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"Hold the Traditions"

"Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle."

II Thessalonians 2:15

Paul had just said that he knew the people in the Christian church in Thessalonica to be elect! And he knew that they were loved of God (II Thess. 2:13, 14)! They stood in sharp contrast to those who belong to the kingdom of Antichrist (II Thess. 2:11, 12). Paul also knew that these Thessalonian saints would, like all the other of God's elected loved ones, believe the truth and walk in sanctification.

Now the inspired apostle lays before these saints an obligation. This obligation is to stand fast and hold the traditions.

When the inspired apostle presents this obligation or responsibility, it becomes obvious that such does not conflict with, but is

in perfect harmony with, divine election unto salvation. Right after speaking of their election he gives them an obligation. As long as the church has proclaimed the doctrine of predestination, she has always heard the charge that predestination removes human responsibility. In response the church, following the lead of the Scriptures, has always maintained that the decrees of God's sovereign counsel do not destroy human responsibility. She has always maintained that the sovereign God determined that election would be carried out in the way of the elect believing and being holy. The striving of believers, by the power of divine grace in them, to love God with their all, and specifically to stand fast in the Lord Jesus, is exactly the way God realizes His decree of election in His people. The church has taught that responsibility is determined, not by predestination, nor by providence, but by God's commandments. So here God gives a command to His beloved elect, namely, that they are to stand fast.



The calling which God gives to the believers in Thessalonica is that they "stand fast." To stand fast means to be firmly rooted in one place. This is not something done once and then it is finished. This is an on-going action. The Thessalonian believers must keep on taking a firm position. It is interesting to note that in his first letter to the Thessalonians Paul spoke of their standing fast "in the Lord." The idea is that the Lord Jesus Christ is the one in whom they are to be rooted. They will be firmly in one place when they are loving Him, trusting in Him, and hoping in Him.

The reason this specific command is given to the Thessalonian saints is evident from the first part of this chapter. These believers were experiencing some trouble. They were being disturbed by a false teaching concerning the end of time. As a result, they were shaken and troubled in their minds (II Thess. 2:2). They were being told that Jesus could come back at any time, and very soon, without any precursory signs. This teaching caused doubts and frustration. The believers were in

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a state of agitation and nervous excitement.

There are a few factors which help us to understand the agitation being experienced by the Thessalonian believers. The first was that they were young in the faith. They had not been long converted to Christianity. This is evident especially from Paul's first letter to them. Secondly, Paul had not been long in Thessalonica before he was chased out of the city. The history is recorded in Acts 17. Therefore Paul did not have time to give the believers there all the instruction he wanted to give them. As a result, those who were converted to Christianity were zealous but immature in the way. They especially were short on their knowledge of the end times. Paul had to clear up some confusion concerning Christ's return in his first letter to them. The third factor was that false teachers were confusing them (II Thess. 2:2), specifically stating that Christ's return was imminent. Some thought that the suddenness of Christ's return meant that it would be completely unexpected by all. Some feared concerning their loved ones who died before Christ's return. And some quit working at their daily job, either because they did not see the need to work if Christ would be coming back soon or because they wanted to be ready when He returned.

So it was concern about the return of the Lord and the possibility of facing the Man of Sin that shook up the Thessalonians. Therefore Paul urges them to stand fast. Don't be quickly and easily shaken, as a grass in the wind. Be firmly rooted and not easily shaken!



How is it that the Thessalonians, and believers in the year of our Lord 2001, can stand fast? What will keep them and us from being upset by the false teachers? By holding the traditions!

A "tradition" is a teaching

which has been passed down either by word or by writing over a period of time. It has been helpful in the past, bearing up under the test of time. The idea of traditions is used in Scripture both in a good and in a bad sense. Jesus condemns the "tradition of the elders" in Mark 7 and Paul condemns that "of men" in Colossians 2. A tradition is bad when the teaching handed down from one generation to the next is bad (not in harmony with God's Word and not to God's glory), or when one adheres to the tradition merely because that is the way it has always been. On the other hand, a good tradition refers to truths of God's Word which are held knowledgeably and are preserved from one generation to the next. The teachings passed down from a previous generation are biblical. And the tradition is held with knowledge, that is, the basis and arguments are understood.

When the inspired apostle admonishes the Thessalonians to hold the traditions, he is referring specifically to the teachings and practices that he, Silas, Timothy, Luke, and the others in his party had communicated to them when they were in Thessalonica. Paul identifies his teaching of doctrines and practices as traditions because he had, in turn, received them from others. The traditions to which they must hold is the "apostles' doctrine" (Acts 2:42). And it was the teaching of the Old Testament Scriptures. The specific tradition that Paul has in mind for the Thessalonian believers to hold concerns the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Why does Paul refer to these teachings as "tradition"? Because *new* teachings had created confusion about what to believe concerning the end of the world and how to live in anticipation of the end. He wanted the believers to understand that what would keep them from being shaken in mind and troubled is their remembering and tenaciously holding to the teach-

ings which have the weight of history behind them. The instruction of the Old Testament as fulfilled in Jesus Christ had proven the test of time. The Spirit of God led the church of the past into the knowledge of truths that were maintained, preserved, and handed down from one generation to the next. They were valuable instructions which had provided stability and comfort to the church of the past. Paul believes that these traditions would provide stability and comfort to the young believers in the church at Thessalonica. They will provide stability and comfort to the church today too.

Confusion was created by new teachings, teachings which contradicted the good, old teachings. The same confusion about the end of time is present today in the book series "Left Behind," which has been made into a movie. The perspective of this book series is dispensational. Dispensationalism is relatively new in the history of the church of Jesus Christ. It certainly is not a teaching which was present at the time of the Reformation. It is a perspective which frightens, both because it describes a very sudden and unexpected return of Christ and because it leaves the false assurance that Gentile believers will not face the persecution brought on by the Man of Sin. On the other hand, the traditional view of Christ's return is a Reformational view, it is set forth in the Belgic Confession (Article 37) and in the Westminster Confession (Chapters 32 and 33), and it does not frighten but comforts and assures.

Good traditions for Reformed believers are the truths of Scripture, which are summarized in the creeds of the Reformation, the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Standards. They provide a wonderful summary of Scripture, giving what is the thought-current which runs through Scripture. They give to us all the counsel of God as presented

in Scripture. It is this counsel of God which Paul preached from house to house when he was in Ephesus (Acts 20:27). This is our tradition. Holding these traditions will enable us to stand fast and not be easily shaken in mind or soul.

How are we to "hold" to the traditions? It is interesting to know that the word translated "to hold" means to take full possession of something, to become master of something. Everyone knows that to master something one must know it thoroughly, must understand it well. In order to hold the good traditions, we must know the truths as summarized in the creeds. We must know the creeds. We must not just know them, but know how they summarize Scripture.

It is also interesting to note that the admonition to hold the traditions speaks of a constant, on-going calling. We are to keep holding the traditions. We must never stop learning them and growing in our understanding of them. We may never rest on our laurels, assuming that we have the truth. Often the Lord gives troubles to His church so that she will not become presumptuous about her hold on the good traditions.

The danger is always that we lose a thorough understanding of the doctrines and practices of the apostles. This happens when we are too busy to keep studying them. This happens when we set

them aside for something which seems to be more interesting and fascinating. Most often this happens when a position is held without knowing why, or it is held just because that is what has always been done!

What are proper ways to hold the traditions, ways which will enable us to stand fast no matter what the Devil may hurl at us? First, we must be faithful in our worship attendance, striving always to attend in adoration of the God we worship and with all readiness of mind to receive the Word preached (Acts 17:11). This means that we come to worship the King in the humble frame of mind that we need to learn from our only Teacher, King, and High Priest. Second, we must study the Scriptures — not just read them! We must study the Scriptures alone, with our family, with a friend, or with our fellow-saints in Bible studies. Thirdly, we must read. And then read some more. The responsibility to read is not altered by the fact that we may not like to read. The comfort of our souls is at stake.




There are many good benefits to standing fast by holding the traditions.

Holding the good traditions and holding them correctly re-

moves unnecessary fears. It answers questions and removes many doubts. Usually the answer to fears is knowledge. Knowledge of the truth frees believers from many fears. Holding the traditions concerning the return of Jesus Christ and the end of the world, believers know that there will be signs which clearly indicate the return of their Lord, that they will not be among those who fall away, and that they will not be deceived by the wiles of Antichrist. In the way of our standing fast by holding the traditions, God gives us faith and sanctification, preserving us so we can manfully fight against sin, the devil, and his whole dominion.

Standing fast by holding the traditions also provides stability in our lives. These doctrines, and the practices which arise from them, have endured the test of time. They have provided tremendous comfort in the trials endured by God's children. Throughout history these doctrines and practices have guided the church into the haven of rest with a sense of great peace and joy.

The devil may be sending Antichrist, but that is not reason to fear. It is the occasion for standing fast by learning (or re-learning) the truths God taught His people in the Scriptures as they are summarized in the creeds. Know them and by the grace of God you will be able to stand! 

Editorial

"So Built We the Wall"*

* The text of the speech given on the occasion of the opening and dedication of Heritage Christian High School in South Holland, Illinois on August 22, 2001.

"So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work."

Nehemiah 4:6

Introduction

The cause that brings us together on this occasion is a great and good one. It is the cause of the Chris-

tian education of the young people of the church in schools that are sound and faithful according to the Word of God, Holy Scripture. This cause is the rearing of our own children. By God's election in the generations of believers, they are the children of the church. In the covenant mercy of God, they are God's own children, redeemed by Christ and regenerated by the Holy Spirit. The education of these children is a good cause.

And this is the cause and work that we celebrate and promote on this occasion. The new high school will instruct the children of the church concerning the glorious triune God, whom they know in His exalted Son Jesus Christ, as this God is made known in His creation. The purpose is that they may know, confess, and serve Him in all their earthly life.

Surely this is a great cause.

The opening of Heritage Christian High School is part of the larger cause of sound Reformed, Christian education, or what the Synod of Dordt called "good Christian schools" in Article 21 of the church order that it adopted. The high school is part of the larger movement of *Protestant Reformed Christian* schools. Dating from the actual establishment of the oldest of these schools, the movement goes back to the 1930s and 1940s. By this time there are nearly a dozen grade schools in North America, as well as one other high school, educating more than a thousand children and young people. These schools are thriving.

The cause of which this new high school is part is larger still. This is the cause of *Reformed* education: instruction of the children of believers that is based on, and permeated with, the distinctive doctrines of the Reformed faith as set forth in the Reformed confessions. This noble cause goes back to the Reformation itself and is worldwide.

Even this does not do justice

to the cause that brings us together. In its broadest extent, it is the cause of *good Christian* education. And this goes back beyond the Reformation to the time of the early post-apostolic church.

We should have a lively sense of the greatness and goodness of the cause, especially since the actual work of a Protestant Reformed high school in the suburbs south of Chicago is new and small. A lively sense of the greatness and goodness of the cause was necessary for Judah rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem in the time of Nehemiah. There had been no wall around Jerusalem for some 150 years. The wall being constructed was much smaller and weaker than the original wall in the time of David and Solomon. The people of Judah had to be motivated by the ancient tradition of the wall of Jerusalem and by the worthy idea of the wall.

That history is instructive for the establishment of the new high school. Those who have worked to bring it into existence can say with Nehemiah and the people of Judah, "So built we the wall." Let us see how this is so.

A Necessary Work

The building of the wall of Jerusalem was necessary. God commanded it. He commanded it by His earlier direction of David and Solomon to build a high, thick, strong wall about Jerusalem. He commanded it by calling the Jews to return to Canaan from captivity in Babylon and to rebuild Jerusalem. He commanded it by choosing Jerusalem to be a strong, secure city on earth, in which His people might be safe. He commanded it by the desperate circumstances of Jerusalem and the Jews at the time of Nehemiah. These circumstances were described to Nehemiah by his brother when Nehemiah was still in Babylon: "The remnant that are left of the captivity there ... are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of

Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire" (Neh. 1:3).

The necessity of building the wall was the security of Jerusalem and its people from their enemies and, thus, the power and glory of Jerusalem as the impregnable fortress of the kingdom of God in the world. Without the wall, Jerusalem lay helpless before the enemy; without the wall, Jerusalem was a reproach and shame. With the wall, Jerusalem afforded salvation to its inhabitants; with the wall, Jerusalem demanded respect. So sang the psalmist: "Walk about Zion and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces" (Ps. 48:12, 13).

"So built we the wall," said Nehemiah, because we *had to*.

The good Christian education of our sons and daughters is likewise necessary. The Synod of Dordt called it "a demand of the covenant," referring specifically to the schools. God commands it. Since He establishes His covenant of grace with believers and their children, in the line of generations, He commands that the children be reared in the nurture and admonition of the Lord by being taught the truth of God (Eph. 6:4; Gen. 18:19).

This command extends to the instruction at school. It is not limited to catechism and Sunday School. The covenant command concerning the education of the children of believers is all-embracing, even as the life of the children is one and as the truth of God for all of life is one. It is unthinkable that God's command would allow an exception consisting of the education that the children receive five days a week, six or seven hours a day, nine months a year, for some thirteen or more years of their life, and those years the most formative. It is unthinkable that God's command would allow the children during this time to be educated in the lie that there is no God, that is,

that man himself is god; that there is no Savior and Lord, that is, that man is his own savior and lord; and that human life need not be lived in obedience to the will of God and to His glory, that is, that humans are sovereign over their own life and may live as pleases them—which is the education of the schools of the state in our day.

But is it God's command that Reformed parents establish Reformed Christian schools alongside other Christian schools? More specifically still, is it God's command that Protestant Reformed people establish Reformed Christian schools that teach the children in accordance with distinctively Protestant Reformed beliefs?

Reformed parents must establish Reformed Christian schools. These are schools that are founded on the "Three Forms of Unity" and that teach in the light of, and in harmony with, the doctrines of the Christian faith as set down in those confessions. This is required of Reformed believers, for the Reformed faith is pure, sound Christianity. It differs radically from Roman Catholicism, Lutheranism, Arminianism, and charismatic Christianity.

What Protestant Reformed people are determined to have in their Christian schools is simply education that is *honestly based on, truly faithful to, and fully consistent with* the Reformed confessions. We want education that honors the Bible as the inspired, authoritative Word of God as regards the origin of the universe in six real (historical) days of one evening and one morning; as regards the particular love of the triune God for Christ as head of the covenant and the elect church in history; and as regards the prohibition of sexual unchastity on the part of the unmarried, the prohibition of divorce and remarriage, and the prohibition of homosexuality—all in the interests of marriage and the family.

We want education that teaches the God who is sovereign in cre-

ation, in providence, in history, and in salvation.

We want education in which the risen Christ is central as Lord over all.

We want education, *in the schools*, that binds the law of God upon the elect, redeemed, and sanctified children as the rule of their life, for example, keeping the Sabbath Day holy and honoring their parents.

We want education that presents the Christian life as spiritual separation from the ungodly world, rather than friendship with the world and its ways, for example, in the condemnation of dancing and movies, and that gives guidance to the Christian life as a pilgrimage through this world to the life and glory that will be ours at Christ's coming, rather than encouraging the children to lose themselves in earthly life.

These are reasons why schools established by Protestant Reformed people ought to be attractive to others who love the Reformed faith and life, that is, genuine Christianity.

Nor should it be forgotten, or minimized, in answer to the question "Why Protestant Reformed Christian schools alongside other, existing Christian schools?" that apostasy in the churches inevitably results in the same departure from the truth in the schools that are controlled and influenced by the churches. There, in the schools, the great guns of the lie are brought to bear directly upon the vulnerable children and young people.

We acknowledge that the command of God to have good Christian schools is qualified by circumstances. Especially is the command conditioned on the ability of a group of people to provide solid instruction to the students in the various subjects of a curriculum that will enable the children and young people to live and serve God in their society at the present time. This is why we are not trying to establish a soundly Reformed col-

lege in North America at present. This is a great need. There is no sound, Reformed college in North America, not one. Not one of the colleges that claim to be Reformed gives instruction that accords with the related truths of God's sovereign, particular grace and the antithesis that are the teaching of the Reformed confessions. The only grace the colleges know is common grace, which does not exist but the teaching of which produces world-conformity. None of the colleges has been able to resist the demonic movements of evolution and feminism. The public press reports that in some of the colleges administration and faculty actively promote homosexuality.

Lack of a Reformed college is hurtful to the Reformed churches, to the Reformed faith, and to Reformed young people. But the demands of a college are so great and the numbers of those who care about soundly Reformed instruction at the college level are so small that our establishing one is not commanded.

Good people may differ as to the possibility and advisability of starting a new Reformed high school in the area of South Holland and Lansing, Illinois. Therefore, supporters of this high school may not view those who in good conscience do not yet support it as Sanballats and Tobiahs opposing the building of the wall of Jerusalem.

On the other hand, those who cannot support it because they think that present circumstances do not warrant a new high school should be careful not to oppose it. The cause is a good one. Protestant Reformed people are committed to Protestant Reformed Christian education to the utmost of their ability.

As regards the possibility and advisability of a new high school south of Chicago, surely a strong case can be made for starting it now. Heritage Christian High School is the product of almost

twenty years of preparatory work and planning by an association of Protestant Reformed Christians in the area. The charge that Sanballat made against the project of building the wall of Jerusalem, "Will they make an end in a day?" (Neh. 4:2), that is, that the project was rash and hasty, was not true about building the wall and does not hold against starting this school.

There are three supporting congregations. In these congregations are some 170 families. In these three churches and among these 170 families, there are almost 300 children and young people. This does not take into account those outside the Protestant Reformed churches who may be interested in the high school. In addition to numbers, what spiritual, intellectual, and financial powers there are in the churches in this area! I know whereof I speak.

Subject to circumstances that make possible an academically

qualified high school, a soundly Reformed high school is commanded by God.

Good Reformed Christian education is also necessary because it safeguards the covenant, the church, and the name of God. In this respect, good Christian education is like the wall of Jerusalem that Nehemiah built. There is power in education, tremendous power, just as there was strength in the wall of Jerusalem. Instruction in the truth of God and His Christ, in the way that this is done in the school, is blessed by God, so that the young people love and embrace the truth. Thus, the young people are preserved in the churches as those who love the faith (and not always questioning and opposing it); the covenant is continued in our generations; and the name of God is magnified in our children and grandchildren.

In his explanation of the Heidelberg Catechism's exposition of the

fourth commandment, Abraham Kuyper wrote that the schools mentioned by the Catechism ("that the ministry of the gospel and the schools be maintained") are primarily the seminaries. Nevertheless, Kuyper added, they are also the Christian day schools, for good Christian schools train the minds of the children to understand and receive the Reformed preaching that is taught in the seminaries.

On the other hand, to give our young people over to schools that actively undermine the Reformed faith and life is to risk losing our own children to the covenant and church of God, or to risk filling the churches with members who, first secretly and then boldly, criticize and seek to change the confession, worship, discipline, and life of the church.

"So built we the wall," because it was necessary.

(to be concluded)

— DJE 

Editorially Speaking

With this issue, we begin volume 78 of the *Standard Bearer*. Seventy-seven consecutive years of publishing this magazine, first as a monthly and soon thereafter as a semi-monthly, are history. Did the group that gathered in the parsonage of Herman Hoeksema on the evening of April 8, 1924, to plan what would appear as the *Standard Bearer* in October of that year, foresee the long and influential future that God would give this magazine in the midst of His Reformed Zion?

Readers are advised that complete sets of the bound volumes of the *SB* are hard to come by. But they are desired especially by seminarians. If anyone has, or knows of, a complete set that is available, for sale or otherwise, inform the editor. Loose copies of the magazine dated before 1965 are also rare

and, therefore, valuable. Turn these in to the business office of the *SB*.

The content of all past volumes of the *SB* are available on a set of CDs. This set of three CDs can be purchased from the business office.

Those who prefer to receive each issue of the *SB* on cassette tape, rather than in printed form, can subscribe to this service by writing Southeast Protestant Reformed Church, 1535 Cambridge Ave., SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49506. The reader is Mr. Ken Rietema, who does the reading as a service to those who cannot read, or who read only with difficulty.

College students who live away from home can receive the *SB* regularly as a gift from the publisher. They should send their request to the business office. They should include their college address.

The September 15 issue of this magazine included an index, by subject and title, of all of the articles in Volume 77. A hearty thanks to Mrs. Judi Doezema for producing this very useful research tool.

At its annual meeting this past June, the staff of the *SB* reappointed the editor and managing editor. There will be new writers and rubrics in the coming volume-year. Rev. Ken Koole will write for "All Around Us" with Rev. Gise VanBaren. Rev. Richard Smit will join Rev. Arie denHartog and Rev. Daniel Kleyn in the rubric "In His Fear." Mr. Gary Lanning and Mr. Joel Minderhoud, both of whom are science teachers at Covenant Christian High School in Walker, MI, will cooperate with Rev. James Laning in writing "All Thy Works Shall Praise Thee."

The *SB* intends to reprint articles by Prof. George M. Ophoff on the Old Testament that appeared in early issues of the magazine. Mr. Don Doezeema will select and edit these articles. The rubric will be called "Day of Shadows." Mr. Cal Kalsbeek, a teacher of church history at Covenant, will contribute regularly to a column called "Understanding the Times." These articles will comment on current events in our own and other nations in light of biblical teaching on the signs of the times. And the editor of the *SB* will develop the Reformed doctrine of the last things in a rubric headed "The Things That Must Shortly Come to Pass."

In addition, we intend to publish John Hendrik DeVries' translation of Abraham Kuyper's book on Reformed family-life in installments. Chapters from this book will complement the articles by Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma, Mrs. MaryBeth Lubbers, and Mrs. Connie Meyer in the rubric that was named after the title of Kuyper's book, "When Thou Sittest

in Thine House." The English translation of Kuyper's book was sub-titled *Meditations on Home-Life*.

We think that these additions, with the continuing writers and rubrics, will make for an interesting, edifying Reformed magazine.

In dead earnest we again ask all our readers to help in spreading the witness of the *SB* more widely by giving a copy of the magazine to a relative, friend, or acquaintance, or by giving a gift subscription to them. It is better to light a small candle, by distributing the *SB* as widely as possible, than to curse the darkness of the triviality, corruption, and falsity of much of the media today.

The next issue of the *SB* (Oct. 15) will be our annual commemoration of the sixteenth century Reformation of the church. It will feature the greatest of the Reformers himself, Martin Luther. Look for this special issue.

This issue contains a report and pictures of the beginning of a new Protestant Reformed high school in the suburbs south of Chicago, Heritage Christian High School. The editorial is the first part of the

speech given on the occasion of the opening and dedication of the new high school. The conclusion of the printed text of the address will appear in the November 1 issue of the *SB*, since the next issue will be the special, Reformation issue. The content of the speech applies to work on behalf of good Christian schools everywhere and is timely in that the schools have recently begun another season of instruction. Heritage Christian High School is presently located in rented facilities in South Holland, IL, near the Protestant Reformed Church in that village. Many of our readers will have a lively interest in this development of the Protestant Reformed Christian school movement and will want to support it by their prayers and gifts.

May God continue to bless the *SB* as a faithful, forthright testimony to, and a spirited, courageous defense of, the Reformed faith and life at the beginning of the twenty-first century, *anno Domini*.

— DJE 

All Around Us

Rev. Kenneth Koole

■ Presidential Policy and Stem-cell Research

Stem-cell research. It's all the rage.

Whether we like it or not, the issue of genetic engineering has become everybody's business. As twenty-first century Christians we face and must be ready to answer some hard questions. Mankind has entered the last frontier. It is not out there in space; it is life within: the human cell, DNA, the genetic

code, that which makes us who we are. With this knowledge and code at his disposal, man stands before the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil once more. Of course, man would like to convince himself that it is the Tree of Life, and he has the perfect right to use it as he sees fit. Behold, the fruit looks good, very good, a thing to be desired. "We will be as gods, making man in the image of self. Think of all the suffering we can alleviate and even prevent altogether. We will use it only for good." Who can resist putting forth his hand to pluck and taste the forbidden fruit? If a perfect woman in the very beginning found it impossible, do not

expect proud, fallen men to do so today.

Mid-August our President set forth the new national policy on stem-cell research (which, of course, ties directly into human cloning and genetic engineering). It was one of those all too familiar politically expedient attempts to say yes and no at the same time: No, we must not go down this forbidden road; but, in the instances where some have started down this forbidden road already, yes, it may continue.

In my judgment, few have explained better the slippery slope our society is on (and has been since the infamous *Wade vs. Roe*

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decision) than the syndicated columnist Paul Greenberg. In an article entitled "The Cloning Question: Drawing the Line, Again and Again," he writes (first half of his article):

Still another line has been drawn in the ever shifting sand that is the debate between Life and Choice, this time on the issue of human cloning. Last week the U.S. House of Representatives voted 265 to 162 to ban the creation of human embryos for research purposes, but you know the cloners will be back — as sure as Dr. Frankenstein always had to make one more try, confident that this time ... he would get it right.

In Britain, cloning is already legal for research though not reproductive purposes, although it won't be easy to distinguish between the two processes. In labs around the world the lights are burning deep into the night. The question before the House last Tuesday wasn't whether somebody is going to clone a human, but whether the law should approve.

Well, why not? It's only one more line to cross. In a long and continuing succession of them:

First we saw nothing wrong with in vitro fertilization, complete with the destruction of those "surplus" embryos.

Then we were going to draw the line at using those leftover embryos for stem-cell research, but that frontier is about to be crossed. (Why let those perfectly good embryos go to waste?)

Once we drew the line at abortion, but now even the semi-infanticide called partial-birth abortion has the blessing of the courts.

Remember when we drew the line at euthanasia? Assisted suicide is now coming into its own.

Down and down we go, 'round and 'round we go, and there's no stopping once we have adopted Quality of Life as our standard instead of mere life. (And we the scientific will define your Quality of Life, thank you.) A comatose patient, a fetus, a depressed and suicidal subject convinced his death is inevitable (and whose

isn't?), an embryo ... they all become legitimate prey. *Lebensunwerten Lebens*, as the more scientifically advanced Germans termed it in the 1920s — life not worth preserving.

Our society has adopted the vocabulary of our moral relativists, there is no bottom to this slope: Human embryos become only blastocysts, just clumps of cells to be manipulated for the greater good. Therapeutic cloning is good, though it is scarcely therapeutic for the embryo involved, and reproductive cloning is bad. But only for now. For there is always an "only for now" attached as one line in the sand after another waits to be crossed.

As the distinction between permitted and forbidden fades ever more quickly, cloning starts to look like no big deal. It's just the latest Choice in this moral progression — or regression.

In the end, this debate between those who would ban human cloning for any reason and those who would allow it for experimental purposes — and soon enough for a lot more — isn't really a clash of arguments but of attitudes. Some see unlimited good while others remember the unlimited evil man can do in the name of good. And for profit.

Indeed, lines in the sand. Like Hitler in his land grabs of the previous century, the "liberals" assure all that this will be the last concession needed. It will not lead to greater evils and assaults on defenseless life. What kind of monsters do you think we are! And the Chamberlain-like "conservatives" want to assure themselves this is where it will all stop. Just another concession or two, and it will be "peace in our time!" But such greed and self-serving ambition is never satisfied. The next demand with its face of evil is but around the corner. In fact, according to *Time Magazine* (Sept. 3, '01), in a small article entitled "Two Weeks later, Cracks in a Carefully Crafted Policy," things are becoming unraveled already. It has come

to light that virtually all stem-cells are cultivated using embryonic mouse tissue (in order to provide the human embryos with nutrients crucial to their survival). This would violate current FDA laws governing treatment of humans with tissue from another species due to risk factors involving animal viruses. According to the correspondent,

This news sparked renewed calls for the president to loosen his policy and allow further harvesting from embryos, this time without using animal tissue in the petri dish. Senator John Kerry warns that if federal dollars aren't made available for new cell lines, Congress may yet wrest the policy from the White House. Just when you thought the fight was over.

Only a fool would think the fight is over, or that stem-cell research and engineering of human genetics by ungodly man is going to be held in abeyance, presidential policy or not. What this president decided settles nothing. The next one will just as easily reverse the policy with a wave of his pen. And just because this nation is forced for a time to exercise some moral restraint, that does not stop the rest of the world. As Mr. Greenberg pointed out above, "In labs around the world the lamps are burning deep into the night." The world of scientific know-how, and of blind ambition, does not stop with the good old USA, you know.

■ The Divorce and Remarriage Scandal

We live in an age when scandals in the church have often sullied the name of Christ associated with her. But surely one of the worst, if not the worst, is what has been allowed to take place in contemporary Protestantism in the marriages of her members. A recent study reported by Janet Chismar (the *Religion Today*

editor for Crosswalk News Services) reaffirms just how seriously amiss things are in this area in Christendom today.

Brace yourself for the latest batch of research results: Born-again Christians are just as likely to divorce as non-born-again adults. A new study from Barna Research Group, released earlier this month, shows that 33 percent of all born-again individuals who have been married have gone through a divorce. That number is statistically identical to the 34 percent of non-born-again adults who divorce, says Barna.

Anticipating "hostility and denials" that emerge whenever his company releases new survey data showing that massive numbers of born-again Christians get divorced (sic! - KK) researcher George Barna provided additional details regarding the data. "The adults analyzed in the born-again category were not those who claimed to be born-again, but were individuals who stated a personal commitment to Christ, confessed their sins, embraced Christ as their savior, and believed that they have received eternal salvation because of their faith in Christ alone."


And now note the following, as Barna continues to underscore just who these divorcees are:

"More than 90 percent of the born-again adults who have been divorced experienced that divorce after they accepted Christ, not before." Barna adds, "It is unfortunate that so many people, regardless of their faith, experience a divorce, but especially it is unsettling to find that the faith commitment of so many born-again individuals has not enabled them to strengthen and save their marriages."

Unfortunate? Unsettling? Mild words, to say the least. How about "grievous" and "lamentable"? And what message does this send to the world? A scandal, an offense. If such faith makes so little difference in this most fundamental relationship in life (the truest test of that "love" the church is so enamored with these days), is there anything to be said for the difference faith and Christianity is supposed to make at all? And this does not yet address the children (the coming church generation) injured and scarred by it all. The article goes on to point this out. It quotes a Christian counselor explaining what counselors are faced with.

"Young people tell us that if they are in love and God is with them, then that is all they need," says Leslie Parrott. "Later, if they are not happy, they say, 'God

wants me to get a divorce.' There is very little appreciation that marriage requires hard work and communication skills. They have been shown by the example of friends and family that when things go bad, you just get divorced."


There you have it. First, the grievous example displayed by church members all around them, with the church's blessing, mind you. Evidently Christianity does not have all that much to do with faithfulness and keeping one's vows when it comes to marriage. And secondly, notice that the emphasis is upon one's own happiness. God wants me to be happy. And you don't make me so very!! What is this but the practical expression of the man-centered gospel preached everywhere today. Could it be that the church has not listened to Christ's words on divorce and remarriage, refusing to preach His "But I say unto you..." (cf. Matt. 5:31, 32), and then to hold its members to that hard, self-denying requirement? And where do such churches even start now? Indeed, it all underscores just what we have to be thankful for when it comes to our (biblical) stand on divorce and remarriage. The mess out there is sad beyond words, and the witness of Christ is sorely compromised. 

Feature Article

Mr. Todd Terpstra

New PR High School in the Chicagoland Area

Mr. Terpstra is secretary of the Board of the new Heritage Christian High School in South Holland, IL.

n Wednesday, August 22, 2001, at Calvary Reformed Church in South Holland, Illinois, approximately 650 people gathered to rejoice in the covenant faithfulness and bless-

ing of our God in providing a new Protestant Reformed Christian high school for His people in Chicagoland. Board president, Earl Kamps, gave a brief introduction and welcome speech outlining the



School Board

*Standing, l. to r.: Ted Andringa, Gys VanBaren, Ken DeJong,
Henry Bleyenburgh, Pete Zandstra*

Seated, l. to r.: Andy Birkett, Earl Kamps, Bill DeJong, Todd Terpstra

history of the movement in South Holland as well as the reason for the dedication ceremony. Mr. Kamps stated that 21 years ago a previous generation was led by the Lord to form an association for Protestant Reformed Christian secondary education because they knew we would not be able to use the existing Christian schools indefinitely. He spoke of the reason for the dedication ceremony as being a celebration of what God has done for us and to dedicate a Protestant Reformed Christian High School which will, by God's grace, teach the truth to our covenant youth.



*Mr. Ralph Medema,
administrator*

Rev. Steven Houck opened with prayer, after which the audience sang Psalter numbers 334 and 215.

The audience was also treated to a special number sung by the


Heritage Christian High School student choir led by Mr. Don Terpstra. The enthusiastic singing of the covenant youth was truly an inspiration and encouragement to all who were present.

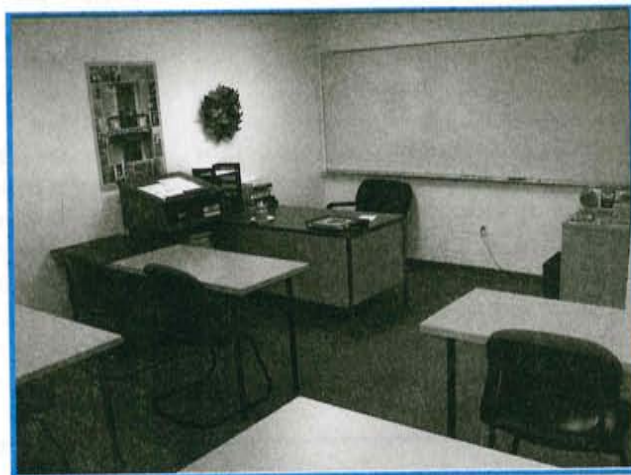
Our speaker was introduced as one of the originators of the Protestant Reformed Christian secondary education movement in Chicagoland. Prof. David Engelsma spoke at length on Nehemiah 4:6, applying the trials experienced by Nehemiah and the builders of Jerusalem's walls to the present day movement to establish a Protestant Reformed Christian high school. Prof. Engelsma also gave words of encouragement from Scripture and examples from history to the gathering of parents, teachers, and supporters.

We sang Psalter number 425, during which an offering

was taken. The proceeds from this offering were well over \$20,000. Our Father in heaven has truly blessed us according to our need.

Rev. Allen Brummel closed with prayer, and the audience was invited to tour the facilities, located in the education wing adjoining the sanctuary of Calvary Reformed Church. What they saw was a like-new building, with amenities which included an assembly room, a school office, a computer lab, and fully furnished classrooms. They also became acquainted with the faculty and some of the support staff, who made themselves available to the visitors. As the evening came to a close, no trumpet fanfare was heard, no ticker-tape parade was held, and no newspaper and television reporters were present, but rather the will of God was once again quietly but powerfully asserted and the glory and honor of His most holy name was set forth in this small corner of His world.

We here in the Chicagoland area pray that God will give us the strength to continue in the calling to instruct our covenant children in the truths afforded the Protestant Reformed Churches. We also covet your prayers for God's blessing on our efforts as board, staff, and students. May all the glory, honor, and praise be to Him! 



Classroom ready for use

Teaching Hands to War (2)

Of all the spiritual foes we must encounter, the closest and therefore most insidious enemy we have to face is our own sin. The battle line of the antithesis lies not only between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, but also in our hearts between the new man in Christ and the corrupt, old man of sin. That old man surrounds our new man, who indeed is but a seed within the old. The apostle Paul attests to the grueling combat in Romans 7:23, 24: "But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind.... O wretched man that I am!" The old man knows the chinks, the cracks, the weak spots of our armor. He raises his head in mocking triumph after every success in seducing the child of God to bow to pride and self-righteousness. But note that head — it is bruised. Crushed. The new man has the victory. Not just will have, but *has*. The outcome is certain. Yes, the new man is but a seed — but the old man is only chaff! We need to be reminded of that, and we need to remind our children of that as well.

You were unkind to your classmate? You hurt your brother or sister in Christ? You believe you can do as you please, and you need not listen to those whom God has placed in authority over you? That is your old man of sin. Fight him! You have every right to fight him,

for he is doomed! He *cannot* win. God has given you a new man, a new, living heart to replace that old heart of stone. He lives in you! *You* live! In that new man you cannot lose. You cannot sin! So fight, and be encouraged — the victory is yours. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sins; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God" (1 John 3:9).

This is an amazing victory that we already possess. But how do we live in it? How exactly do we fight? Even if we could flee from the world, we cannot flee from our own flesh. The chaff still clings to us and defiles every perfect work we would do. Every single one! Yet, there are things we can learn. David, as both psalmist and a man of war, was able to expound in great eloquence the battle we are in and how it is fought. Indeed, it is part of the infallible instruction of the Spirit, given to us in order to "teach our hands to war" (Ps. 144:1). As stated above, one of the worst enemies we encounter on this earth is our own sinful flesh. David understood this well, and so must we. But not only is this a most treacherous enemy — it is also the first one we have to face.

Even the Heidelberg Catechism echoes the pattern, or strategy, that we see established in the psalms for the militant church on this earth. There must be, first of all, knowledge of sin. *My sin and misery.* I must know that first. I must know that in order to "live and die happily" (Lord's Day 1, Q. and A. 2). In order to sing the versification of Psalm 144: "O happy land,

whose sons in youth, in sturdy strength and noble truth, like plants in vigor spring...." I must also confess with David verse 3 of that Psalm: "Lord, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him!" We are vanity! We are but a shadow! The state of man in his own sinful nature is the first thing David proclaims after introducing the war and the Victor. "Blessed be the Lord my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight: My goodness and my fortress; my high tower..." (Ps. 144:1, 2). Yes, blessed is He! By verse 3 He is already teaching us vital information about how our enemies will be subdued.

Psalm 139 expands on this even more. The enemy must be sought and exposed in order to be eliminated. That is the theme of Psalm 139. It opens with praise to the Lord for: "thou hast searched me," and it closes with: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Watching for our own sin. Looking for our own sin. Being sorry for it. Repudiating it. Turning from it. This is what we must point out to our children. This is how we begin to wage the battle. And this is the biggest part of the war.

The fight with our other enemies will naturally follow. If the antithesis is in the heart, the antithesis will be lived. Psalm 139 puts these two things back-to-back. First: "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? ... I count them

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mine enemies? (vv. 21, 22). Then: "Search me, O God..." (v. 23). To fight the enemy within, that enemy may not be allowed to be aided by the foes that are without. There will be — there must be — separation: "depart from me therefore, ye bloody men" (v. 19). There will be no fellowship with those who would lead us into temptation. There will be no fellowship with those who would lead us to compromise our walk or our doctrine. This expression is repeated twice in Psalm 144; "Rid me, and deliver me from the hand of strange children, whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood" (v. 11; also vv. 7, 8). Vanity and falsehood. An apt description of the ungodly world and apostasy that abounds all around us today. It is scriptural to pray to be delivered from them!

This call for deliverance, separation, and even judgment is not limited to a few passages of Scripture. There are hundreds of such expressions in the psalms alone, beginning with Psalm 1 and continuing through such striking examples as Psalm 58 and 109. But there are also all the judgments in the prophets, all the calls to holiness in the New Testament, and all the examples of godly, holy, saints throughout. Abraham sojourned as a pilgrim and stranger his whole life. Lot did not. Lot did not think that separation from the world was all that necessary. But with the taste of salt upon his lips and the smell of brimstone in his nostrils, he learned otherwise. "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people.... I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (I Pet. 2:9-11). How do we abstain from these lusts and how do we teach our children to abstain? As pilgrims and strangers we are to be separate. We will not be found where we know fleshly lusts will attack our eyes and ears, we will not allow this attack to

come within our own house and domain, and our companions will not be those who would lead us into that barrage. In fact, not only will we be strangers — we will be strange: "Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot..." (I Pet. 4:4). Day after evil day, the passageway on which our tent is pitched becomes a more narrow and constricted road. Can you sense it? There's hardly any place we can go anymore where our senses are not assaulted with lust in one form or another. Stranger, indeed.

Not, of course, that we have no contact with the world. We rub shoulders with them, speak with them, and work next to them day by day. Jesus prayed, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil" (John 17:15). Our light must shine in this world of darkness. But that does not mean we are in friendship and fellowship with that darkness. Abraham had dealings with the Canaanites too, and they respected him. He needed land for Sarah's burial and purchased it in honesty and integrity. Nevertheless, he was a stranger to them.

"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (II Cor. 6:17, 18).

We must be a separate people, but even then, there are those things which may not be touched. "Touch not the unclean thing." In the Old Testament, touching the unclean thing meant that *you* became unclean. That pictured the same reality we experience today. When we touch what we ought not touch, we cannot expect to experience the blessings of forgiveness, for we will experience being "unclean." Nor can we expect to make clean the unclean thing that we

touch, for the effect only works the other way around. What are these unclean things? We are very familiar with most things of this world that we ought not touch. Adultery, drunkenness, illicit drugs, dancing, drama ... a fuller list is not necessary. Yet, some of these things are more subtle than others. It may be profitable to take a moment and consider a few that especially relate to younger children, for they are poisonous darts directed exactly at them.


Satan, that old serpent, hides himself in deceptively "innocent" places, and what can seem more innocent than games, toys, and children's books? So many could be brought to our attention, but one particularly perilous example is the electronic game and related paraphernalia called "Pokemon." Pokemon stands for "pocket monsters," and if you've ever seen these little creatures and thought they looked like little demons, you would be correct. They train the player to have an ever-increasing appetite for power, power that comes from Pokemon. But according to Phil Arms, author of *Pokemon & Harry Potter: A Fatal Attraction*, it is a devilish power, and it is a precursor to other dangerous, occultic games for older children and young adults, one of which is called "Dungeons and Dragons." Cartoons and books can be another direct source of Satan's influence. Magic, wizards, witches, spells ... so many children's stories center on these themes. The very popular *Harry Potter* books are a prime example, leading young readers to increasingly deeper recesses of the dark arts. Again, the quest is always for "power."* A very deceptive move by the masquerading angel of light: the more power-

* This information and more can be obtained from *Pokemon & Harry Potter: A Fatal Attraction*, by Phil Arms, Hearthstone Publishing, P.O. Box 815, Oklahoma City, OK, 73101, copyright 2000.

ful an individual thinks he is, the more enslaved to Satan that individual actually becomes. Satan is deadly serious in his cunning and craft. These things are not to be taken lightly. How he would love to snatch one of our impressionable young ones away! He cannot, of course, for we are sealed. Nevertheless, we have a calling. The Christians in Ephesus gave us an

example by what they did to their accumulated books of the "curious arts" (Acts 19:19). Their response was swift, sure, and irreversible. They burned them.

By so doing, they resisted Satan. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). This is what we must teach our children in order to teach them spiritual warfare — resist. But resistance in-

volves more than physical separation and putting away evil things. Even then, we are not yet out of the enemy's range. Satan has an arsenal of fiery darts designed especially for destruction deep inside his targets. But it is in defense of this particularly sinister artillery that our sure and certain victory is brought to the foreground. Next time, D.V., we will look at that. 

All Thy Works Shall Praise Thee

Mr. Joel Minderhoud

Consider the Atom

"Hearken unto this, O Job: stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God."

Job 37:14

Throughout the Scriptures, God's people are instructed to consider God's mighty acts and wondrous works and to praise Him for them. This includes the creation, for in the creation, God teaches us truths about Himself and His relationship with us. That is what the Belgic Confession, Article 2, means when it says that the creation is a most elegant book that leads us to contemplate the invisible things of God. We are wise to study this elegant book in the light of Scripture to see what God has to say to us. We learn that God is worthy of praise and that we are nothing compared to Him. "O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! ...When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him?"

and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" (Ps. 8: 1, 3, 4). Let us now consider the wondrous work of God in the smallest known fundamental particles of nature, and what they reveal to us about our covenant God.

The Wondrous Work

Already in grade school, children learn that all matter is composed of tiny particles called atoms. Most students marvel at many of the intricate details of the atom, but two properties always stand out — the tiny size of the atom and the profound order that exists within its smallness.

Only in recent history has man been able to understand and observe the beauty, order, and intricacy of the creation as seen in these microscopic particles. God, in His providence, led various scientists in the early 1800s to perform experiments that demonstrated that "atoms" existed. At that time John Dalton proposed that all substances are made up of small, dense, indestructible particles that he called "atoms," and that these atoms would join together with other atoms to make molecules. In the last decade of the nineteenth century it was confirmed that these atoms were actually made of smaller

particles yet. Positively charged particles (protons), negatively charged particles (electrons), and neutrally charged particles (neutrons) were discovered within it. Further research also indicated a closer approximation of the size of the atom. The atom is so small that one ounce of water contains 3×10^{24} atoms. Though it is impossible to imagine how large this number is, we might have a small feeling for the magnitude of it if we would consider that 3×10^{24} pennies would cover the surface of the earth up to a quarter mile in pennies. We marvel at the intricate details within God's creation. Every substance in the creation is composed of these tiny little substances!

In the early twentieth century, Ernest Rutherford discovered that the atom is not a solid sphere of material (dense) as Dalton had suggested but that the atom was almost completely empty space. Only a very small center of mass (the nucleus — containing the protons and neutrons) was dense and the rest of the atom was empty space, with the exception of a few electrons swarming around the nucleus. In fact the atom has relatively so much empty space that one can have a better understand-

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ing of this if one imagines the nucleus of a hydrogen atom to be the size of a penny and the atom's electron to be the size of a pinhead. Between that penny-sized nucleus and the pinhead electron would be a vast 1¼ mile of empty space! However, within the creation, matter is composed of trillions upon trillions of such atoms, so that the atoms overlap and interact in such a way that those empty spaces are not noticeable to us in our day-to-day lives when we interact with matter.

Scientists continue to delve into questions about this tiny part of creation. How are the electrons distributed around the nucleus? What about the distribution of the protons and neutrons in the nucleus — is there an order to these particles and to their movements? Originally it was believed that the electrons move around the nucleus much like the random movement of bees around a beehive. However, this random movement theory was not accepted since it would result in chaos — in all atoms self-destructing because of the attraction between the positive nucleus and the negative electrons. It was Neils Bohr, in 1913, who proposed the “planetary model” of the atom, suggesting that the electrons were distributed around the nucleus in concentric circular orbits, much like the planets move around the sun in somewhat circular concentric orbits. These orbits would keep the electrons from “colliding” with the nucleus, just as, in God's providence, the “circular” orbits of the planets keep them from crashing into the sun. Furthermore, Bohr suggested that there is an order in how those electrons are distributed. The smallest orbit, closest to the nucleus, can “hold” only two electrons. The next orbit can hold a maximum of 8 electrons, the third, a maximum of 18 electrons, and the fourth, a maximum of 32 electrons. What an amazing order is observed in the miniscule atom!

Further research has shown a more complicated view of the position of the electrons — describing a deeper level of order. The electrons actually are further distributed, within the orbit they are in, into smaller “orbits.” It is in the study of these “sub-orbitals” that one finds an amazing order and structure in the creation. It is in an understanding of the distribution of the electrons in these “sub-orbitals” that many of the chemical and physical properties of matter, such as magnetism or chemical reactivity, begin to be understandable. Furthermore, recent research indicates that not only are the electrons outside of the nucleus found in very orderly arrangements, but the protons and neutrons in the nucleus are also found in orderly arrangements similar to the “orbits” of the electrons. And to make things just a little more complicated yet, scientists now believe that the protons, neutrons, and electrons are actually made up of even smaller fundamental particles, which they have named quarks. Related to this research, scientists now know that the atom is not indestructible, but that it can be split into these tinier particles emitting tremendous amounts of energy in the process — enough energy to fuel entire cities with electricity, or to devastate entire cities with small nuclear warheads. In all of this we stand in amazement of the wondrous works of God. How tiny and how orderly is the atom! God spoke and it was so (Ps. 145:8). “And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good” (Gen. 1:31).

The Invisible Things of God Taught

The wondrous work of God in creating and maintaining the atom teaches us many important things about God and ourselves. We humbly recognize that we as God's people are loved by the very God who has made all these things. We, as finite creatures in the organism of the human race, which has for

hundreds of years struggled to come to an understanding of the fundamental particles of the creation, only scratch the surface of the infinite beauty and order within the atom and within the rest of the creation. And yet, it is we, who are so insignificant in and of ourselves, who have been called to be His covenant children. We are loved by the Almighty God, who in a word created it all. How amazing that such a God is mindful of such weak creatures as ourselves and makes covenant friendship with us!

Our humble state is further emphasized when we recognize that the entire creation is formed by an all-wise God as a “house” for His covenant friends. This house is of glorious detail, beauty, and unity, as seen in the atom. In His wisdom God created the atom as He did that the minute details and the inexpressible order bring glory to His name alone. In His wisdom, His name is further glorified since the atom itself is created in all of its intricacy to serve man, so that man can serve and glorify his God. How amazing and how humbling to realize that the very atoms all around us, with all their movements and structures, are created, maintained, and directed by the word of God's power for *our* sake. This is humbling!

As we learn more about the atom, we are reminded of our kingly office. God created man as the pinnacle of creation, in the office of prophet, priest, and king. As king, man is to rule and have dominion over the creation and, thus, is given the ability and authority to unfold the power in the creation. This too is truly humbling to God's people. Who are we, that God should consider us and give us such honor? What a great blessing to God's people to be privileged to study and use the creation! And with that comes the awesome responsibility to use the creation properly, especially as we uncover the manifold uses of the


atom. May we enjoy the riches of the creation for the benefit of the church and the praise and glory of God's name.

The wicked too are called to have kingship over the creation. However, they use their kingship for the sake of their father the devil, using the powers in the creation for their own sinful desires. The wicked, in his pride, now says that to control the atom is to control his own destiny, with no need for God. They try to rid the earth of the name of God. What pride man has to think to remove God from His creation — remove Him whose very name is written within and throughout each and every particle in the creation! Truly we see all around us men who “professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.... Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator” (Rom. 1:22, 25). As the mysteries of the atom are unfolded and its countless uses discovered, may we remember the cause for which the Lord has allowed such development by man to take place — that the church may grow and develop and stand in thankful wonder at the works and good gifts of her God, praising Him all the day long, and that the world's cup of iniquity may be filled as they stand in thankless, willful ignorance, deliberately turning God's truth into the lie for the

ease and praise of man. All of this instills in us a great fear of God — a humble awareness of God's awesome work and power in the creation and our responsibility to Him. May God's name be praised by us in our use of His creation!

The atom, when seen in the light of Scripture, gives us a good opportunity to take notice of God's power as manifested in His providential care. We confess that God “upholds and governs heaven, earth, and all creatures” (Heidelberg Catechism, Q.A. 27). This includes these tiny atoms. They too are directed and upheld each moment of each day in their particular places by that powerful word of God. In Q. 28 of the Catechism we ask, “What advantage is it to us to know that God has created and by His providence doth still uphold all things?” The comforting answer of the catechism is that we are to be patient in times of adversity, thankful in times of prosperity, and in all things place our firm trust in our faithful God, our Father, knowing that nothing can separate us from His love because *all* creatures cannot so much as move without His will. When we consider the infinitely tiny atom and its miniscule parts that move in such an orderly fashion, for a specific, God-ordained purpose, and are governed each moment of each day by the word of God's power, how can we doubt God's

care over us, His people in Christ, and that He will provide us with all we need for both body and soul! When we walk about in God's creation each day and consider the wondrous works of God, we boldly continue our pilgrimage knowing that God directs *all* things for our spiritual welfare.


All thy works shall praise thee. All thy works — even the tiny, orderly, often-forgotten atoms. The infinite, incomprehensible, perfectly wise, all-powerful God of the covenant is clearly seen by the child of God in such a study. May we be given the grace to look into the creation through the spectacles of Scripture and see the beauty of our God. May we, both as young people and adults, seek to read and to study and to delve into the things of the creation and learn of its beauty and intricacy, for it bears the mark of its Maker. May our study be humbling as we stand amazed at how insignificant we are, and how great God is. May God be praised by us as we wait for Christ, who shall return to take us to glory and who shall even deliver the very creation from the bondage of corruption. He shall melt the very elements that we have considered today and create a new heavens and a new earth. “O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches” (Ps. 104:24). 

Ministering to the Saints

Rev. Doug Kuiper

The Qualifications of Deacons (5) Godly in Their Conduct

Rev. Kuiper is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Byron Center, Michigan.

ne could divide the qualifications for deacons, set forth in I Timothy 3:8-12, into several categories. Some of the qualifications clearly concern their family situation and

life. They must “be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well” (v. 12). Furthermore, their wives must be “grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things” (v. 11). One quali-

fication regards the deacon's personal situation with regard to the church — he must "first be proved" (v. 10). Some of the qualifications regard the basic work of the grace of God in their heart — they must be believers, "holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience" (v. 9). And others deal with the manifestation of that grace of God in how they live — they must be "grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre" (v. 8), and they must be "blameless" (v. 10). Another qualification which would be placed in this category is found in Acts 6:3: "men of honest repute."

It is to this latter group of qualifications that we now turn our attention. Deacons must be godly in their conduct! In how they live, they must manifest that God has worked His grace in them. They must live lives of thankful obedience to the law of God, and set an example for the people of such obedience. Such a life will elicit willful respect of the people of the church for the deacons, and will cause the people readily to acknowledge that the deacons are vessels fit by grace to administer the grace and mercies of Jesus Christ.

We began our treatment of the godly conduct required of the deacons in the last article, in which we emphasized that they must be men full of the Holy Ghost, wisdom, and faith, as was required of the first deacons in the church. That a deacon is full of the Holy Ghost, wisdom, and faith, will be evident by his godly conduct.



Heading the list given in I Timothy 3:8 is the requirement that deacons be grave. This means that they must be serious minded, dignified men. The qualification does not say what must be true of the man's natural disposition, but what must be true of him by grace. That is, Scripture does not say that the man must never smile or enjoy

earthly pleasures; rather, all of this proper enjoyment must be tempered by the deacon's consciousness of three basic truths: his salvation in Christ is an undeserved wonder; the servant of God must be diligent in all of his life; and the deacon in particular has a great responsibility, which he must perform faithfully. What must *not* be true of the deacon is that he can never be serious, but treats everything lightly and with humor.

Such gravity and serious-mindedness will inspire respect in the people of the church. They will understand that they can come to these deacons in their need, and not be laughed off, or be the cause for another joke, but that they and their request for help will be taken seriously.

Are you grave men, deacons?

A person whose needs are legitimate, but who senses that the deacons do not take him seriously, will have a hard time ever trusting deacons — any deacon — again.



Next, they must not be doubletongued. The Greek word thus translated means, really, "two-worded." Sometimes we call it "two faced." His word to one person does not correspond with his word to another. Or, he makes a promise to those in need, trying to show compassion, but knowing that he is not able to carry out that promise himself.

It is here that we may note the positive, set forth in Acts 6:3: "men of honest repute!" Let him be a man who obeys the ninth commandment in every way!

The trust and confidence of the people will be shaken, not only in that particular deacon who is not honest, but in all deacons! And how can a deacon bring the Word of Truth to comfort the people of God in their spiritual needs, when he cannot even speak a word of truth of his own mouth?

DeJong's comments in this con-

nection are to the point, and I will quote them in full:

Even more than in the work of the eldership, the deacons are in serious danger of falling into this sin. Time after time must they contact the poor and needy in their homes, discuss personal matters with them, listen to the recital of their circumstances and seek to alleviate their distress in every way possible. Such an arduous task requires not only a sympathetic and loving heart but also a steady and unswerving character. A deacon must be able to win the confidence of those whom he seeks to help. These must feel that his word is dependable; that he makes no promises which he is unable to fulfil. Likewise must he be able to judge fairly the situations which obtain, keep himself free from prejudice, and as much as possible defend his judgment before the other deacons and elders to whom he is responsible. Anyone who makes fine promises without rightful authority or before he has adequate knowledge of the circumstances will find himself in the unenviable position of being charged as undependable, unstable, and even deceitful.¹

The "rightful authority" of which DeJong speaks is the body of deacons as a whole; let no individual deacon, or committee of deacons, make promises to those in need, except such promises as the diaconate as a whole has made. To avoid being double-tongued, it is also good that deacons go out in teams, that they have discussed the situation they will encounter ahead of time, and that they address each other (privately) if the one thinks the other has not been sincere.



The deacons must also be "not given to much wine."

"Wine" is mentioned because it was a common drink of the day

1. P. Y. DeJong, *The Ministry of Mercy for Today*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1952), p. 99.

and because of its intoxicating character. The deacon must set an example of temperance and self control for everyone. Certainly he cannot do his work as officebearer in Christ's church if he is under the influence of alcohol; to do such work, he must be "filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18).

Historically, DeJong points out, this admonition was needed because as the deacons went from house to house gathering gifts from the rich, and distributing them to the poor, they were often offered a strong drink.² One drink is fine, perhaps. Especially in his own home, a deacon is permitted to drink a little wine. We do not make laws where Scripture does not; wine as such is not forbidden. But one strong drink at each house, when the deacon will visit several homes in a night, is too much!

Today, deacons must apply the positive requirement of self-control to more things than merely wine. Let the deacons not be given over-much to food, or to earthly pleasure, which in moderation is legitimate. One who uses earthly pleasures immoderately cannot truly say that he puts the responsibilities of his God-given office first in his life.



It is further required of deacons that they be "not greedy of filthy lucre."

The positive principle of this requirement is really the same as that of the previous requirement: earthly things must not become ends in themselves. This is true also of money. This requirement applies to the deacon's *view* of money: he must understand that it is a legitimate means by which God provides for our earthly needs, but he must not be greedy and covetous of it. His concern must not be to get ahead in this life, or to be rich; he must not be earthly-minded. Rather, he must be content with his lot in life, and

be an example of one who trusts in God to supply his material needs. The requirement also applies to the way in which the deacon *obtains* his money and possessions — let him work honestly and lawfully, and pay a fair price for that which he owns. And the requirement applies to the way in which the deacon *uses* his money and possessions — let him be a good steward of it, seeking first the causes of the kingdom. Let him be sure that he brings his offerings to church on Sunday, and pays his Christian school tuition, *then* cares for the earthly needs of his family.

Again, the importance of this for the deacon is readily seen. First, if he will be trusted with the funds of the church, he must be a man who does not have his heart set on money. Too many temptations will arise. Second, if he must preach contentment to the people whom he visits, he must himself practice contentment. And if he sometimes must preach godly stewardship to those whose needs are due to their own poor stewardship, he must be sure he also is a good steward.



Lastly as regards the deacon's godly conduct, Scripture says that he must be blameless. This is the last qualification mentioned for the deacon, except for those dealing particularly with his family situation. As regards the deacon's personal conduct, this is the concluding point in Scripture.

The Greek word translated here "blameless" is different from that so translated in verse two, in regard to elders. There the word means literally, "not taken hold of," that is, their conduct must be such that none can lay hold of a reason to keep them from office, none can find a ground for a charge against them. Here the word has the idea of one who cannot be called into account. We see that, although the words are different,

the idea is substantially the same.

Deacons, you must so live, in every aspect of your life — family life, personal life, work life, church life, diaconal work — that none have any reason to accuse you! You must obey both tables of the law of God, and every commandment, with diligence! And to that end, guard not only your actions but your tongue, and your thoughts, and your heart! You must be above suspicion, and must abstain not just from evil as such, but from the very *appearance* of evil.

This means, positively, that you must be close to God in your life, and that that must be evident in all your life. One cannot have such godly conduct who does not depend on God for His grace. One cannot truly be blameless and godly while doing the work of the diaconate, who is not blameless and godly in his personal life. Be one who spends time with God in prayer and meditation on His Word every day!

Then you can come with boldness and confidence to those in need, as the representative of the living, merciful God, and Christ, our High Priest.



Does it seem that some qualifications are lacking? Where is any mention of the love and compassion that a deacon must have? Should he not be a man who will uphold justice and be fair? We might think these are the essential qualities of a deacon; yet Scripture makes no explicit mention of them.

However, these qualities are implied in the requirements of God's Word.

How he rules his home will show whether he has love, compassion, and justice, or whether he has none of these. In his home, does he show tender love to his children; is his justice fairly administered?

Whether or not he lives up to

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 99-100.

these qualifications mentioned will show whether or not he has these other qualities. Does he love God above all? Is his obedience to God's law unswerving? Such a man who loves God will also love God's people.

That he is grave and blameless will show itself in his true, godly love and compassion for those in need.

The point is this: let none who are not grave, are double-tongued, are given to much wine, and are greedy of filthy lucre, claim to have

a love and compassion for God's people! All that such men show is that they love vanity, lies, wine, and money. And then they cannot truly love God or His people.


Deacons, are you these things?

Deacons wives, do you encourage your husbands to be these things?

Elders, deacons, and pastors, do you mutually admonish and encourage each other to be these things?

People of the congregation, do

you pray that your officebearers be such men? And do you respect them for being such men, by God's grace?

Remember that these qualifications are mentioned for the sake of every member of the church, and not only for the sake of the deacon personally. We must all be impressed with the great responsibility of the office, and be fervent in prayer that God might supply the needs of our deacons, both by continually granting them the grace to be qualified, and by blessing them in their work. 

Book Reviews



Come Out From Among Them: 'Anti-Nicodemite' Writings of John Calvin, by John Calvin. Tr. Seth Skolnitsky. Dallas, Texas: Protestant Heritage Press, 2001. 317pp. \$29.95 (cloth). [Reviewed by the editor.]

For this book, we have been waiting. An editorial in the March 1, 1990 issue of the *Standard Bearer* urged that Calvin's writings on the "Nicodemites" be translated and published:

Would someone translate into English, and publish, Calvin's writings against the "Nicodemites," So far as I am aware, the only work of Calvin on the subject in English is his letter of 1537 which appears in volume III of his *Tracts and Treatises* as "On Shunning the Unlawful Rites of the Ungodly and Preserving the Purity of the Christian Religion." But there are at least several other similar works of Calvin on this very important theme, none of which to the best of my knowledge is available in English. Calvin's view of the necessity of belonging to a church that manifests the marks of the true church is not only of historical significance but is also of great practical importance for Protestants in departing churches today.

The "Nicodemites" were Protestants in France during the Refor-

mation who participated in Roman Catholic worship, not because they believed Roman Catholic doctrine or regarded Roman Catholic worship as pure, but because of various pressures on them to conform. These pressures included the threat of persecution, their own desire to maintain their social standing in the community, and the influence of Roman Catholic family members and friends. The Nicodemites deliberately dissembled. Outwardly they performed all the rites of Roman Catholic worship, including the celebration of the Mass. Inwardly, they said, they rejected Roman Catholic worship as false and worshiped God according to the Reformed faith.

Since they justified this behavior by an appeal to Nicodemus, who came to Jesus secretly at night while retaining his position on the Sanhedrin, Calvin called these people "Nicodemites." Later, he would call them "pseudo-Nicodemites."

Come Out From Among Them contains most of Calvin's writings against the Nicodemite error, including "A Letter to Some Friends," "A Short Treatise Setting Forth What the Faithful Man Must Do When He is Among Papists and He Knows the Truth of the Gospel," "Answer of John Calvin to the Nicodemite Gentlemen Concerning

Their Complaint That He is Too Severe," "Four Sermons from John Calvin Treating Matters Which Are Very Useful for Our Times with a Brief Exposition of Psalm 87," and "A Response to a Certain Dutchman Who, Under Pretence of Making Christians Really Spiritual, Suffers Them to Defile Their Bodies in All Sorts of Idolatries." Most of these, if not all of them, are now translated into English for the first time.

One important work by Calvin against the Nicodemite error—the earliest—is not included. No doubt this is because it appears in English translation in Calvin's *Tracts Relating to the Reformation*, tr. Henry Beveridge, vol. 3 (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1851). The English title is "On Shunning the Unlawful Rites of the Ungodly, and Preserving the Purity of the Christian Religion." Calvin wrote this in 1537. In this treatise Calvin established the line he would take, and marshaled the texts he would use, throughout the entire body of his anti-Nicodemite writings.

It is not without significance that Calvin's controversy with the Nicodemites spanned his entire ministry. He wrote the first of his treatises (we would call them pamphlets) at the very beginning of his ministry in 1537. He wrote the last of them at the end of his ministry

in 1562. This was the treatise entitled "A Response to a Certain Dutchman." Obviously, the Nicodemite error persisted. Obviously also, Calvin viewed this error as grievous, one that demanded his unrelenting attention.

The Nicodemite error is with us today. This makes the publication of these treatises extraordinarily worthwhile. Professing Reformed believers remain in countries or areas where worship in a true Reformed church is impossible, excusing themselves by appeal to the hardships of moving. Or men and women who confess the Reformed faith worship in churches that are not Reformed, because this is convenient. Or those who claim to know and love the Reformed faith stay in churches that depart from the faith, corrupt the Word and Sacraments, and pollute the worship, because of family or social pressures. All of these are modern Nicodemites.

The Calvin scholars, some of whom are themselves Nicodemites, will no doubt welcome the book as a valuable contribution to the academic study of Calvin's mind in English. Our interest is more spiritual and practical. To Reformed believers in foreign lands who cannot publicly worship God in a true Reformed church because such a church is lacking, Calvin now says in plain English, "Emigrate to another country, regardless of the cost!" To Reformed Christians who remain in apostatizing churches because of the influence of their wife, or children, or parents, or grandparents, or because leaving for the true church will mean ridicule and the loss of friends, Calvin now says in plain English, "Leave that church and its God-dishonoring worship for a church that worships God rightly."

To participate in corrupt worship, regardless that one inwardly dissents, is forbidden:

I answer that part of the yoke of Jesus Christ is to confess his name,

and to declare that we desire to purely worship God alone. I say that faith is not buried in the heart, but produces fruits outwardly. From this it is clear that those who dissemble in order to please idolaters, signifying that they are of their band, have neither faith nor zeal to obey God. Rather they are like lost beasts, taking cheer in a wicked and perverse license (p. 283).

The believer must be member of a true, instituted congregation, where the gospel is purely preached, the truth is confessed, and God is worshiped as He requires in His Word. The fundamental trouble with the Nicodemites is that they do not appreciate

what a treasure it is to have freedom, not only to serve God purely and to make public confession of one's faith, but also to be in a well ordered and governed church, where the word of God is preached, and where the sacraments are properly administered, since these are the means by which God's children may be confirmed in the faith and are stirred up to live and die in his obedience.

Calvin added: "Now, it seemed to me that this point was very needful in our day, because there are many fanciful Christians who mock those who take pains to get to foreign and far off countries in order to enjoy such freedom" (pp. 130, 131).

So much is it the duty of every believer to be an active member of a true church that "they are without excuse, who are in a far-off land and are kept by the world from every means of relocating to a country where the gospel is preached" (p. 212). Indeed, "for the sake of God's worship we ought to forget everything, to the point of renouncing our own lives" (p. 293).

Some of the Nicodemites repented and moved to Geneva and other places where Reformed worship was possible. Others reacted

by criticizing Calvin for his rigor and his alleged lack of sympathy for their plight. One Nicodemite charged Calvin with teaching that "one cannot get to paradise except by way of Geneva." The equivalent in our day is the angry accusation that "you people think that you are the only ones going to heaven."

Many will find the book offensive. All hardened Nicodemites will stumble at it. So also will the delicate "brothers of charity." In his zeal for the glory of God in right worship and in his holy anger against our readiness to put our own convenience and ease before God's honor, Calvin is ironic and severe. He grants that contemporary Nicodemites resemble the original in one respect: both bury Jesus. In his "Response to a Certain Dutchman" who defended Nicodemism, among the names that Calvin calls the wicked Dutchman are "oaf," "crackpot," "blunderer," "wretch," "dog," "wild animal," "beast," "baboon," "clod," "joker," "dimwit," "blockhead," and "bulldog."

This book is long overdue and sorely needed. It is divine encouragement (for Calvin derives his instruction and admonition from Holy Scripture) to those who take seriously membership in a true church and participation in the right public worship of God. ■

Unfolding Covenant History: An Exposition of the Old Testament, Volume 1, From Creation to the Flood. Homer C. Hoeksema, author. Mark H. Hoeksema, general editor. Grandville, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2000. 327pp. \$27.95 (cloth). [Reviewed by Rev. Steven R. Key.]

The Reformed Free Publishing Association continues to make a significant contribution in the publication of substantial Reformed and biblical books with the printing of the first volume in a new series entitled *Unfolding Cov-*

enant History: An Exposition of the Old Testament. The first volume, *From Creation to the Flood*, was written by the late Homer C. Hoeksema, my esteemed professor of Dogmatics and Old Testament History in the Seminary of the Protestant Reformed Churches. Those of us who were privileged to sit under Prof. Hoeksema's teaching are happy to see the content of his instruction now being made widely available by the RFP. Prof. Hoeksema's love for the Old Testament was well known. It was evident in his teaching and preaching. It is evident also in his writings.

The value of this volume — as will be seen in the rest of the series as it is published, God willing — is found in its careful, exegetical unfolding of the history of God's covenant.

That perspective is rare in our day. Not only is the literal interpretation of these opening chapters of the Bible steadfastly maintained and reasonably expounded by Prof. Hoeksema, but there is a unique covenantal perspective in his exposition. His development of Old Testament history takes into account the organic perspective of all history, as well as the unity of sacred history with its focus always upon Christ and the realization of God's covenant with His people in Christ.

This kind of treatment of Old Testament history, and particularly this covenantal and organic perspective, has been sorely lacking. In fact, one searches for it largely in vain even among other Reformed theologians. It is a refreshing approach to the unfolding of biblical revelation.

Adding to the value of this volume is a 17-page introduction to the series written by the editor, Mark Hoeksema. This introduction explains the organic unity of Bible history and the covenant character of that history as it also determines our approach and method in Bible interpretation. Prof. Hoeksema's book illustrates that concretely, as will all the books in this series.

Because of the importance of the opening chapters of Genesis to the whole of biblical doctrine, this volume is particularly valuable.

Prof. Hoeksema's treatment of the creation account shows his unwavering devotion to the historical and literal interpretation of this portion of Scripture. In his words, maintaining the truth of God as Creator and maintaining the biblical account of creation is a matter of life and death for the church. "The church herself must not exchange the testimony of revelation for the language of the wisdom of man." We must sit humbly at God's footstool to learn of Him. Scripture, after all, is God's own narrative with regard to His own work. The creation account is a matter of clear revelation. "There simply is no room in the record of scripture for a process of any kind.... Scripture certainly presents the work of creation as immediate and instantaneous."

Already in the opening chapters, Hoeksema gives careful attention to the time factor in Genesis 1, repudiating theistic evolution (or what since has been more deceptively named by its promoters "progressive creationism"), the framework hypothesis, and other theories that reject the clear teaching of the Genesis account and its literal interpretation.

Hoeksema develops the truth, which is often overlooked, of creation as an act of the Triune God. The book also contains a careful treatment of each day of creation week, including the significance of man as "the crowning work of God in the earthly creation," God's covenant friend. Hoeksema repudiates any idea of a "covenant of works," and shows that the covenant that God established with man is a relationship, a "living bond of communion, that highest and most perfect form of the bond of life," indeed, a reflection of God's own life as the covenant God.

The significance of both the tree of life and the tree of knowl-

edge of good and evil is spelled out — the establishment of God's antithesis for man.

Careful attention is also given in this volume to the fall of our first parents and the devastating effects of that fall for the whole human race and the creation. Resulting from the fall is death, the universality of sin, the total depravity of all persons, and therefore the need for the revelation of the wonder of grace in Christ Jesus.

The book goes on to take us through the history of Cain and Abel and faithful Enoch, the development of sin in the world, and the salvation of Noah and his family by the waters of the great flood, a universal flood which brought such drastic change to the world that "we do not live in the same kind of universe as did the prediluvian generations. We now live in the second world, as, by the wonder of God's grace, it emerged from the waters of the deluge." This, Hoeksema points out, is the plain teaching of II Peter 3:5, 6.

Not to be overlooked in the book is Hoeksema's treatment of the genealogy of Genesis 4:16 - 5:32. The professor's fascination with the genealogies of Scripture is revealed in his devotion of a chapter to that genealogy with its data and significance.

There is a wealth of sound instruction in this book. Although the material was prepared for the instruction of seminary students, it is written in a form understandable by those who are high school age and older. Much of it, in fact, is written in a preaching style. It is valuable for all.

In my review of this book, I found one thing missing that would enhance its value, and that is a subject and textual index. Because this book is not a verse-by-verse commentary, a subject and textual index would enhance its value as a reference work. Even so, the book is readable from cover to cover, and highly recommended.



Young Adults' Activities

This year's annual post-high Young Adults' camping trip took place on a rainy weekend in late August at the Stoney Haven Christian Campground (north of Muskegon, MI near New Era). Some of the young adults arrived early Friday afternoon and were able to squeeze in a round of golf, but the majority of the 70 campers arrived later that evening. Mr. Jon VanOverloop, a science teacher at Covenant Christian High School in Walker, MI, served as moderator for a group discussion on the topic, "Being Fearfully and Wonderfully Made," a look at the question of stem-cell research, cloning, and gene manipulation and how it affects the raising of covenant children. This discussion was based on Psalm 139:13-16. Besides the four-somes who went golfing, other activities included playing cards, staying dry, and not sleeping. Supper and breakfast were provided for the campers, and most left by 10:00 Saturday morning.

Evangelism Activities

A man from Germany found the website of the Hudsonville, MI PRC and wrote that he was greatly helped and encouraged by what he read and heard there. Hudsonville's sermons can be heard from their website only hours after they are preached. After correspondence with the man, Hudsonville's consistory gave him permission to translate some of these sermons (from audio to printed form) and to put them on his own website. The first of those sermons has been translated and

posted. For any of you who can read German (for anyone really), you may find his website at <http://www.calvinianum.de/>.

This year again the Evangelism Committee of the Grace PRC in Standale, MI is sponsoring their "Christianity on Campus" series at Grand Valley State University. For ten successive Wednesdays each semester students at Grand Valley are encouraged to meet together and look at various topics in the light of God's Word. All are welcome. The only requirements are a heart for God and His Word, an earnest desire to serve Him, and a love to witness for the truth. If you are college age or thereabouts, or at least look that way, you are encouraged to attend. Meetings are held each week in Cabins ABC in the Kirkhof Center. Some topics for this semester include "The Christian and the Environment" on October 3, which will explore questions like, should we hold hands with tree-huggers or have a windmill in our front yard? On November 28 you can listen to a topic entitled "Of Stem-Cell Research and Pandora's Box" — a look at the whole genetic-engineering question and whether President Bush opened a veritable Pandora's Box?

Congregation Activities

The congregation of the South Holland, IL PRC marked their 75th anniversary as a congregation with a church picnic held on August 25. This Saturday picnic was special since a personal invitation had been extended to previous pastors of their congregation, and pastors who are sons of the congregation, to attend. These men were not only able to enjoy the fellowship with the congregation but they were also given the opportunity briefly to address the gathering. Two previous pastors, Professors

Engelsma and Decker, also were able to preach for them the next day, Sunday, August 26. Prof. Decker preached in the morning using Hebrews 4:14-20 as his text and preaching on "Holding Fast Our Profession," while Prof. Engelsma preached that evening on the subject "Jealousy over the Congregation," based on II Corinthians 11:2-4.

Denomination Activities

The Convocation for our denomination's seminary was held at Faith PRC in Jenison, MI on September 5. Prof. R. Dykstra, rector of the seminary, spoke on the theme, "Handling the Word of God Honestly," based on II Corinthians 4:1, 2.

School Activities

Friends and supporters of Hull PR Christian School were invited to join parents and students in celebrating their school's 25th anniversary on August 31 at the Hull, IA PRC. The celebration revolved around the theme, "God's Covenant Faithfulness." An open house and lunch at the school followed the program.

On August 22 an overflow crowd gathered at Calvary Reformed Church in South Holland, IL to be part of the official dedication of Heritage Christian High School. Besides singing appropriate Psalter numbers, the audience also heard a special number from the choir of Heritage, and Prof. D. Engelsma deliver a stirring speech based on Nehemiah 4:6 entitled "So Built We the Wall." Immediately following the program, visitors were invited for an informal walk-through of Heritage.

Minister Activities

The Doon, IA PRC extended a call to Rev. R. Miersma to serve

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

as missionary to the Philippines. Trinity PRC in Hudsonville, MI extended a call to Rev. W. Bruinsma to serve as their first pastor. Rev. C. Haak declined the call extended to him from the Randolph, WI PRC. Since that decline Randolph has formed a new trio consisting of the Revs. R. Hanko, Doug Kuiper, and R. VanOverloop. Rev. W. Bekkering has accepted the call he received to serve as our churches'

second missionary to Ghana. Rev. A. denHartog has accepted the call to serve as minister-on-loan to Singapore. As a result of that acceptance, the council of the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA, where Rev. denHartog is pastor, has made a trio from which they will call a pastor, the Lord willing, on September 16. That trio consists of the Revs. C. Terpstra, J. Slopesma, and C. Haak.

Food For Thought

"Our missionary giving is more like a thermostat than a thermometer. A thermometer merely reflects the temperature in a room whereas a thermostat determines it."

— Ralph Johnson



Announcements

Reformed Witness Hour Station Listings

Station	Location	Frequency	Time/day
KCCF	Ferndale, WA	1550AM	8:30 A.M./Sunday
KLOH	Pipestone, MN	1050AM	8:00 A.M./Sunday
KDCR	Sioux Center, IA	88.5FM	5:30 P.M./Sunday
KCWN	Pella, IA	99.9FM	3:30 P.M./Sunday
WMRH	Waupun, WI	1170AM	8:30 A.M./Sunday
WYLL	Chicago, IL	1160AM	8:30 P.M./Saturday
WFUR	Grand Rapids, MI	102.9FM	8:00 A.M./Sunday
WFUR	Grand Rapids, MI	1570AM	4:00 P.M./Sunday
WORD	Pittsburgh, PA	101.5FM	10:00 A.M./Sunday
WFNC	Fayetteville, NC	640AM	9:30 A.M./Sunday
WELP	Spartanburg, SC	1360AM	4:00 P.M./Sunday
WFAM	Augusta, GA	1050AM	4:00 P.M./Sunday
WBXR	Huntsville, AL	1140AM	9:00 A.M./Saturday
CJCA	Edmonton, AB	930AM	coming soon

Topics for October

Date	Topic	Text
October 7	"Examples of Womanly Beauty and Submission," part 2	I Peter 3:5, 6
October 14	"Husbands, Dwell with Your Wife," part 1	I Peter 3:7
October 21	"Husbands, Dwell with Your Wife," part 2	I Peter 3:7
October 28	"An Altar Built of Unhewn Stones" ..	Exodus 20:24

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On September 14, 2001 our beloved parents and grandparents,

JOHN and JEANETTE DE VRIES,

celebrated their 45th wedding anniversary. We thank God for them and for their diligence in raising covenant seed in the fear of His name. Our prayer is that God will supply all their needs and bless them in the coming years.

"Those who His gracious covenant keep the Lord will ever bless; their children's children shall rejoice to see His righteousness" (Psalter 278:5).

❖ Herman and Lorraine DeVries

John and Rebecca Pols (fiancée), Sarah, Amy, Laura, Timothy

❖ Donald and Shelly DeVries

Kari, Daniel, Abigail

❖ Bryant and Ruth Cox

Eric, Kyle, Scott, Anna

❖ Thomas and Brenda DeVries

Jeffrey, Jared, Stephan

❖ Michael and Amy DeVries

Kiley, Casey, Christian

Grand Rapids, Michigan

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On August 24, 2001,

DR. ROD and EVONNE KREUZER

celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary. We, their dear friends and family in Christ, express to them our congratulations. We thank the Lord for their place in our churches and Christian schools, as well as for the godly example they set before us and our children. May the Lord continue to give them many years together and be pleased to use them for the good of His covenant among us. "Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord. The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life (Psalm 128:4, 5).

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of Grandville PRC express their Christian sympathy to Leon and Ellen Kamps and family in the death of their father and grandfather,

MR. GEORGE KAMPS,

and to Art and Luanne Mulder in the death of his brother,

MR. ERNEST MULDER.

May they be comforted by God's Word, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints" (Psalm 116:15).

Rev. Audred Spriensma, President
Jack Brands, Assistant Clerk

TEACHER(S) NEEDED:

Heritage Christian High School in South Holland, IL is now in its first year of operation, teaching freshmen and sophomores. As we plan for the addition of a junior class for 2002-2003, we see our greatest faculty needs in the areas of math, science, business and technology, and foreign language courses. Interested individuals, please contact our Administrator, Ralph Medema, at (708) 339-1733 [rmedema@earthlink.net] or Education Committee Chairman, Bill DeJong, at (708) 946-6126 [bill@dejongequipment.com].

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Martha Ladies' Society of Hull PRC express their sincere Christian sympathy to fellow members Annabelle OnderLinde and Karen Andringa in the death of their husband and father,

MR. ED ONDERLINDE.

May you and your families find comfort in the words of the psalmist in Psalm 23:6b: "and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

Jan Westra, President
Brenda VandeKamp, Secretary

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of Randolph PRC extend their Christian sympathy to Mrs. Joan Buitter and family in the death of their husband and father,

MR. BILL BUITTER.

"My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever" (Psalm 73:26).

Gene Braaksma, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The members of the Martha Society of Doon PRC express their love in Christ to fellow member Cora VanDenTop, in the loss of her brother,

MR. JOHN MAASSEN.

"Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the Lord hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted" (Isaiah 49:13).

Rev. R. Smit, Pres.
Henrietta VanOort, Sec.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies' Society of the Hudsonville PRC express their sincere Christian sympathy to member Mrs. Grace Kamps and her family in the loss of her husband,

MR. GEORGE KAMPS.

May the words of Psalm 27:14 be a comfort for her: "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: Wait, I say, on the Lord."

Barb Dykstra, Vice-pres.
Freda Zwak, Sec.

Lecture Notice

The Reformed Witness Committee of the Doon and Hull, IA and Edgerton, MN Protestant Reformed Churches is sponsoring a Reformation Lecture on October 26, 2001 at 7:30 P.M. Rev. Ron Hanko will speak on the theme: "Continued Reformation Through Catechism Preaching." All are invited to attend. The lecture will be held at the Protestant Reformed Church in Hull, Iowa at 1006 Hayes Ave.

Reformation Lecture

Date: Friday, Oct 26, 2001
Where: First PRC of Holland
Time: 7:30 PM
Speaker: Prof. H. Hanko
(Topic – Justification by Faith)

NOTICE of changes for Acts 2001

The address of First Protestant Reformed Church (Holland) and its parsonage is now Zeeland, MI 49464. Please note this change when sending mail to either one.

The telephone number listed on page 359 for Rev. Angus Stewart has been changed to: 011-44-28 25 891851. Please make the change in your copy.

REMINDER

If you want to have your own copies of the *Standard Bearer* bound, please remember that the business office needs your copies by October 15. Cost: \$13.00.