calm dominion over sin,
Making of earth a heaven —
The wondrous and mysterious grace
Of ever looking on Thy face.

Standard Bearer, March 15, 1928

Sodomy, Scripture, Schools, and a Sign

Much in the news in Western Michigan recently has been a controversy over a sodomite teacher in a state high school. The teacher made public his homosexual relationship with another male. Conservative and Christian parents using the high school raised objection, clamoring for the dismissal of the teacher. Supporters of homosexuality in general and of the teacher in particular responded with a ferocious defense of the teacher and his position in the school. They railed against opponents of the teacher as narrow-minded, unenlightened bigots.

The result was a decision by the school board that the practicing homosexual will remain as a teacher.

Homosexuality is transgression of the seventh commandment of the law of God, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." The lust is depravity of nature. The deed is wilful rebellion. Explaining the seventh commandment as the requirement that we live "chastely and temperately, whether in holy wedlock or in single life," the Heidelberg Catechism consigns homosexual relations to the category of the uncleanness that is "accursed of God" (Lord's Day 41). The Westminster Larger Catechism expressly names "sodomy and all unnatural lusts" as among the sins forbidden in the seventh commandment (Question 139).

In the confessions, the Scriptures speak. God's will for the use and enjoyment of sex is the marriage of male and female (Gen. 1, 2; I Cor. 7:1-5). Homosexual relations are disobedience to the will of the Creator.

On account of the abomination of its homosexuality, as well as its other iniquities, Sodom was destroyed by the righteous God (Gen. 18:16-19:29; II Pet. 2:6-9; Jude 7).

I Timothy 1:10 lists "them that defile themselves with mankind," that is, men who have sexual relations with males, with the "lawless and disobedient ... the ungodly and ... sinners." Their sodomy is "contrary to (the) sound doctrine" of the gospel.

With other gross sinners, impenitent homosexuals ("effeminate" and "abusers of themselves with mankind") will not inherit the kingdom of God (I Cor. 6:9). Some who formerly practiced this wickedness are members in good standing in the true church. But they have been sanctified and justified, so that they are homosexuals no longer (I Cor. 6:11). They do not practice it. They hate and crucify the lust. They certainly do not speak out in defense of the unrighteousness from which the Lord Jesus delivered them by His cross, gospel, and Holy Spirit.

An avowed sodomite teaches high school children in Western Michigan with the official sanction of the school authorities.

Now the members of Reformed and other churches who for many years have sent their children to state schools, all the while despising and fighting the Christian school movement, are confronted with the consequences of their position and actions. Education that leaves God out, education that is not founded on the holy Scriptures, education that is not Christ centered, educa-

tion that is not costly obedience to the demand of the covenant sealed in baptism to the children of believing parents, must come to this. Teachers instruct the children that the evil of homosexual rebellion against the will of the sovereign God is good.

Make no mistake, even though the teacher never says a word to his classes, he is teaching the students powerfully by his example. Of course, a school that has a homosexual teacher on its staff is going to justify his presence and defend his practice in its teaching.

Apart from the homosexuality as such, the teacher is promoting sheer lawlessness. He claims to be "married" to his male consort. But the State of Michigan does not recognize homosexual "marriage." And marriage is a civil matter in which the state has a compelling interest. This alone puts the teacher in open defiance of the authority of the state.

From such a teacher, the children learn. And they do learn. One of the grimmest features of the controversy as it plays itself out in the newspaper is that, although parents object to a homosexual teacher, the high school students themselves are ardent supporters of the teacher.

Fulfilled is the prophecy of Martin Luther long ago in his warning to parents who rejected the Christian schools that the Reformation established:

Because they (parents — DJE) are not now willing to support and keep the honest, upright, virtuous schoolmasters and teachers offered

them by God to raise their children in the fear of God, and in virtue, knowledge, learning, and honor by dint of hard work, diligence, and industry, and at small cost and expense, they will get in their place incompetent substitutes, ignorant louts such as they have had before, who at great cost and expense will teach the children nothing but how to be utter asses, and beyond that will dishonor men's wives and daughters and maidservants, taking over their homes and property, as has happened before. This will be the reward of the great and shameful ingratitude into which the devil is so craftily leading them ("A Sermon on Keeping Children in School," in *Luther's Works*, Fortress Press, 1967, vol. 46, p. 218).

These educational developments in Western Michigan (and similar developments throughout the United States) are confirmation to Reformed believers of the wisdom and necessity of maintaining good, Christian schools.

Thank God that we have, and still can have, our Protestant Reformed Christian Schools!

But these developments are also a sign of the end. The community in which these things have happened is not San Francisco. It is a conservative, heavily Dutch Reformed village. In this suburb of Grand Rapids, it is now possible that public

homosexuality be approved in a teacher in the schools.

The state sanctions it by the decision of its school board.

Evidently the majority of the people tolerate it, if they do not favor it.

The false church plays her prominent role. Professing Christians plead for the teacher and his homosexual behavior, with obvious sincerity, on the ground that God is love and accepts us all, no matter how we live. They have learned well the heretical lessons of countless sermons, that the God of Christianity is a God of one perfection only — love — being devoid of holiness; that God loves all men, ungodly and godly alike; and that the love of God saves men in their sins and with their sins, rather than from their sins. (This god a Reformed Christian detests with all his heart. It is an ugly idol. Such a god is not good. To have to live with it in its "heaven" would be hell.) A Presbyterian minister officiated at the unholy parody of holy marriage, and a Presbyterian congregation knowingly has the impenitent, practicing homosexual as a member in good standing.

So far has the abounding of lawlessness gone in this most Christian part of the "Christian West" (Matt. 24:12). The spirit of Antichrist in Western Michigan now changes one

of the most basic laws of God the Creator *in nature itself*, to say nothing of Scripture — the law of male and female (Dan. 7:25; Rom. 1:18ff.). These are signs of the end of the world.

But this too is a sign, that the wrath of the holy God — the God who really is — falls very heavily now upon apostates who hold the truth in unrighteousness and change the truth of God into a lie. It is God who is giving the Western world up "unto vile affections" in that "the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burn in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which (is) meet." No other explanation can account for our society's embrace of a culture of vanity, sterility, despair, and death. "Knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death," they "not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them" (Rom. 1:18-32).

The sign speaks loudly to believers: come out of Babylon (Rev. 18:4, 5); wait for God's Son from heaven, who delivered you from the coming wrath (I Thess. 1:10); lift up your heads for your redemption draws near (Luke 21:28).

And prepare for persecution. □
— DJE

Letters

■ Correction and Comment

I would like to thank you for your comments concerning the "Seminar on the Principles and Practice of Reformed Education," which appeared in the January 1, 1996 issue of the *Standard Bearer*. I, too, see that this course is an opportunity for all of our teachers, whether experienced or not, to grow together in the knowledge of Reformed, Christian principles of education, as they have developed through the centuries under the guidance of our covenant God. One correction

should be made, however, in the article. At some point in the development of this course, the idea of the Federation funding the course was replaced by the decision that the school boards of the teachers taking it should pay for the tuition. This decision leaves our aspiring teachers who are burdened by college expenses in a real bind, because they will have to bear the expense. I am disappointed that our Federation did not at least offer the course at no charge to future teachers.

I would also like to comment on

the letter of John VanBaren in the same issue of the *Standard Bearer*, in which he makes observations and asks some questions regarding the articles on "Music in the Church." Brother VanBaren, after giving his opinion of the meaning of Colossians 3:16, asks, "And if so, does that not provide additional evidence that God's command is that we sing the Psalms, *since they alone are inspired?*" (italics mine, GK). He later states in his letter the following: "Can there be any doubt that such power of the Psalms lies in the fact that they are

God-breathed?" Then Brother VanBaren makes an amazing statement, when he writes, "*Psalms* (italics mine, GK) as products of the Spirit, are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, that the man of God may be furnished unto all good works." Immediately following that statement, he asks, "Is this not the reason that we are commanded to sing from the only songbook given to the church?" He then continues, "And do we not run the risk of losing the 'little Bible' when in our schools and homes, we find ourselves using more and more hymns?"

It is my conviction, that not only the Psalms, but *all* of Scripture is God-breathed and inspired. In addition, it is true that not only the "power of the *Psalms*," as stated in Brother VanBaren's letter, but the power of the Holy Scriptures, *both in the Old and New Testaments*, lies in the fact that the Word of God is God-breathed. In II Timothy 3:16 and 17, we read, "*All Scripture* (not only Psalms!) is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

Mr. VanBaren realizes that the *Psalter* does not always contain close or even accurate versifications of the Psalms, and yet he calls it the "little Bible." Perhaps the Brother should consider the meaning of II Timothy 3:16, 17, and also the fact that there is a difference between the inspired, God-breathed Word, and a set of versifications written by poets and set to tunes. Compare the versifications of many of the songs in our *Psalter* with the inspired text of Handel's "Messiah," and it is obvious which of the two is inspired and God-breathed.

The *Psalter* is just that — versifications of the Psalms, which are a part of the original, God-inspired Word. The *Psalter* is a useful and adequate vehicle for praise in our worship service. Prudence demands

that we continue to seek to improve both the texts and the music of these Psalms as we use them in our worship services. Although I question the historical validity of Brother VanBaren's reference to students of the Reformation who found that the Reformation prospered more when Psalms instead of hymns were sung, it is obvious to all of us that many Christian and Reformed churches, after introducing hymns into the worship, have largely departed from singing the Psalms, and have added hymns, often in subsequent additions, that are unscriptural. For that reason, we would also be wise to continue with the Psalms in our services.

But, thanks be to God, we have many other hymns and anthems from other parts of the God-breathed Scriptures that we may sing in our homes, in our schools, at our weddings, at our funerals, in times of distress and joy, as well as during special seasons of the church-year. I am grateful to my teachers in our own Protestant Reformed Schools who taught me not only the Psalms, but also many glorious hymns of faith, that have served as reproof, comfort, and instruction in doctrine for me. It is my prayer that our homes and schools may continue to, as one of our ministers recently put it, "add to the glorious tapestry of praise" God has given us in His Word, by singing the hymns and anthems God has given, based not only on the Psalms, but on all the inspired Scripture.

Gerald Kuiper
Hudsonville, MI

■ A Conditional Covenant: Why We Can't Just Leave it There

I would like to try to add to the answer of Rev. Woudenberg to a letter written by one Rev. C.W. Tuininga found in the January 1, 1996 issue of the *Standard Bearer*. Rev. Tuininga writes, "The wild branches, those who believed in Christ Jesus, were grafted in. They belong; but that depends on their remaining in faith (Rom. 11:22). That,

by the way, is a condition of the covenant we find mentioned many times in Scripture. If only the elect are in the covenant, such a covenant would not exist. The attempt to understand or solve Scripture's mysteries through logic gets one into endless problems." Tuininga makes "remaining in the faith" or perseverance of the saints a condition of the covenant. We cannot just leave the matter there. We must allow Scripture to interpret Scripture. Those who argue for conditions of the covenant see passages of Scripture that appear at first glance to argue for a conditional view of the covenant, and they just leave it there. It is the failure to allow Scripture to interpret Scripture that gets one into endless problems.

Tuininga makes this error in his interpretation of Romans 11:22. To interpret this passage one must look to the rest of Romans 11. Particularly Romans 11:27 where God teaches, "For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins." Likewise Jeremiah 31:33 teaches, "But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inmost parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people." And in Hebrews 11:16, 17, "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." These passages, clearly, equate God's establishment of His covenant with His salvation of His people. Does Rev. Tuininga mean to say that "remaining in the faith" is a condition required for salvation from sin? I would hope that Rev. Tuininga would not dare to say that atonement for sin is subject to conditions. This is rank Arminianism, but Rev. Tuininga's exegesis of Romans 11:22 leaves him no alternative — as the Bible clearly teaches, God's covenant is the same as His atonement for sin. I certainly hope

that Rev. Tuininga can acknowledge that God only takes away the sins of the elect and that remaining in the faith is not a condition that God requires before he takes away people's sins and writes His law on their hearts.

If this were not enough to cause Rev. Tuininga to reject his position, he need only look at the Canons. The Synod of Dort rejected the heretical error of those who teach, "That the perseverance of the true believers is not a fruit of election, or a gift of God, gained by the death of Christ, but a condition of the new covenant, which (as they declare) man before his decisive election and justification must fulfill through his free will" (fifth head of Doctrine, Rejection of Errors I). Perseverance of the saints or "remaining in the faith" is not a condition of the covenant, and Romans 11 certainly does not teach this lie. Ironically, the fathers of Dort quote Romans 11 (Rom. 11:7) to demonstrate that the perseverance of the saints is not a condition of the covenant. I sincerely hope that Rev. Tuininga does not endorse the position of the Arminians. Perhaps he means something different by conditions of the covenant than they did, but nevertheless the similarity between his views and the views of the Arminians is unmistakable.

If Rev. Tuininga and others wish to maintain that there are conditions of the covenant (a phrase never found in Scripture and only found as a rejected error in the Creeds), it is incumbent upon them to explain how their view can be harmonized with the plain teaching of Scripture that God establishes his covenant by taking away His people's sin, and how their view differs from the Arminian view that perseverance of the saints is a condition of the covenant. They may not "just leave it there." This is the explanation the Protestant Reformed have always asked for. They have never received an answer. I doubt that any answer is possible, as apparently does Rev. Tuininga when he says, "If only the elect are in the covenant such a con-

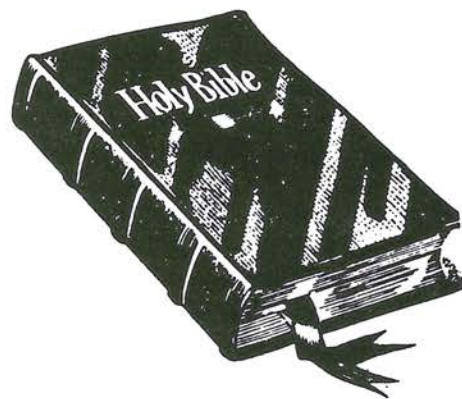
dition (i.e., a condition of the covenant, SS) does not exist." In the light of Scripture and the confessions, which teach that God establishes His covenant by taking away people's sin and that God only takes away the sins of the elect, Rev. Tuininga's own logic (not only the PRC logic) should lead him to conclude that a conditional view of the covenant cannot be maintained.

But those who, like Rev. Tuininga, believe in a conditional covenant are bound to ask questions such as, do we baptize our children, "because they were God's elect children, i.e., belonging to the Seed, that is, Christ, or because they belonged to God's covenant children?" and "If only the elect belong to the covenant, how can anyone break the covenant?" These are serious questions, but they fail to appreciate that the PRC's position that the covenant can be understood as a bond of friendship between God and the elect is not their only teaching on the covenant. Answers to the above questions are seriously and fully addressed in the PRC's description of the organic nature of the covenant. That is, God calls His people in the line of continuing generations and therefore commands all their children to be baptized. This is our basis for infant baptism. This is our basis of hope for our children. So strong is this hope that if one of our children is to die in infancy we do not doubt that he is elect (cf. Canons, Chap. 1, Art. 17). We do not and cannot tell which of our children are elect. This is a matter we leave with God, and we are happy to "just leave it there." If God in His sovereign good pleasure reprobates some of our children, they will trample underfoot the covenant of God, that is, they will spurn all the good gifts of the covenant (a covenant family, teachings of the mercies of God, a covenant education, etc.) that God has given them, and God will hold them responsible for their actions. They are the covenant-breakers of which the Bible speaks. They are the vines that are cut off.

I would like to ask that those who, like Rev. Tuininga, seek to criticize the Protestant Reformed view of the covenant do so in light of the whole of the PRC teaching on the covenant. I believe that if they take the time to understand all of the PR teaching on the covenant (its expression as a bond of friendship that God establishes with the elect, its organic nature, its distinction from the Kuyperian view, its distinction from the Netherlands Reformed view, etc.) then they will see that this teaching is thoroughly orthodox and has much value. But if after thorough study they should find solid grounds for objections, I am sure that we in the PRC would be willing to be enlightened. However, do not fault us for proclaiming the plain teaching of Scripture that God establishes His covenant by taking away the sins of His people, and that He only takes away the sins of the elect. That is, that God establishes His covenant only with the elect.

I do not know of one particular work that sets forth all of the teaching of the PRC on the covenant — this teaching is spread throughout H. Hoeksema's *Reformed Dogmatics*, for example. Does such a volume exist? If not, are there plans for such a book that would bring together all of our teachings on the covenant? I personally would highly value such a work, and believe it could aid in other's understanding of the PRC view of the covenant. □

(Dr.) Steve Spencer
Holland, MI



The Reformed View of Angels (1)

There are several reasons why we should have an accurate and extensive understanding of angels. First, the source of all angelic understanding is the Word of God, and it is surely our calling to understand the Word of God fully. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is *profitable*." We may expect to receive great profit as we search out the Scriptures on the subject of angels. And we assure you that all we set forth here will be from the Word of God. When we studied the available literature on our subject, we found that as soon as an author went beyond the Bible, without exception he became speculative and fanciful. We are not interested in that. We will restrict ourselves to the Word of God as the only source of truth regarding angels.

Secondly, we find in these last days of apostasy an emphasis among many on spiritualism, demon worship, and special revelations. Along with that, angels and demons have an important part. Many are being deceived by these movements, and many others do not quite know what to say about these things. If we have a Bible-based understanding of angels and devils, we will know how to judge of these matters, and we will know how to answer the neighbor when he comes to us enthusiastic about some meeting, or with earnest questions that he has.

Thirdly, we hope to show that a thorough understanding of the bib-

lical doctrine of angels will enrich our lives and increase our thankfulness for salvation. May God open our eyes to this aspect of His creation and this aspect of our salvation. Martin Luther wrote, "The acknowledgment of angels is needful in the church. Therefore godly preachers should teach them logically. First, they should show what angels are, namely, spiritual creatures without bodies. Secondly, what manner of spirits they are, namely, good spirits and not evil; and here evil spirits must also be spoken of, not created evil by God, but made so by their rebellion against God, and their consequent fall. Thirdly, they must speak touching their function, which, as the epistle to the Hebrews shows, is to present a mirror of humility to godly Christians, in that such pure and perfect creatures as the angels do minister unto us, poor and wretched people, in household and temporal policy, and in religion" (*Table Talk*, pp. 278-279).

The great Reformation came at the conclusion of the Dark Ages; it may be argued that the Reformation was the reason the dark, middle ages came to a close! During the several hundred years before 1517, under the ignorance by which the Roman Catholic Church kept her members bound, there was a lot of superstition regarding heaven and hell, angels and devils, ghosts and goblins, etc. In the area of theology there were all kinds of speculations and endless discussions on the subject of angels. About 1200, a certain Albertus Magnus asked and attempted to answer 120 questions

about angels. He discussed the language the angels spoke, and he was not afraid to write at length about the fall of Satan in heaven. About the same time, Bonaventura asked such questions as, "Can an angel be in several places at the same time?" "Can several angels be at the same time in the same place?" "How many angels can dance on the head of a needle?" Duns Scotus, the last of the scholastics or schoolmen, was so speculative in this theology that many in Europe called for saner methods of theological discussion, and Luther called him "the most arrogant of sophists" (specious reasoners). The Reformation brought an end to this wild, speculative method of biblical interpretation; it was a return to the Bible and the principles of Scripture alone and the sufficiency of Scripture.

The Belgic Confession, written about 1560, gives the Reformed view of angels, and shows the restraint that the Reformation engendered in its theologians. (We ask that you read Article 12 of the Confession.) It is very striking that in an article entitled "Of the Creation" more than half the lines are used to set forth the truth concerning angels! There are reasons for this: first, to set forth in a calm, biblical way what we must believe over against the speculations of the scholastics; and second, to distance the Reformed churches from the Sadducees and the Manichees. The former denied the existence of angels altogether. The latter taught that the devils were not created but were eternal, and did not fall but were eternally corrupted.

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Angels as such

What are angels? Scripture presents us with four main teachings.

1) Angels are creatures; they were created by God, and are not to be worshiped. They are not eternal. And they are dependent. They have their being, not in themselves, but in God. The creation of angels is not recorded in the first chapters of Genesis. All those who believe in the literal meaning of Genesis 1 agree that angels were created on one of the six creation days. Some place their creation on day one, when God created the heavens and the earth. They point out that at this point the earth was without form and void, but not the heavens. We lean towards this interpretation. Others are content to say that they were created prior to the fourth day, when God made the sun, moon, and stars, basing their view on Job 38:7. Herman Hoeksema prefers the sixth day, although he refuses to be dogmatic about it. Rev. G. Lubbers stated in a recent conversation that he leans toward the second day. It is enough for us to know that as creatures the angels were created during the creation week.

As creatures, angels have their own peculiar natures. They are not glorified human beings. In Hebrews 2:16 we read that Christ did not take on Him the nature of angels, but He took on Him the seed of Abraham. Likewise, Hebrews 12:22 is careful to distinguish between the host of angels and the spirits of just men made perfect. They do not have flesh and blood, although God can give them bodily form. They are spirits, not in the sense that God is Spirit, but *created* spirits. God made His angels *winds* (Ps. 104).

Angels are greater than men in knowledge, but they do not know everything. A certain woman said to king David, "My lord is wise according to the wisdom of an angel, to know all things that are in the earth" (II Sam. 14), but we also read that of the day and hour when the Son of God returns, no one knoweth, not even the angels of heaven (Matt.

24:36). And Peter informs us that the angels desire to look into the things which the prophets foretold, the things of salvation. No, the angels do not know all things. Nor are they almighty, though they are stronger than men. We read of angels being mighty in strength, of angels who have power, even the power of Christ, of their work in rolling the stone from the door of the tomb of Jesus and setting the apostles free from prison. But only God is omnipotent. So angels are created spirits, higher than men.

2) Next we ought to see that God's eternal, double decree of predestination pertains to the angel world. In I Timothy 5:2 the apostle writes, "I charge thee in the sight of God, and Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things." And of the reprobate angels we read in Jude 6, "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the last day." God elected some angels, and reprobated all the rest. The Belgic Confession states that the elect angels have, by the grace of God, remained steadfast and continued in their primitive state, while others have fallen from that excellency in which God had created them.

At this juncture several important points must be made. First, according to the decree of reprobation, a large number of angels fell into sin. If you have been looking for something new here about that fall, you will be disappointed. Very likely you know as much as we about that matter. The angels fell sometime after their creation and before the appearance of the devil in a serpent to our first parents in Paradise. Their fall into sin was motivated by pride. The prince of the devils was not satisfied in being a holy angel in the presence of God, but he wanted to be God himself. He succeeded in getting a large number of angels to join in his rebellion; Revelation 12 states that his tail drew a third part

of the stars of heaven down with him. But *how* sin entered into God's holy heaven, how rebellion filled the minds of Satan and his cohorts, is a mystery that has no present answer. Will we know in heaven? Perhaps not even then.

Further, angels do not comprise a race similar to the human race, but they are a host or a realm of individuals. Angels are not organically related. They do not marry and bring forth little angels. Their number is constant from the moment of their creation. Angels are not legally related either. They do not form a corporation or federation. When Adam fell into sin, the entire human race became guilty and corrupt in him. He represented us in Paradise (Rom. 5:12). But when Satan fell into sin, all the angels did not become guilty of his sin. Those who willfully joined his rebellion became wicked and depraved, while those who remained steadfast by the grace of God remained upright and are still upright today.

The third point is that the death of Christ did not atone for the sins of a single angel. He is not the Savior of angels. The holy angels do not need redemption and the fallen angels have fallen absolutely. Yet, the Scriptures make clear that the work of Christ in His humiliation and in His exaltation does have significance for the angel world. Through His death, resurrection, and ascension to God's right hand, Christ did unite all things in heaven and on earth. He makes all of God's creation *one*, and He is Head over *all* exalted. There is that difficult passage in Colossians 1:20 ("And having made peace through the blood of the cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven.") which states emphatically that through the blood of the cross Christ has reconciled all things unto God whether they be in heaven or on earth. The difficulty is that we usually think of reconciliation in terms of the removal of the guilt of sin through the satisfaction

of the justice of God. But the holy angels have no guilt of sin. The answer to the difficulty must be found along these lines. The peace that Christ established through the blood of the cross is, first of all, peace with God. The opposite of peace is rebellion and war. Man is at war with God, and man is at war with man. There was also war among the angels or war in heaven (Rev. 12). Although the elect angels did not sin, yet a certain stain or reproach did attach itself to the angel realm because of the rebellion of Satan and his demons. Christ arose as the Firstborn of every creature, so that in the cross of Christ every thing is reconciled to God and every aspect of the universe is brought into peace with God. The division in the angelic realm is healed. Christ is the new Head of the angels as well, and He has the pre-eminence everywhere for uniting all things in one under Himself.

3) When God created the angels He placed them in various orders or at different levels. Angels differ as far as their glory and positions are concerned. We can call this the classification of angels. (We will limit ourselves to the holy angels; you can read C.S. Lewis' *Screwtape Letters* for the classification of devils.) Scripture speaks of the cherubim which are the guardians of God's throne, righteousness, and holiness; of the seraphim which stand above the cherubim, and lead the worship of God in heaven; of the archangels, one of which is Michael and perhaps another is Gabriel; angels entrusted with specific, great tasks by God. Paul speaks in Colossians 1 of further organization of angels when he writes of thrones, principalities, dominions, and powers, all of which were created by Christ and for Christ. One more angel is mentioned in the Old Testament, the Angel of the Lord. Really

this is not a created angel, but he is the Christ as He appeared in the form of an angel before His incarnation through the virgin birth. When Christ appeared in the form of an angel, to Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Balaam, Gideon, and others, there is a foreshadowing of the great mystery of godliness, when God was manifest in the flesh.

4) The last point we wish to make regarding angels as such is their number. We said earlier that the number of angels remains constant. They do not increase or decrease. Now we notice that that number of holy angels is very great! In Daniel 7 the prophet writes that "Thousands of thousands ministered unto God, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him." Literally that is a hundred million, but the idea is really a countless throng! As we read in Hebrews 12, an innumerable host of angels.

... to be continued □

Taking Heed to the Doctrine

Rev. Steven Key

God's Providence and Evil

Our Heidelberg Catechism defines God's providence as, "The almighty and everywhere present power of God; whereby, as it were by His hand, He upholds and governs heaven, earth, and all creatures; so that herbs and grass, rain and drought, fruitful and barren years,

meat and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty, yea, and all things come, not by chance, but by His fatherly hand."

What a profoundly blessed truth!

But there is one aspect of this truth that demands our further attention. It involves a matter that we have a difficult time understanding.

If God's providence embraces *all* things, does that mean that God is also behind those events that we would call evil? "The LORD is good to all: and his tender mercies are

over all his works."¹

Is the good God the One who sends hurricanes and earthquakes, diseases and deaths, wars and social upheavals? Must we say that the God who *is love* is also the One who is behind such terrible events as those that destroy and bring suffering and ruin and death?

And what, then, shall we say about the sin that is evident in all the world? Are we also going to

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¹ For a biblical exposition of this text, Psalm 145:9, see the meditation in the *Standard Bearer* of October 15, 1995.

say that God's providence sovereignly encompasses even *sin*?

We boldly and without wavering give answer to these questions. The answer is, "Yes, God is the One who governs and controls *all* things." With our Belgic Confession we confess that "nothing happens in this world without His appointment."

Stumbling at the Truth

It is precisely at this point that many stumble over the truth of God's providence. I have faced the argument of some, even within the Reformed camp, that God Himself does not bring affliction into the lives of His people, but that all things which would be classified as trials, tribulations, or afflictions, come from Satan, our adversary. That has become a rather common conception in the Christian church, even within Reformed church circles.

Superficially considered, there may even be something attractive about that position. For they use such arguments as: "Listen, you are a father; would you kill your children? Would you inflict your children with debilitating disease? Of course not! Therefore...." And so they draw their conclusion. Or they point at the love of God — which they insist is a love for everybody — and says, "A loving God *cannot* bring affliction and torment and death upon those objects of His love."

I say, superficially considered there may be something attractive about those arguments.

But there is one problem, a rather serious problem at that. Those arguments fly directly in the face of Scripture, opposing what God Himself reveals to us concerning the nature of His love toward us.

Scripture teaches that not only does God permit, but He wisely *orders* trials and afflictions as a necessary *good* for His people. The Belgic Confession, in stating that nothing happens in this world without God's appointment, supports that single statement with no fewer than 25

Scripture passages! This is a truth that is woven like a thread throughout the whole Bible!²

God's Hand in Our Afflictions

That God appoints unto us our afflictions is often taught in Scripture as a truth of great comfort for the children of God.

The believers in the Old Testament recognized that great truth. Taking the words of Psalm 66 as their own confession, they sang, "For thou, O God, hast proved us: thou hast tried us, as silver is tried. Thou broughtest us into the net; thou laidst affliction upon our loins.... Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul. I cried unto him with my mouth, and he was extolled with my tongue. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me: But verily God hath heard me; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer. Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me."

Going back still earlier in the Old Testament, righteous Job recognized that the Lord was the One who had appointed his affliction. By faith he recognized that, and confessed it. "The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." What a profound confession in the face of the heaviness of Job's trial!

But the same truth is maintained in the New Testament.

In Acts 14 we find Paul and Barnabas returning to those cities where they had previously preached the gospel. Their purpose in returning was to nurture those who had just recently come to faith in Christ. They knew that those who professed faith in Christ would find their faith severely tested both by persecution and by the trials that mark the Christian life. So Paul and Barnabas would exhort them to continue in the faith. But then in verse 22 of Acts 14 we find that they also had a

second point of emphasis in their nurture of these new Christians.

Not only were God's servants found exhorting them to continue in the faith, but, we read, "and that we *must* through *much* tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (my emphasis). Through many afflictions — and that is the word translated "tribulations." We *must* — that is unavoidable. We must through *many* afflictions enter into the kingdom of God. So it is also for us. If we are to enter the kingdom of God in all its glory, we will do so only through the pathway of many afflictions. That is God's way for us.

II Corinthians 4:17,18 sheds comforting light upon this truth. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

This is a very beautiful text, worthy of extended exposition. But one significant truth set forth in this text is this: Our affliction *works* for us.

What an amazing thing!

Our afflictions are *working* for us!

It is not just that some day we shall exchange our cross for a crown. To face our affliction in the light of Scripture is not just a matter of looking forward to the time when our affliction is over and glory begins. But the apostle would have us understand that right now, in the midst of our afflictions, God, in an altogether mysterious way, is working our glory.

God uses affliction to make us beautiful ornaments of His grace, fit

² In this article we treat only God's providence in affliction. We shall return in another article, the Lord willing, to consider the relationship between God's providence and sin.

to decorate His house of many mansions.

It is not for us to try to figure out the "why."

We are called to take God at His Word and believe it. Affliction is for the benefit of everyone who believes. So says the psalmist: "It is good for me that I have been afflicted."

Our afflictions, as the handiwork of God, the outworking of His providence, are His way to lead us to glory.

To use a figure: Our heavenly Father does not cause His children to grow to maturity in the protected environment of a greenhouse. He puts them out where they are exposed to the rains, sometimes extremely heavy rains; to the winds, sometimes gale-force winds; to the bite of winter and the blasting heat of drought. And in that set of circumstances, albeit *controlled* circumstances, God prepares us for our place in glory.

Our flesh would love the greenhouse treatment, wouldn't it. If only we were protected from all trials. If only we were surrounded by thick plexiglass panels that would shelter us from the heaviest storms, that would protect us from the hailstones, the gale-force winds, and the driv-

ing rains. If only the watering which we receive could be ever so comfortable for us — never too wet and never too dry. If only the humidity was just right and the air filtered from all unwanted germs.

But God knows that such an environment would be absolutely devastating to any true growth in grace.

God knows what is best for us.

Affliction is an instrument in His hand, to work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

The psalmist recognized that great wonder of God's handiwork in our afflictions, when he wrote in Psalm 119:75: "I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me." Will you join him in that confession?

Oh yes, there are many, many details in the handiwork of God's providential government that we cannot understand. "Why must I suffer *this* affliction? Why must this agony last for so long? Why?" We sometimes ask those questions. We must be careful that we do not ask such questions from an attitude of rebellion against God's way with us. The simple fact is, we don't have to know "why" in order to experience the truth that God governs these things for our spiritual profit. But

we do have to walk by faith in order to confess these things.

We speak about God's handiwork in *our* afflictions, as believers in Christ Jesus. The almighty and everywhere present power of God is also that which sends afflictions to the wicked. No question about that. The affliction of the wicked works their damnation. It renders them helpless in all their pride and self-love. It shows them their total dependence upon the God whom they reject. It leaves them without excuse. But for *us* God works our blessedness even through affliction.

We speak of that which Scripture reveals. These things are not seen with the natural eyes. This truth is seen with the eyes of faith. It is a beautiful thing to be able to look upon the things that are not seen. To be able to see the reality of things, as all is for Christ's sake — that is a beautiful thing. Because that sight, that spiritual understanding, is God's wonder work of grace in us.

Receive the instruction of Scripture. And in everlasting glory God will give you to see how His way was the best way, the only way, for you. And we shall praise Him for bringing us safely home. □

A Cloud of Witnesses

Prof. Herman Hanko

Gijsbert Voetius: Defender of Orthodoxy

Introduction

The Lord has promised the church, purchased with His own blood, that the gates of hell shall never prevail against it. To accomplish this, Christ raises men in the church who are strong and passionate defenders of the faith. These

men, qualified by Christ, placed at crucial times in the church, and equipped spiritually for the task, do battle with heresies that threaten the church's welfare. After all, one crucial means used by Satan to destroy the church is the introduction of heresy into the church's ministry and teaching.

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These men are not always the most liked; indeed, they must often suffer abuse at the hands of their own fellow members in the church. They are not free from sin; God is pleased to use weakest means to fulfill His will. But they are men of courage and faithfulness, and through them Christ preserves the cause of His church in the world.

It is quite amazing that almost as soon as the delegates from the great Synod of Dordrecht said farewell to their fellow delegates and returned to their homes and churches, serious heresies arose in the churches of the Netherlands which threatened her orthodoxy. The echo of the ringing bells in Dordrecht which marked the end of the Synod had not yet died away and errors of almost every conceivable sort entered the universities and pastorates. Only through the courageous battles of some staunch men of God were these errors turned away — and then only for a time.

One of the most ardent defenders of the faith was a man by the name of Gijsbertus Voetius; or, if we would abandon his Latinized name, Gijsbert Voet — the surname being the Dutch word for “foot.” Gijs Foot. He was a man who stood head and shoulders above his contemporaries.

Early Life

Gijsbert Voetius was born of a Dutch Reformed minister in the town of Heusden, the Netherlands. He was born on March 3, 1588 or 1589 (biographers are not sure; apparently some mishap clouded the town records). The date of his birth tells us that he lived in some of Holland’s most troublous, though prosperous, times.

Holland had become a naval power, and Holland’s navy sailed the seven seas. Colonies were established by these navies in the West Indies, the East Indies, America, and South Africa. Exotic silks, spices, and woods flowed in an unending stream into the country. The growing trade of Europe passed through its ports. Merchantmen and crafts-

men filled the cities. The nation’s navy could stand before the mighty sea powers of England and France without flinching. It was enough to make any Dutchman proud.

Politics, however, were troubled. The Eighty Years War with Spain was still raging and the borders to the south were dangerous places to live. The nation was divided between Orangeists (who wanted the House of Orange of the throne of Holland) and Republicans (who wanted nothing resembling a monarchy). The divisions were deep and bitter.

The Reformed faith had taken root in the nation and had, within a few decades, become the dominant religion of the Lowlands. That Reformed faith, born and nurtured in Geneva, had found particularly rich soil among the fiercely independent Dutch. But the Reformed faith was being threatened by a growing attachment of many ministers and leaders to the evil heresy of Arminianism. It had been spawned in the fertile, though shallow, brain of Arminius, minister in Amsterdam and later professor of theology in the University of Leyden.

Voetius’ father was a sturdy defender of the Reformed faith, and his son imbibed this doctrine from youth.

He was a brilliant lad who soon outshone his fellow students in his studies. Leyden was his home school and there he studied under Gomarus and Arminius, though Gomarus did more than any other to shape his mind. He was industrious and possessed what we would call today a photographic memory. So rapidly did he advance in his studies that, while still in the University, he was appointed lecturer in Logic. In his classes he defended the strictest Calvinism and already in these years showed his disdain for any viewpoint which challenged the teachings of the Reformer from Geneva.

Because of his many gifts he was, upon graduation, called soon to the ministry of the Word of God

in Vlijmen. The year was 1611, seven years before the great Synod of Dort. After serving many years in the pastorate, he became professor in the University of Utrecht, where he spent the rest of his life, a professor for no less than 42 years.

His Able Pastoral Ministry

Before Voetius became professor he served two congregations. He spent about six years in Vlijmen, where he was first called, and about 17 years in Heusden, the town of his birth.

During the years of his ministry, Voetius preached eight times a week — and we think we are busy when we preach twice a week. While it was the custom in those days for an elder to read the Scriptures and for a precentor to lead the singing, Voetius often did this himself for the congregation.

He was faithful in his pastoral labors, and the congregations he served came to love him deeply.

But his ministry was not limited to the work of the congregation. He was intensely interested in evangelism and missions. While in Vlijmen, a village in which were still many Roman Catholics, he was instrumental in bringing a large number of Roman Catholics to the Reformed faith. And, while minister in Heusden, he was influential in persuading the large trading companies to send missionaries with the Dutch ships to distant parts of the world so that mission work could be done in these far-off islands and lands.

And, if all this were not enough, Voetius gave himself over to the study of Arabic, the better to understand the Semitic languages, one of which was the Hebrew of the Old Testament Scriptures.

His Influential Professorship

In 1634 Voetius accepted the call to become professor in the new Academy of Utrecht. When in 1636 the Academy became a University, Voetius preached the inaugural sermon on Luke 2:46: “And it came to pass, that after three days they found

him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions."

During the years of his labors in Utrecht, Voetius taught theology, logic, physics, metaphysics, and Semitic languages: Hebrew, Arabic, and Syraic, surely a heavy load. But in addition to this massive load of teaching, he also became the pastor of the church in Utrecht, and the street on which he lived bears his name to this day.

He was a prolific writer in many different fields, although those who have read his writings complain that they were almost impossibly boring and difficult to read.

To accomplish all this work, Voetius rose at 4:00 A.M. to begin his studies for the day and prepare for his many lectures.

He has often been accused of being "scholastic" in his theology; in fact, one author calls him "the greatest of the scholastics." This was meant, of course, as criticism. Many today complain that the theologians of the Dutch Reformed tradition, beginning with Theodore Beza and continuing through Herman Hoeksema, have altered fundamentally the theology of Calvin with their "scholasticism." Before we become too critical of these supposed "scholastic" theologians however, we do well to listen to more balanced students of Dutch Reformed theology who have pointed out that it was not that the theology of the early Dutch theologians was scholastic, but rather that the method in which they developed their theology was the method used by the Medieval scholastic theologians. That is, these Dutch theologians were intent on developing Reformed thought by careful analysis, detailed definition, thorough development of each theological concept, careful repudiation of every heresy, and logical organization which was intended to show the relationships between all the truths of Scripture. It was not, by any means, all bad. But that is another story — perhaps for another time.

His Battle Against Arminianism

Voetius hated Arminianism. He saw it for what it was: a wholesale attack on the very heart of the Reformed faith and, fundamentally, a return to Roman Catholicism and its doctrine of salvation by works.

He began his battle against Arminianism already before Dort as the Arminians increasingly began to influence the theology of the Dutch churches. In fact, more than likely, Voetius took a call to become pastor in Heusden because this city had become a hotbed of Arminian thinking.

Yet, as Arminianism gained ground prior to Dort, Voetius was not averse to traveling to other cities (such as Gouda and Bois-le-Duc on the Belgian border) to do battle with these enemies of the Reformed faith.

So trustworthy was he considered to be that he was voted delegate to the Synod of Dordrecht (1618-'19). At the Synod he made major contributions to the defeat of the Arminians and the writing of our precious Canons. When Bogerman, the president of the Synod, angrily dismissed the Arminians from the Assembly and forbade them to return, Voetius supported his actions.

Although Dort was a mighty victory for the Reformed faith, Arminian poison continued to affect the churches, and Voetius spent all his life doing what he could to root out this pernicious evil.

Yet, his interest in the Reformed faith was not merely in its intellectual coherence and internal harmony. Voetius was a godly and pious man. One of the first books, if not the first, was entitled "Proof of the Power of Godliness." His thesis in this book was that, while Arminianism is destructive of Christian morality, the orthodox faith gives attestation to itself in a godly and upright life. The book was not the writings of a man who did not live what he believed. He was firmly convinced, and showed it in his own life, that the Reformed faith, when

embraced wholeheartedly, led to Christian piety.

Other Battles

But Voetius did not do battle with Arminianism only. Other heresies appeared soon after Dort, and Voetius took up the weapons of his spiritual warfare against them.

We mention here three heresies.

Strange as it may seem to us, soon after the Synod of Dort the philosophy of the French philosopher René Descartes was beginning to have an impact in Holland, even in the University of Utrecht. Descartes firmly believed that the Christian faith could be supported by reason alone and really had no need of faith to bolster its tenets. This was rationalism, pure and simple. Against it Voetius waged bitter war, and in fact secured the dismissal of his own colleague in Utrecht, Regius. So biting was his attack that Descartes himself, in lonely isolation in France, but adored by all Europe, considered it necessary to respond to Voetius. Sadly, Voetius, while winning the battle in his own lifetime, lost it in the long run of Dutch theology.

When the French Calvinists were persecuted in France, many of them fled to the Lowlands, where they could find political asylum. Among them were mystics who found a congenial home in some parts of Holland. Their spokesman at the time of Voetius was Jean de Labadie, who was not only deeply imbued with mysticism, but who also preached and practiced separation from the instituted church — as mystics usually do. It was the valiant efforts of Voetius which brought these miserable mystics to bay.

But his greatest battle was with Cocceius, a colleague in the ministry. In a way this controversy was sad, because Cocceius himself was an important figure in the development of Reformed thought.¹

¹ We shall treat Cocceius in a later article.

Cocceius was disturbed by the "scholasticism" of his colleagues and developed what later became known as biblical theology.² In the course of his work Cocceius made such a sharp distinction between the Old and New Testaments that he denied the validity of the New Testament Sabbath. Although Voetius attacked him for this, the controversy involved other points as well, including various political questions. Voetius promoted strongly the need for Holland to be ruled by the royal House of Orange, while Cocceius wanted a more Republican form of government.

The controversy became very bitter and the church was divided into a Voetian Party and a Cocceian Party. In fact, the controversy was never settled. It continued beyond

the death of the two opponents, and only gradually died out.

After producing three sons, two of whom became professors and one a minister, and after seeing even a grandson become a professor, Voetius died on November 1, 1676.

Voetius has often been charged with "using the end to hallow the means": "Voetius was vehement, and not careful as respects the choice of his weapons." He has even been charged with dishonesty by some biographers — a reference to his debate with René Descartes when he denied authorship of a book which was published under another man's name. But that he was a vehement defender of orthodoxy cannot be denied, and one author, not a friend, pays even this tribute to Voetius: "With all the faults of his character, Voetius was an earnest and sincere

Christian, and a most devoted servant of the Church. Few men have in any age exercised greater influence over the Church of their time and country."

It is a man who himself loves the church and the cause of God's truth who can see beyond a man's character and stand with him in the defense of the faith. □

² We cannot enter here into the ideas which served as the foundation of biblical theology. That would require an article in its own right. For an interesting defense of biblical theology, we refer the interested reader to Geerhardus Vos' inaugural address at the time he took the chair of Biblical Theology in Princeton Seminary. The title of the speech was: "The Idea of Biblical Theology As A Science and As A Theological Discipline."

All Around Us

Rev. Gise VanBaren

■ What Do They Believe?

The *Grand Rapids Press*, December 16, 1995, carried a clarification of an earlier Press story on a survey made of the theological beliefs of the clergy in the CRC and the RCA. The survey had dealt with two very significant questions: is Jesus the only way of salvation? And: does the devil really exist? Apparently the earlier Press story contained incomplete information. The clarification read as follows:

While 73 percent of Christian Reformed Church clergy "strongly agreed" that Jesus is the only way to salvation, the story should have noted another 23 percent said they "agreed"; 3 percent were undecided and 2 percent disagreed.

Likewise, while 58 percent of Reformed Church in America clergy strongly agreed with the statement,

22 percent agreed, 10 percent were undecided and 10 percent disagreed.

Regarding whether the devil actually exists, 72 percent of CRC pastors strongly agreed and 25 percent agreed. And just 2 percent were uncertain and 1 percent disagreed.

Among RCA clergy, 48 percent strongly agreed and another 33 percent agreed; 8 percent were uncertain, 9 percent disagreed and 2 percent strongly disagreed.

One could surely rejoice that such a large percentage of the clergy in both of these denominations "strongly agreed" with the above propositions. One might wonder about the lesser number in both denominations who would not state that they "strongly agreed," but simply were recorded as "agreed." Is the distinction this, that those who "agreed" were nevertheless not totally and absolutely sure in their own minds?

And what of those who were "uncertain," or "disagreed," or even "strongly disagreed"? One could be

thankful that the percentages in these two denominations who placed themselves in these categories were relatively very small. But there is something indeed troubling in this report. Are these small minorities who minister the Word in Reformed churches being truly honest? Do they not express agreement with the three *Forms of Unity* (cf. *Heidelberg Catechism*, L.D. 11, or *Canons of Dordt*, Head III-IV, article 1) when they enter the ministry? More basically still: do they not maintain the infallibility of Scripture? Scripture allows no room for doubt about either of the propositions above. Can it be that men (women?) publicly express agreement with Scripture and the Confessions on these propositions — yet deny them in their hearts? One assumes that the survey was submitted in a manner that no one knows who answered in these various ways. But God knows.

Troubling too is the fact that such a survey (which, I assume, is answered anonymously) places many clergy under suspicion. Many

Rev. VanBaren is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Loveland, Colorado.

within the churches will likely be wondering: "Does my minister deny the existence of the devil? Does he believe that there are other ways unto salvation apart from the cross of Christ?" If there is any possible doubt, our Formula of Subscription requires a consistory (classis or synod) to examine the preacher, elder, or deacon carefully. Is that not also done in these other denominations?

■ "Yea, Hath God said....?"

The attack against God's Word as first made in Paradise is known to all. Satan (yes, the Bible presents him as very real) came in the serpent to deceive first Eve — then Adam through his wife. His approach was to cast doubt upon the Word which God had spoken, "Yea, hath God said....?" Satan knew what God had said. Eve knew what God had said. The question, however, casts doubt upon that Word. That has been the approach of Satan ever since. It is a clever attack; it is a basic attack on fundamentals. If one can undermine the foundation, the entire superstructure will fall.

The national newsmagazines *U.S. News & World Report* (April 17, 1995) and *Time* (December 18, 1995) have cover stories treating the question of the accuracy of the Bible in light of recent archaeological discoveries. Both appear to question the reality of much of what the Bible records through the reign of Solomon. These raise questions about the very existence of Christ Himself. Interestingly, these mention those instances where archaeological discoveries have confirmed some of the biblical accounts — which were earlier questioned or denied. But the doubts, the questions raised, remind us of the fact that Satan is up to his old tricks again. Here follows just a few of the statements made in *U.S. News & World Report*:

Now the sands of the Middle East are yielding secrets hidden for thousands of years that shed surprising new light on the historical veracity of those sacred writings. In this

decade alone, archaeologists in Israel have unearthed amazing artifacts pertaining to two important figures from the Bible: a ninth-century B.C. stone inscription bearing the name of David, the ancient Israelite warrior-king who killed the giant Goliath, and a first-century A.D. tomb believed to be that of Caiaphas, the Jerusalem high priest who presided over the trial of Jesus. In both cases, it was the first archaeological evidence ever discovered suggesting that the two existed beyond the pages of the Bible. "These are tremendously important finds," says James K. Hoffmeier, chairman of archaeology and biblical studies at Wheaton College in Illinois. "They will certainly cause anxiety for the skeptics." Some have even hailed the discoveries as the beginning of a new "golden age" of biblical archaeology.

Yet for many scholars, such exuberance raises profound questions. Just how far can archaeological evidence go in "proving" the accuracy of the Bible?....

But modern archaeology has found little tangible evidence from the Middle Bronze Age (2000-1500 B.C.) — roughly the period many scholars consider to be the patriarchal era — to corroborate the biblical account. Nor are there extrabiblical references to the early battles and conflicts reported in some detail in Genesis as Abraham and his descendants claimed their inheritance....

...The Book of Joshua, for example, describes an early and important battle at the fortified city of Jericho, where the Israelites marched and the trumpets sounded and the walls came tumbling down. Yet Kathleen Kenyon, a British archaeologist who excavated Jericho during the 1950s, concluded that there was no wall there during the period many scholars associate with the Israelite conquest — the Late Bronze Age III (1300-1200 B.C.). The city, which had existed since about 8000 B.C., appeared to have been destroyed in about 1500 B.C. and was uninhabited until the eighth century B.C. Some experts suggest Kenyon might have misdated the debris. But hers is still the accepted interpretation in most archaeological circles....

Time magazine presents its own slant on the Bible and its veracity. Its cover asks, "Is the Bible Fact or Fiction?" Sounds much like the question of Satan to Eve in Paradise, does it not? *Time* writes:

In what may be the most important of these discoveries, a team of archaeologists uncovered a 9th century B.C. inscription at an ancient mound called Tel Dan, in the north of Israel, in 1993. Words carved into a chunk of basalt refer to the "House of David" and the "King of Israel." It is the first time the Jewish monarch's name has been found outside the Bible, and appears to prove he was more than a mere legend.

On the other hand, say many scholars, much of what is recorded in the Bible is at best distorted, and some characters and events are probably totally fictional. Most scholars suspect that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Judaism's traditional founders, never existed; many doubt the tales of slavery in Egypt and the Exodus; and relatively few modern historians believe in Joshua's conquest of Jericho and the rest of the Promised Land. In the most extreme view, all of the above are complete fabrications, invented centuries after the supposed fact.

....Science has neither proved nor disproved the existence of the itinerant preacher and wonder worker who Christians believe was the Son of God. After all, writes biblical scholar R.T. France, "no 1st century inscription mentions him and no object or building has survived which has a specific link to him." Nonetheless, recent finds in the Holy Land have provided a wealth of insights into the milieu from which belief in Christ emerged....

One heading in the *Time* article states it correctly, "Fact vs. Faith." How true! The attacks on the very foundation of Christianity, the infallible Scripture, continue with increasing ferocity. It was the devil's original battle plan, "Yea, hath God said....?" When national news magazines enter the fray, obviously there is the design of creating doubt about Scripture itself. Sadly, many theo-

logians (also those labeled "Reformed") have adopted the same position: if the Bible can be proved by archeological studies, they will believe it; if archeological studies disprove portions of the Bible, they will accept that too. No longer is this a matter of faith, but rather of "fact" as presented by the archaeologist.

We must be very aware of the attacks on the foundations of God's church. These will surely continue and intensify. If these days were not shortened, it would seem that the very elect would be deceived!

■ **Rev. Henry VanderKam**

(The following is taken from the "United Reformed News Service" bulletin by Darrel Maurina.)

Rev. Henry VanderKam, founding pastor of the Free Christian Reformed Church of Kalamazoo, passed away on January 11, 1996 in

Kalamazoo due to complications of congestive heart failure.

Rev. H. VanderKam, aged 78, had a massive heart attack fourteen years ago. He continued his labors, however, and was instrumental in the founding of Mid-America Reformed Seminary, then in Orange City, Iowa, where he also served for a time as professor. He left the CRC in 1992 and became founding pastor of a new independent church, the Free Christian Reformed Church of Kalamazoo.

Rev. H. VanderKam served in various Christian Reformed Churches as pastor. He was president of the CRC synod in 1976 and served five other times as an officer of synod. He was president of the CRC home missions board from 1960-1965 and president of the board of Calvin College and Seminary from

1970-1973. He was the author of many articles published in various periodicals, and was writer of a number of Bible study booklets. He has a book on the Dutch Reformed church leader, Dr. Klaas Schilder, scheduled for release this spring.

VanderKam was recently involved in drawing up a new church order for the Alliance of Reformed Churches. He was one of the men who labored to "federate" the Alliance into a new denomination called provisionally "Federation of Uniting Reformed Churches."

Rev. H. VanderKam preached his final sermon on Sunday, December 24, 1995. Though scheduled to preach again on Christmas Day, he was unable to do so.

We would extend also our Christian sympathy to his widow, children, and congregation. □

Day of Shadows

Homer Hoeksema

Chapter 5 Paradise the First (cont.)

The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil (2)

But to return to the immediate subject of discussion, it is in the light of this principle (namely, that man lives, not by bread but by the Word of God — Ed.) that we can properly understand the name of this tree, which, in turn, stands very closely related to the purpose of the tree in Adam's life and in the history of the covenant of God. Scripture calls the forbidden tree "the tree of knowledge of good and evil."

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

We note at once that this is a very peculiar name. The tree is not named according to its fruit, whatever the nature and appearance of that fruit may have been. Thus we identify trees: we speak of a peach tree, or a pear tree, or an apple tree. Of such kinds of trees there must have been many in Paradise the First, offering to Adam the fruit of the ground for the sustenance of his earthly existence as a creature who was taken from the dust of the ground. Undoubtedly also the tree of which Adam was forbidden to eat bore its own fruit, a fruit which in itself and apart from God's prohibition was good. It is striking, however, that Scripture does not even

trouble to satisfy our curiosity as to how the tree looked and what kind of fruit it produced and how that fruit tasted to Adam and Eve when they ate of it. In fact, Scripture does not call the tree by its fruit at all. The tree is named in Scripture from the point of view of its meaning and significance for man, and that, too, in connection with the commandment of God which was attached to it. It was "the tree of knowledge of good and evil."

What does this mean?

The evolutionistic conception of this tree is that it serves to bring man to moral consciousness and self-consciousness, or pictures man as having evolved to that state. Ac-

cording to this theory, the story of the tree is not literally true. Yet there is a deep spiritual meaning in it all. The meaning is that man was a sort of animal, or as yet a half-animal. He was without moral conception and moral consciousness. Good and evil did not mean anything to him as yet. But somehow he developed moral consciousness and a conception of good and evil. This is then the meaning of the narrative of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

Here you have an illustration of the fact that the issue in evolutionism and the question of the literal or non-literal character of the Genesis account is certainly not a merely academic question concerning some insignificant facts. Nor is it merely a question concerning origins. But the truth about man, about the fall, about sin, and therefore about grace, about Christ, about redemption, about salvation, about the consummation of all things, about heaven, about hell — all these truths are inevitably at stake in this controversy about the philosophy of evolutionism and in those theories which deny the reality and historicity of the matters concerning which the book of Genesis informs us. Take note of the fact that a theory like this is destructive of the entire scriptural doctrine of man. Man, then, was not created a rational, moral being: he developed into one. He was not made morally good: he is as yet evolving into such a good being, he is on the way. Thus it is also with respect to the doctrine of sin. Morality and immorality, goodness and sin, religion and impiety — all these have no objective standard, and are not a matter of the will of the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth; no, they are strictly relative, the product of a long process of evolution, and determined by the evolving man in society. The fall has no reality, then, for man never fell, but he is

always on the way upward, from good to better to best. As surely as sin and the fall have no reality, so surely a different content must be poured into such scriptural concepts as Christ and grace and redemption and salvation.

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Over against all such philosophy stands the plain Word of God that man was created good and after God's image, that he stood originally, as he came from the hand of His Creator, in righteousness and true holiness, possessed of the true knowledge of God, of God's will, and of his own relation to God and to all things, and that he certainly knew the good by experience from the moment that he first gazed upon God's creation, and was able to recognize and did recognize the evil when he met with it.

Another presentation would find the meaning of the name "tree of knowledge of good and evil" in the fact that this tree served to make man know good and evil by experience through eating of it. This idea is based on what we read in connection with this tree after man's fall into sin, as recorded in Genesis 3:22: "And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil." But the meaning there is not that heretofore Adam and Eve were in a condition of childish innocence, that they were naive with respect to good and evil, and that through eating of the tree they learned to know good and evil by experience. For again, as we said before, man was created in true knowledge of God, righteousness, and holiness, having been created in the image of God. As such, he certainly knew the good by experience; and he positively delighted in it, performed it, and tasted life in the fellowship of God. Moreover, he was created with the ability to recognize the evil when he met with it; and when he was confronted by the di-

vine prohibition to eat of the tree, he actually did recognize the violation of that command as evil.

Besides, in the second place, this explanation of the tree is directly contrary to Scripture. Man was emphatically commanded not to eat of the tree. In this light the name "tree of knowledge of good and evil" could hardly denote that this tree was to make man know good and evil by eating of the forbidden fruit.

Nor, in the third place, is that the meaning of the text in Genesis 3:22. That text rather points to man's sin and fallen estate. The words "man is become as one of us, to know good and evil" point to the fact that man, heeding the lie of the devil, has sinfully assumed such a likeness with God as to determine and to know for himself what is good and evil.

What, then, positively speaking, is the meaning of this name of the tree?

That name implies, in the first place, in connection with the command of God attached to it, that it is not man's lot, but God's prerogative to determine what is good and what is evil. It is man's calling simply to listen and obey. God, the Creator, is sovereign; and man, the creature, is servant. God's alone is the sovereign prerogative to determine what His servant shall do and what he shall not do, what is good and what is evil.

Thus, in the second place, the name of this tree denotes that by not eating, that is, by the way of obedience, man would truly know, know by experience, know as taught by God, know in the sense that he would actively assume the right attitude over against good and evil. In this sense the tree was the means whereby man would have an experiential knowledge of good and evil. If he obeyed God's commandment, he would so know good and evil that he loved the good and hated the evil, and thus experience the favor and fellowship of God that constitute the true knowledge of God. If he disobeyed that command, he

would so know good and evil that he would love the evil and hate the good, and thus experience the very opposite of the blessedness of the true knowledge of God, namely, the abject misery and desolation of spiritual ignorance and darkness, the wretchedness of that experience that is denoted in the words, "to live apart from God is death."

In this light we can understand the purpose of this tree from a moral, spiritual point of view.

1) That purpose stands connected with the fact that Adam was created the covenant friend of God. He stood in covenant relation to the living God, his Creator. That covenant did not consist in the commandment attached to the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Nor was that covenant any kind of agreement or contract, a covenant of works. Thus it is often presented. The elements of such a covenant are supposed to have been a condition (obedience), a promise (eternal life), and a penalty (the threatened death). In that case, the commandment not to eat of the tree was to test Adam

— as if God had to test His own work in order to discover what was in it! Of such a covenant and its elements you find not a word in Scripture; it can only be discovered by reading something into the text which is not really there. No, the covenant consisted in the bond, the relation, of friendship, in the living fellowship between God and the man who was created after His own image. That covenant came into existence by virtue of man's very creation. In that covenant man is the friend of God, but always as friend-servant, while God is the friend of man, but always as Friend-Sovereign.

2) God willed to reveal that covenant relation and willed that Adam should enjoy it by way of antithesis. Hence, God's friend-servant must show himself an enemy of God's enemy, an enemy of that which is not of God, an enemy of that which is contrary to the will of God. As God's friend-servant, he must show himself to be opposed to all that is not of the service of God. He is to be the friend of God, therefore, antithetically.

3) Without the tree of knowledge of good and evil there was no such antithesis expressed in Adam's life. He could serve God positively, with his whole heart. But in the concrete sense of the word he could not serve God antithetically. This antithesis is given in the tree. In connection with that tree a prohibition is created in the life of Adam. In fact, that tree, which was in itself perfectly good, served eminently to emphasize the nature of that antithesis. For the eating of that in-itself-perfectly-good-tree was evil purely because of the prohibitive command of God that was attached to it. That command was purely and simply a matter of obedience to the good Word of God.

Moreover, soon that tree and its antithesis were to be strengthened by the temptation of the serpent, and man, God's covenant friend, was to be confronted concretely by the calling to say "Yes" to God and "No" to Satan and to sin.

Such was the tree of knowledge of good and evil. □

Book Reviews

A Woman Rides the Beast: The Roman Catholic Church and the Last Days, by Dave Hunt. Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 1994. 544 pp. [Reviewed by the editor.]

In his outstanding commentary on the book of Revelation, *Behold, He Cometh!*, Herman Hoeksema explained the Antichrist of Revelation 13 as a future political world-power (the beast from the sea) that will be supported by the false church (the beast from the earth). This is also, according to Hoeksema, the explanation of the great whore sitting on the beast in Revelation 17:

Surely this woman is the church as she appears on earth; but it is the

false church, rapidly developing in our own time.... This false church ... shall ultimately reveal herself as the power in the kingdom of Antichrist (*Behold, He Cometh!*, Grand Rapids: RFPA, repr. 1974, pp. 562, 563).

Dave Hunt, internationally known author, agrees with this interpretation of the important, eschatological 17th chapter of Revelation. He is more specific: the "mother of harlots," "drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus," is the Roman Catholic Church. The Roman Church is now actively working at uniting all the Christian churches and, indeed, all religions under herself. Her tactic today is

ecumenism. "The foundation is being laid for the world religion headquartered in Rome" (p. 432). At the end, soon, Rome will help bring to power, will support, and will promote the world-power of Antichrist.

Hunt's exegesis of Revelation 17 is, in the main, sound. His documentation from Rome's own pronouncements and actions and from events in contemporary history is compelling. The prospects for the true church in the near future are sobering.

The book exposes, in a popular manner, the damnable heresies, the corrupt history, the murderous nature, and the malevolent designs of the church of Rome. It should be read by every Protestant and by every Roman Catholic who has the

faintest flickering of doubt about his church for this reason alone.

The depths of evil — doctrinal and ethical — in the Roman Catholic Church are impenetrable. She is a mystery of iniquity. Her gospel is a message of salvation by the works of man, another gospel than the biblical good news of grace (chapters 22-25). "The Roman Catholic Church has been the greatest persecutor of both Jews and Christians the world has ever seen, and has martyred far more Christians than even pagan Rome or Islam" (p. 262). The life of her clergy, from priest to pope, has always been scandalous, ridden with fornication and homosexuality, in part because of Rome's demonic prohibition of marriage (chapter 12).

This makes it incredible that evangelicals — J. I. Packer! — would bless Rome and make alliances with her. Yet, this is happening, as Hunt demonstrates. The introduction ("Overturning the Reformation") calls attention to the recent "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the 3rd Millennium." In a chapter entitled "The Reformation Betrayed," Hunt expresses puzzlement that such men as Billy Graham, Luis Palau, Norman Geisler, and W. A. Criswell have sold out to Rome.

Hunt's puzzlement may be due to his failure to uncover the fundamental heresy of Rome: free will. Luther identified the error of free will as "the hinge on which all turns" at the outset of the Reformation in his monumental *The Bondage of the Will*. Graham and Palau, as well as the majority of "evangelicals," share this denial of grace with Rome. One with Rome as regards their gospel, they can now dally with Rome in alliances and cooperation. Eventually, this will render them powerless to refuse Rome's seduction to the full embrace of organizational union.

Where does Hunt himself stand on this vital issue of the ability of the unregenerated sinner to choose Christ?

Finally, only the Reformed faith — Calvinism — can, and will, say no to Rome. Rome knows this. So do we.

Dave Hunt is a dispensational premillennialist. He can, therefore, write of the coming Antichrist and his terrors with a certain coolness, if not carefreeness. Hunt is confident that he will be raptured beforehand. Should he be alive when the man of sin is revealed, Hunt is in for the surprise of his life.

As a dispensationalist, Hunt denies infant baptism and is at pains, more than once in the book, to attack it:

Catholicism's doctrine of infant baptism destroyed the truth that one becomes a Christian not by any work or ritual but by responding to the offer of God's grace through personal faith in Christ (p. 271; cf. p. 384).

The truth is that Scripture's doctrine of the baptism of the infants of believing parents illustrates brilliantly the truth that one becomes a Christian not by any work or ritual, including the activity of man's will (see Rom. 9:16), but by the work of the sovereign Spirit in the elect sinner.

This is a book to read for insight into end-time developments that fulfill biblical prophecy. It is also a book to read, to withstand both the seduction of Rome and the treachery of evangelicalism. ■

Thomas Paine: Apostle of Freedom, by Jack Fruchtman, Jr. New York/London: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1994. 557pp., \$30.00 (cloth). [Reviewed by the editor.]

This biography of one of the chief instigators of the American Revolution of 1776 by a scholar who smiles on his subject proves that this "apostle of freedom" was also an apostle of the hatred of God and Scripture, of the worship of man and reason, and of the violent overthrow of government everywhere.

A personal friend of Washington, Franklin, and Jefferson, Paine was highly influential in bringing about the revolution of the American colonies against Great Britain. By his powerful work, *Common Sense*, published in January 1776, Paine convinced the colonists that "separation from the empire was correct. The Continental Congress' Declaration of Independence just five months later on July 4, 1776, came as almost an inevitability after Paine's little essay" (p. 64). Paine's treatise was "truly a declaration of war against the Beast of Britain" (p. 75). It is Fruchtman's assessment that "a straight line goes from the publication of *Common Sense* in January 1776 to the Declaration of Independence just six months later" (p. 439).

This life of Paine is of importance in refuting the notions found among today's "Christian right," and even some Calvinists, that the founding fathers of the United States were Christians, if not Calvinists; that America was originally a Christian nation; and that it is the duty of Christians to restore the United States to its (their) biblical foundation.

Paine went on from revolution in America to become active in the French Revolution. He became a French citizen, sat in the National Convention as a delegate, cooperated with all the leaders, including Danton and Robespierre, wrote passionately on behalf of the Revolution, and almost lost his own head in the Terror. All the while, Paine was urging world-revolution: "A nation has at all times an inherent indefeasible right to abolish any form of Government it finds inconvenient" (*Rights of Man*, cited in Fruchtman, p. 249).

This revolutionary's rage against the authority of the state reflected his rebellion against God. He wrote a diatribe against Scripture and the God who reveals Himself in this holy book:

It would be more consistent that

we called it (the Bible) the word of a demon than the Word of God.... For my part, I sincerely detest it as I detest everything that is cruel (*The Age of Reason*, cited in Fruchtman, p. 326).

This charge of cruelty, from an enthusiastic advocate of the French Revolution.

Paine was not irreligious. Who

is? Who can be? His religion was a curious combination of deism and pantheism. It opened him up to an avowed embrace of the spiritualism of the "Illuminati" and freemasonry (pp. 371-389).

Intriguing is this rebel's utopian dream. He heralded the American Revolution as "the birthday of a new world (now) at hand." The ground of this hope was that "we have it in

our power to begin the world over again" (*Common Sense*, cited in Fruchtman, p. 64).

Paine died disillusioned, drunken, destitute, and disowned.

Also, damned.

For, "whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation" (Rom. 13:2). □

Report of Classis East

Classis East met in regular session on Wednesday, January 10, 1996 at the Southeast PRC. Each church was represented by two delegates. Rev. Dale Kuiper was the chairman of this session. Special guests were the church history students of Mr. Cal Kalsbeek from Covenant Christian High School.

Classis dealt with the routine matters of hearing reports from the Stated Clerk and the Classical Committee. The church visitors reported that they found peace, harmony, and evidence of spiritual growth in our congregations.

Classis received a request from Rev. B. Woudenberg for emeritation beginning October, 1996. This request was supported by Kalamazoo's consistory. By October, 1996 Rev. Woudenberg will have spent 40 years in the ministry.

Two overtures were considered. The first was from First PRC, Grand

Rapids, requesting that synod appoint a committee to begin planning for our denomination's 75th anniversary. The second came via Southwest PRC from Donald Doezeema and Rev. R. VanOverloop asking the synod to make further corrections in grammar and punctuation to the forms and creeds section at the back of *The Psalter*. Both overtures were forwarded to synod with the approval of classis.

Subsidy requests for 1997 from Covenant PRC and Kalamazoo PRC were received. Classis forwarded, with its approval, the request for \$43,500 from Covenant and the request from Kalamazoo for \$14,000.

Voting for synodical delegates resulted in the following: MINISTERS: *Primi* — R. Cammenga, R. Dykstra, B. Gritters, J. Slopsema, R. VanOverloop; *Secundi* — W. Bruinsma, K. Koole, Dale Kuiper, A. Spriensma, B. Woudenberg. ELDER: *Primi* — D. Doezeema, C.

Jonker, J. Kalsbeek, Jr., H. Langerak, G. Wassink; *Secundi* — D. Harbach, C. Kuiper, D. Lotterman, D. Ondersma, K. Schipper. In other voting, classis elected Rev. K. Koole to a three-year *primus* term and Rev. A. Spriensma to a three-year *secundus* term as delegates *ad examina*. Rev. R. VanOverloop was elected to serve a three-year term on the Classical Committee; Revs. Dale Kuiper and J. Slopsema were chosen as church visitors with Rev. R. VanOverloop as alternate.

Classis was in closed session to deal with a matter brought via question #4 of Article 41 by Covenant PRC and for a matter of discipline brought by a consistory.

The expenses of classis amounted to \$1,366.80 for this session. Classis will meet next on May 8, 1996 at the Grandville PRC.

Respectfully submitted,
Jon J. Huiskens, Stated Clerk

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Mr. Wigger is a member of the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.

Mission Activities

Rev. T. Miersma, home missionary to the San Luis Valley Mission, in Alamosa, CO, reports slow but steady progress in the work there. With two elders from our Loveland, CO PRC (the calling church) Rev. Miersma has conducted family visits with the families of the mission. He reports that another family is

now regularly attending and is committed to the work. This is the occasion for much encouragement both to the missionary and the people who support the SLV mission.

Rev. R. Cammenga and elder Gary Kaptein of our churches' Domestic Mission Committee also visited the SLV mission January 19-22, to meet with and encourage Rev.

Miersma and his family and to get a firsthand look at the work being done.

We have also learned from Rev. Brummel, pastor of the Edgerton, MN PRC, that due to increasing interest from the Philippines, the Foreign Mission Committee of our churches has decided to send two men there to investigate that field this July, conditional upon Synod's approval.

Rev. J. Kortering, our churches' minister-on-loan to our sister churches in Singapore, with his wife flew from Singapore to Yangon, capital of Myanmar (formerly Burma) for two weeks in mid-January to attend a conference with members of the United Reformed Church, a new church that has formed out of the modernistic and apostatizing churches of that country. Let us remember to pray for the Korterings and the outreach of our sister churches in Singapore, the First and Covenant Evangelical Reformed Churches.

Rev. B. Gritters, pastor of the Hudsonville, MI PRC, the calling church for our churches' mission field in Northern Ireland, along with Mr. Gord Wassink, a member of our Domestic Mission Committee, planned on traveling to Northern Ireland the first two weeks in February with a view to preparing advice concerning the Covenant Reformed Fellowship and their desire to be organized into a congregation.

Evangelism Activities

The Extension Committee of the Lynden, WA PRC handed out free copies of the late Rev. H. Hoeksema's book entitled *The Mystery of Bethlehem* to each family and individual of their congregation. This book of devotional readings for the Christmas season was given as a note of thanks for Lynden's past support of evangelism, as well as an encouragement for the spiritual growth of the Lynden congregation.

From a newsletter to their congregation, we also learn that the

Evangelism Committee of the Randolph, WI PRC is busy with the work of evangelism. One area of labor that continues to grow is their tape ministry. Randolph has received many requests for the three-tape albums, "Reformed Worship," the series on "Daniel," and "Our Trials, God's Handiwork." Randolph was also encouraged by an unexpected response to their pastor's booklet *Church Membership in an Evil Age*. Rev. Key received a letter from the Foundation for Biblical Studies in Denver, CO requesting permission to reprint *Church Membership* in the next issue of their *Quarterly Journal*, which will be focusing on the subject of Presbyterian/Reformed church government.

The Evangelism Committee of the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA was greatly encouraged by the attendance at the special Christmas Bible Study in Victorville. About 30 altogether were present.

Congregational Activities

Our congregation in Randolph, WI has decided to follow the lead of several of our churches by including the reading and signing of the Formula of Subscription during the installation service for elders and deacons each year.

The Council of the Grace PRC in Standale, MI was happy to inform their congregation that they received a gift from the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI of 75 *Psalters*.

Classis East, meeting in Grand Rapids in mid-January, approved the request of Rev. B. Woudenberg and the Council of Kalamazoo, MI PRC that Rev. Woudenberg be granted emeritation as of October 1, 1996, the 40th anniversary of his ministry in our churches.

In keeping with a decision made at last year's Synod (*Acts*, page 56), the congregation of the Edgerton, MN PRC approved a retirement plan for their newly installed pastor, Rev. A. Brummel. This plan is in the name of our churches, with Rev. Brummel as the insured, and

Rev. Brummel and his family as recipients. And the churches that, the Lord willing, Rev. Brummel will serve throughout his ministry will pay the premium.

School Activities

The first Saturday of each month, January through April, the Hope Foundation of the Hope PR Christian School in Walker, MI is sponsoring a series of travelogues in the auditorium of the Grandville Public High School. The first in this series, on January 6, was given by Mr. Karl VanOostenbrugge on Canada.

Ministers Activities

On January 30, the Lord willing, the congregation of the Doon, IA PRC was to call a pastor from the trio of the Revs. Bekkering, Bruinsma, and Koole.

Food for Thought

"When men speak evil of you, so live that no one will believe them." □

ANNOUNCEMENTS

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's and Ladies' Society of the First Protestant Reformed Church in Holland, MI expresses its heartfelt Christian sympathy to Tina Bosman and Rich and Nancy Bosman in the death of their husband and father,

MR. BENJAMIN BOSMAN.

"Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you" (1 Peter 5:7).

Mr. Allan Elzinga, President
Mrs. LaVerne Casemier, Secretary

THE STANDARD BEARER

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WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On February 3, 1996, our parents and grandparents, **MR. and MRS. CHARLES E. VAN MEETEREN**, celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary. We thank our heavenly Father for giving us God-fearing parents, for the many years they have shared together, and for the Christian love, the covenant instruction, and the guidance they have given us through the years. May the Lord continue to bless them and keep them in His care in the years ahead. "But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children" (Psalm 103:7).

- * Charles A. and Beth VanMeeteren
- Faith, Curtis, Tarah, Nathan
- * Randy and Nancy Hendriks
- Sheri, Joel, Jeffrey
- * Donald and Shelly DeVries
- Kari, Daniel, Abigail
- * Gary and Mary Gaastra
- Scott, Kristina, Brittany, Adrian
- * Steven and Beth Potjer
- Lauren, Bradley, Austin

Redlands, CA

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Consistory and Congregation of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Edmonton, AB express their heartfelt sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Herman Klaassens and their family in the loss of his mother,

ANNA KLAASSENS.

May they be sustained by God's grace and comforted by His Word: "Thou wilt show me the path of life; in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Psalm 16:11).

Rev. Michael DeVries, President
Henry Ferguson, Clerk

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WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

With gratitude and thankfulness to God,

MR. and MRS. Wm. HOFMAN celebrated their 35th wedding anniversary on January 19, 1996.

We are grateful to them for our covenant upbringing. And it is our prayer that our heavenly Father will watch over them and bless them as they continue through life together.

"But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them" (Psalm 103:17, 18).

- * Bill and Joan Hofman
- Katelyn, Jeff, Jill
- * Tom and Darla Hofman
- Jacob, Emily
- * Doug and Melissa Looyenga
- Stephanie, Justin

Grand Rapids, MI

Hope PR Council (Walker) announces that, as of February 4, their evening worship service will begin at 6:00 instead of 7:00 P.M.

NOTICE!!

All students enrolled in the Protestant Reformed Seminary who will be in need of financial assistance for the coming school year are asked to contact the Student Aid Committee Secretary, Mr. Larry Meulenberg (Phone: 616-453-8466). This contact should be made before the next scheduled meeting, March 27, 1996, D.V.

Student Aid Committee
Larry Meulenberg, Secretary

CALL TO ASPIRANTS TO THE MINISTRY

All young men desiring to begin studies for the 1996-1997 academic year in the Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches should make application at the March 21, 1996 meeting of the Theological School Committee.

A testimonial from the prospective student's consistory that he is a member in full communion, sound in faith, and upright in walk; a certificate of health from a reputable physician; and high school and college transcripts must accompany the application. Before entering the seminary, all students must have earned a bachelor's degree and met all of the course requirements for entrance to the seminary. These entrance requirements are listed in the seminary catalog available from the school.

All applicants must appear before the Theological School Committee for interview before admission is granted. In the event that a student cannot appear at the March 21st meeting, notification of this fact, along with a suggested interview date, must be given to the secretary of the Theological School Committee before this meeting.

All correspondence should be directed to the Theological School Committee,

4949 Ivanrest Avenue
Grandville, MI 49418.

John Buiter, Secretary

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The Protestant Reformed Seminary admits students of any race, color, and national or ethnic origin.