

# The Standard Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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## CALL TO SYNOD

By decision of the last Synod, the Consistory of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church of 1580 Ferndale S.W., Grand Rapids, Michigan, notifies the churches that the 1967 Synod will convene on Wednesday, June 7, 9:00 A.M., in the above mentioned church, D.V.

The pre-synodical service will be held on Tuesday, June 6, at 8:00 P.M. at Hope Church. Rev. G. Van Baren is scheduled to deliver the sermon.

Synodical delegates are requested to gather with the consistory before the service.

Those in need of lodging are asked to contact Dewey Engelsma, 1310 Kenowa S.W., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49504, Telephone 453-2578.

Consistory of Hope Protestant Reformed Church  
Rev. J. L. Kortering, President  
Dewey Engelsma, Clerk

## MEDITATION—

## Jehovah's Vigilance

by Rev. J. Kortering

*For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.*

*I Peter 3:12*

Righteous or a doer of evil.  
With which group do you identify yourself?  
It's either — or, we are either righteous or a doer of evil.  
This question is the most important question we can

ever face. The words of our text identify both the righteous and the doer of evil and tell us what attitude Jehovah has toward both. His attitude toward the righteous is, "The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous and his ears are open unto their prayers,"



His attitude toward the doer of evil is, "The face of the Lord is against them."

Search your heart and your life for the answer.

May our meditation on this Word of God aid us in our search.

The line of demarcation is determined by our attitude toward our sins.

The righteous are a crying people. They weep on account of their sin. We are told this directly in our text. The word "prayers" could just as well be translated "cries." You recall that in Scripture different terms are used to describe prayer. Some prayers are declarations of thanksgiving. Others are petitions of request for daily needs. Still others assume the form of intercession, seeking the guidance and strength of Jehovah on behalf of others. Yet, there also are prayers of supplication. A deep awareness of our needs and our own helplessness drives us to our knees and we lift up our eyes heavenward imploring Jehovah to hear us and supply our lack. These prayers are mentioned in our text and they always assume the form of an urgent cry.

Our righteousness occasions this cry!

This indicates that the righteous surely are not *self*-righteous. There were many in the days of the apostles that boasted of their being righteous on account of their works. The Pharisees could rattle off a long list of things they did in obedience to Mosaic law. Similarly today, myriads of people console themselves in the delusion that they surely aren't as bad as some of their fellow human beings and in many ways they are a great deal better. Attend any memorial service and one gets the impression that there isn't a person on earth that's bad enough for hell. These are righteous in their own eyes. Peter isn't speaking of these; they never cry!

The supplicating cry flows from the lips of the righteous as they are burdened with their sins. In the context of this epistle of Peter to the "scattered strangers," we learn of many reasons for their crying. Many of them were in great affliction; they were distressed because of bodily suffering. They lifted up their souls and cried for grace to bear their pains patiently. Others were weeping because of the effects of persecution, their homes were broken, fathers were taken captive, children were scattered to the winds. Some were in prison, others were tortured. They cried on account of their righteousness, for darkness hates the testimony of the light. Yet in the immediate context, it is obvious that Peter intends to single out those who are distressed because the dark curtain of sin envelopes their soul and they pine beneath it.

Do you weep supplicating tears because of your sins? The righteous do. They know the sweetness of covenant life with God. They have learned that nothing is more precious than to behold the smile of God's approval upon them. They know from the Word of God that He is righteous, He loves the light and hates darkness. He is Jehovah who punishes evil with evil and rewards the good with good. This knowledge brings them to tears. Casting a searching glance over their life they behold the sordid depths of their sins. These

sins stand as a barrier between the righteous God and their filthy souls. Supplicating in the name of Jesus Christ who hath merited righteousness for all His own, these righteous seek the assurance that for Christ's sake God will not hate them, but love them and forgive. Their cry is that of confession, they tell God they hate their sins, they are sorry for them, they long to be delivered from them and live constantly to the glory of Jehovah, the God of their salvation. Their prayer is marked with sweat and tears.

In contrast the doer of evil doesn't know what it is to weep for sins committed. When Peter describes the wicked as the doer of evil he doesn't simply refer to one who sins. The righteous sin also and yet are not described as an evil doer. Rather, he is one who gives himself wholly to sin. He violates the commandments of God. This doesn't mean that he is always some notorious and infamous sinner as such. He may even live an outwardly noble life; many people may consider him a worthy example. Yet, in all his thoughts words and deeds he doesn't have the love of God in his heart. His one goal in life is to satisfy his own lusts and seek his own ambitions. He delights in his evil way of life. When he revels in sin he finds excuses. His pet phrase is, "To err is human." He looks back at his "mistakes" and says proudly, well, we can't always succeed. I may not be the ideal man, yet I'm a great deal better than most. Sometimes this even takes on a religious flavor. Did you ever hear someone who professes to be a christian say, well I couldn't help it that I fell into sin, after all I still have my sinful nature. Sometimes young people like to imagine they can live in riotous iniquity under the pretense that youth has a license to sin, for after all they have to sow their wild oats, they have to wallow in the filth of sin and rebellion, "to get it out of their system while they are still young." Natural man likes to find excuses for his evil way of life. Every time he is tempted to sin he grasps at the slightest excuse and tries to suppress the fiery flame of his incensed conscience. How often don't we hear it said and we sometimes say it ourselves that we were victims of circumstances. We really didn't want to do this wrong, but this and that happened and we couldn't help ourselves.

This is how an evil doer speaks. He simply tries to justify sin, and is no different than the Pharisee who pretended to be so religious and yet was filled with dead man's bones. You can be sure of one thing, if we try to find excuses for sin and point to the so called good in our life as reason why all is well with us, we will never cry the supplicating prayer of the righteous. We will continue in the way of sin.

Jehovah's attitude toward the righteous is quite different from His attitude toward the doer of evil.

Peter describes His attitude toward the righteous as, "the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous and His ears are open unto their prayer." In this self description, God pictures Himself as one of us, having eyes and ears. By means of this picture language God reminds us that with all His being He is mindful of His children and ready to hear them and help them when they cry unto Him. The God that stirs the human



heart and arouses the cry of supplication is the same God that hears that cry and answers. Jehovah is a merciful God. He never brings to tears without drying them. By sovereign grace He reveals Himself to us as the God of righteousness and holiness. He crushes all our pride and exposes before our human conscience the horror of darkness that crouches within our mortal frame. He causes us to be restless with ourselves and through tears of sorrow to seek His forgiveness. As a tender Father that loves His children He directs our troubled soul to the cross and whispers in our ears, "Forgiven!" He reminds us that we have been clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ. By His Spirit He calms the storm and draws us closer to Himself. That's favor for the righteous.

Jehovah's attitude toward the doer of evil is quite different, "the face of the Lord is against them." That's the opposite. The face is the point of contact we have with each other as friends. While we visit together we don't sit with our backs to each other, but our faces are directed toward one another. Our whole personality is reflected in our face. Hence a turned face indicates a cessation of friendship. The picture here is simply this, God turns around and looks away from the doer of evil. Through this figure of speech the apostle reminds us that where there is no friendship there is enmity and wrath. Scripture makes clear that God doesn't simply *ignore* the doer of evil. He hates him and in His just judgment moves to subject such a one to His righteous indignation against sin. This takes place already in this life. Those who continue in sin are made subject to God's wrath right now. God presses upon such a one the certain wages of such sin, namely death. The power of death takes hold of such a one and draws him deeper and deeper into the cesspool of filth. Even the good gifts of God are so used by the doer of evil that he refuses to give God the glory, but elevates himself above the rest of mankind in stinking pride. After physical death the doer of evil will be cast away into outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Just recall a moment how God demonstrated this truth to Israel as they stood at the edge of the Red Sea. Here this grumbling and sin-laden people lifted up their voices in crying and supplication as the mighty forces of Egypt bore down upon them. Was there not forgiveness with God? Would Israel be slain as helpless sheep entrapped in the snare of greedy Egypt? Not at

all, for the eye of the Lord was upon them. The same Shekinah that led them into this apparent trap now began to move behind them. The ear of the Lord had heard their cry. All that night the eye of the Lord shone down upon them, affording them light while the mighty winds of the heaven prepared a dry path through the midst of the sea. Jesus Christ provided safety for them and led them safely out of all their distresses. For Christ's sake God is faithful to His people and forgives.

Yet it was that very same Shekinah that delivered the death blow to Egypt. Jehovah's back was turned to Egypt and therefore it was pitch black and the chariot wheels came to a screeching halt. Thinking that they could partake in Jehovah's goodness to Israel and sneak through the sea on dry ground, Egypt encountered the full wrath of Jehovah. The Israelites found them lying dead upon the shore.

Let's not confound this glorious truth. Surely it appeared for a long time as if the favor of God was upon Egypt and not on Israel. Israel was in bondage, her sons beaten with many stripes. Egypt prospered outwardly with cucumbers and garlic. God's favor, however, was not determined by outward things, rather by the inner fellowship of the heart. For awhile Egypt prospered because Israel was in her midst. God's blessing was upon Israel for He was making of them a great nation. Even the lashes of the whip were spiritual blessings. As soon as Israel was delivered from bondage Pharaoh and his hosts were slaughtered in mighty judgment.

Remember Asaph, "Then understood I their end." Ps. 73:17

Peter know of what he spoke. One night he went out and wept bitterly.

Righteous or a doer of evil, what are you?

Do you weep or do you laugh?

Your sins a burden, so much so that you long for forgiveness and desire to live according to God's will and to His glory? Be assured that Jehovah is not deaf to your cry, He hears! Gaze upon the cross and behold our Shekinah Who has led us through death and hell into everlasting glory.

Continue in sin, find pleasure in sin? There is only wrath, judgment and hell.

Thank God that we never weep in vain. Jehovah is vigilant.

He hears and answers!

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Salvation...is the deliverance from all evil, from the guilt and dominion of sin and corruption, and from the power of death; and the being made heirs and partakers of the highest good, eternal righteousness, life, and glory in God's heavenly kingdom through Jesus Christ our Lord, Who was delivered for our transgressions and raised for our justification.

- H. Hoeksema, "The Wonder of Grace," p. 84



## EDITORIAL—

# “Report of the Doctrinal Committee”

## - A Critical Study 4

### The Committee on the Offer

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

#### THE COMMITTEE SEES THE POINT

We have already noted that the mandate given the Study Committee in the Dekker Case obviously has in view the First Point of 1924. For this mandate is interested in the question whether it is valid to make a qualitative distinction between the general love of God and His special love for the elect. This of course, precludes any Reformed conclusion on the part of the committee. It means that they are bound to the idea of a general love of God. They may conclude that there is, or is not, a qualitative distinction between God's general love and God's special love. But to the theory of a general love of God they are bound. From the outset the committee has the millstone of the First Point hanging about its collective neck. And this means that unless the committee has the courage to go beyond its mandate and to say that the Christian Reformed Church was wrong in 1924 and to tell the CRC that the alternative posed in its mandate is a false one, the Report is doomed to failure: the failure of being un-Reformed.

The committee, therefore, had the choice of approving the theory of Prof. Dekker and going in the direction of full-blown Arminianism with respect to the love of God, the death of Christ, and the preaching of the gospel; or the choice of following the covert, half-way Arminianism of the First Point, which tries to connect the so-called offer of the gospel with common grace, but which nevertheless speaks of a general, well-meant offer of salvation. It had the choice of following more consistently the Arminian track with respect to the preaching of the gospel or of attempting to continue to follow a double-track theology.

The committee took the second option, and it tries desperately to maintain it. In fact, while the committee's efforts reveal many of the same methods, the same inconsistencies, and the same desperation tactics which have characterized all those who have tried to run on two tracks, and while the committee tries probably more desperately than ever before to maintain the First Point without becoming “too” Arminian, — something which perhaps accounts for the lengthy meanderings of their report, — the fact is that anyone who studies the report must be left altogether un-

satisfied, — even on a Christian Reformed basis, — as to the question how a general, well-meant offer of salvation can be an evidence of so-called common, non-saving grace. The fact is, too, that this dissatisfaction appears in the points raised by the committee of pre-advice at the last Christian Reformed Synod. For two of the “related problems” which the committee of pre-advice said were in need of “theological clarification and precise statement” have to do with this matter. They are: 1) “The relationship between election and the sincere offer of salvation.” And it should be remembered that in Christian Reformed parlance the word “sincere” means “well-meant.” 2) “The universal implications of the atonement.”

It is too bad, by the way, that the committee of pre-advice did not add *this* problem as being in need of theological clarification: the relation between sovereign reprobation and the general, well-meant offer of the gospel. Or should I say “disjunction” instead of “relation?”

Fact is, too, that in the end the committee falls flat on its collective nose. For in its conclusions and recommendations the committee ends by making basically the same statements as the First Point of 1924 without resolving the problem which we Protestant Reformed always raised with respect to the First Point and which Dekker and Daane have raised from their point of view.

This I will show in due time.

But I also want to show how the committee reached this conclusion, or rather, maneuvered themselves into this position and played hocus-pocus with the facts and with the Reformed truth until they came up with this conclusion.

For as in 1924, so also today, this requires some very devious maneuvering. And the admonition of the 1966 committee of pre-advice to avoid poorly defined categorical statements and ambiguous terminology may very well be applied, above all, to the Study Committee.

First of all, therefore, let us note that the Study Committee apparently saw the point at issue rather clearly. They immediately place their entire study in the context of the First Point of 1924 and the well-meant offer of the gospel. For one thing, they refer



openly to the fact that Prof. Dekker and Dr. James Daane have written in the context of 1924 and "compel us once more to take a good look at the decisions of our Synod of 1924 and the interpretation of these decisions that was given by the Synod of 1959." And again, they write: "For we are convinced that now as then we are again wrestling with the age-old problem concerning the grace of God." And thus they finally say: "Let us briefly review 1924 and its aftermath in our ecclesiastical history."

And what the committee states concerning 1924 reveals that they see the point rather clearly. Permit me to quote the following from pages 441 and 442 of the Acts of Synod, 1966:

In 1924 the Revs. H. Danhof and H. Hoeksema stressed the exclusiveness of God's grace at the expense of leaving no room at all for the doctrine of so-called common grace. Prof. Dekker, and perhaps some others with him, are inclined to wipe out the distinction between special and common grace. Yet both meet on this point that both would maintain that God's grace is one. The former, however, would limit that one grace of God to the elect alone; and from their standpoint draw the conclusion that any mention of common grace or even general favor or benevolence on the part of God towards the non-elect is forbidden. Fact is, the Rev. Hoeksema contended that God could manifest only His wrath towards those whom he labelled the reprobate. Not for one moment could God be favorably disposed towards any one who did not belong to his elect people. Even when the prophet Ezekiel says so plainly that the Lord "has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live;" these deniers of the doctrine of common grace went so far as to aver that this text refers only to the elect wicked. The others God delights to visit with His wrath.

I must interrupt the quotation for a few pertinent comments. They are the following:

1/ The committee does not have its historical perspective correct here. In the first place, the Revs. Hoeksema and Danhof stressed this position long before 1924. In the second place, there was no "doctrine" of common grace before 1924. There was a theological opinion held by some; and up to 1924 it was possible to discuss common grace as an extra-confessional matter. But there was no "doctrine" of common grace until the Synod of 1924 officially established it in the Three Points.

2/ The committee plainly suggests an aversion for the term "reprobate" in this paragraph. They evince this same aversion throughout their report. And this aversion is common to many in the current discussion. All seem to prefer to speak of the "non-elect." Note that this is the committee's term here; and they speak of those "whom he (Rev. Hoeksema) labelled the reprobate." The reader should beware of this terminology. We are all perhaps automatically inclined to understand and mentally to read "reprobate" when this term "non-elect" occurs. I find myself doing this. But the terms are not the same. The term *reprobate* is a positive term; the term *non-elect* is strictly a negative term, that is, it does not say anything about those who are not elect except that they

are not elect. This is a covert denial of double predestination which is becoming very common. Here is a good question: why does virtually no one today want to speak of reprobation? Here is another: why does the committee, which wants to maintain common grace and a common love of God, consistently prefer to speak of the "non-elect" rather than of the reprobate?

3/ Let me remind you, in connection with my quotation of Calvin in the April 1 issue of the *Standard Bearer* that "these deniers of the doctrine of common grace" are in good company when they deny that the passage in Ezekiel refers to the reprobate wicked. The committee seems to raise its hands in holy horror that anyone could "go so far as to aver that this text refers only to the elect wicked."

4/ Let it also be noted, however, that this reference to Ezekiel 33 already places the discussion in the context of salvation and damnation, not in the context of so-called "non-saving benefits of the death of Christ," nor in the context of so-called common grace, which is concerned only with so-called temporal blessings.

The committee continues as follows:

Our Synod of 1924 rightly repudiated this conception of God, and stated emphatically that "on the basis of Scripture and Confession it is certain that there is, besides the saving grace of God shown only to the elect unto eternal life, also a kind of favor or grace of God which He manifests towards his creatures in general." Moreover, in the two points of doctrine, which followed that first point, Synod declared that this general favor of God manifests itself in a "restraint of sin" and in this that "unregenerate men, though incapable of any saving good, are capable of doing civil good."

Once more I must interrupt for comments:

1/ Here we have an accurate statement of the main proposition of the First Point. The Second and Third Points are less fully stated; but we may ignore this at present, since the issue is the First Point.

2/ The committee correctly discerns that there is a conception of God at stake here. In other words, this discussion goes to the very heart of doctrine, namely, theology. I must, however, remind the readers that while surely one's conception of God is one of the fundamentals, yet the Synod of 1924 declared Hoeksema and Danhof to be Reformed with respect to the fundamentals. Strange, is it not?

But now comes the paragraph in which the committee makes it very plain that they see the point at issue:

Nevertheless, although the Synod of 1924 made these clear and definite statements in regard to the doctrine of common grace, it soon became evident that there were still several problems left in the area of God's grace that remained unresolved. For example, there was, first of all, the question about the so-called "favorable disposition of God toward all His creatures in general" that gave rise to a long debate. (But how can the committee call this an unresolved problem when the Synod established this as binding doctrine? Does the Synod establish problems as binding? H.C.H.) But more important than this was the problem that was presented by what Synod had adduced as one of its grounds for the position taken in the first point, and which Rev. Hoeksema called "the little point of the



first point" ("het puntje van het eerste punt"). (Again, does Synod establish problematical grounds for its doctrinal pronouncements? History shows that none of the defenders of the First Point considered this a problem; but Hoeksema, Danhof, Ophoff, and others made it very uncomfortably problematical for men like Berkhof, H. J. Kuiper, Heyns, Keegstra, Zwier, and Jan Karel Van Baalen to maintain this position of Synod. H.C.H.) This ground stated that this certain favor or grace of God toward all His creatures in general appears from the well-meant offer of the gospel, which the Canons of Dort present as coming to all men promiscuously (II, 5 and III & IV, 8, 9). It was this point especially that became the main target of Rev. Hoeksema's attack upon 1924; and it is this same point that is also calling forth the shades of 1924 in our present controversy.

We understand, of course, that when the committee speaks of the Canons of Dordrecht as presenting the well-meant offer of the gospel, they are speaking from a Christian Reformed point of view. The Canons of Dordrecht do not speak in these articles, or anywhere

else, of any well-meant offer of the gospel which comes to all men promiscuously. But this is the consistent Christian Reformed misrepresentation of the Canons which the committee slavishly follows. If only they had refused slavishly to follow this position, they might have accomplished something worthwhile in their report; and they certainly would have had no difficulty in refuting and condemning Dekker's position.

Nevertheless, I wish to make the point that the committee in so far is correct, namely, that they *see* the point. The point at issue is the so-called general, well-meant offer of the gospel in relation to the love (or grace) of God and in relation to the atoning death of Christ. Still more: the point at issue concerns the particular, redeeming love of God and the limited, or definite, atonement of Christ. How in the light of the latter is it possible to speak of a general, well-meant offer of the gospel?

This point the committee sees rather clearly.

But this same point the committee tries mightily to avoid and to obscure.

To this I shall call your attention next.

## ON THE HOME FRONT—

# Protestant Reformed Primary Education

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

### ENCOURAGING PROGRESS

Some months ago we devoted our attention with respect to the "Home Front" to Protestant Reformed Secondary Education.

We now turn to Primary Education.

It is, of course, no less true with respect to primary education than with respect to secondary education that the principle must be followed that wherever and whenever the Lord makes it possible, Protestant Reformed parents must provide for Protestant Reformed children Protestant Reformed schools.

This implies, of course, in the first place, that the principle of Protestant Reformed education as such is one that cannot be gainsaid. It simply cannot be a question, from the point of view of principle, whether Protestant Reformed people should favor Protestant Reformed education. This is a matter of simple consistency. The covenant instruction of our covenant

seed in the school as well as in the home and church must be in harmony with our distinctive Protestant Reformed beliefs.

Nor is it open to question whether there is a difference. I will not argue this matter of difference as far as the public school is concerned: the public school is not neutral, but it is the school of the world; and covenant parents may not allow covenant children to be brought up in the world's schools. Nor will I argue the matter of difference between our schools and the existent Christian (Christian Reformed) schools on practical grounds. I will simply point to the fact that as surely as the doctrine of common grace is a doctrine which radically affects one's world-and-life view, so surely it affects education, which is exactly concerned with one's world-and-life view. Those who adhere to common grace see this clearly, and they are not ashamed to act accordingly. We ought also to see this,



— if anything, even more clearly. Moreover, anyone who has seen the actual fruits of our own schools and our own education in our children will testify that there is indeed a difference.

The concrete question, therefore, is not that of the principle of Protestant Reformed instruction as such; but the question is one of discerning when and where the Lord opens the way for us to have our own schools and of being ready, when the way is opened, to follow up our calling.

There has been encouraging progress in this regard.

In some areas, of course, we have had our own grade schools for many years. In fact, the time may not be far off when we will have a graduate or two from our seminary who has had his entire grade school education in one of our Protestant Reformed schools. It has also been reason for gratitude that in spite of all the miseries of 1953 and in spite of numerical loss, we were able to maintain our schools in these areas where they had already been established.

But in more recent years there has been progress. In Loveland our people were not slothful in beginning their own school. In South Holland a school has been established and is prospering. In Iowa the Northwest Iowa School Society, according to recent announcements, plans to open a school in the fall of this year, the Lord willing. And various news items indicate that progress is being made in Redlands also. These are good signs, and these are reasons for gratitude. And, under the Lord's blessing, we may surely look for good fruits from these efforts.

Moreover, I would also express a word of encouragement to our people in this regard, especially in those areas where numerical smallness makes it more of a struggle and a sacrifice to establish and maintain our own grade schools. By all means, go ahead! It is not always easy to get started. Sometimes, for various reasons, the backing of our people is not always one hundred per cent. Sometimes, when one looks back on the history of our school movement, there may seem to be reasons for discouragement and hesitation. Moreover, once started, we may expect it to be a struggle to maintain our schools. But, by all means, go ahead! The advantages far outweigh any disadvantages; and the benefits to be reaped far outweigh any sacrifices that must be made.

#### OUR ON-GOING CALLING

All this does not mean, however, that we have arrived. To think thus, even in those areas where our schools have long been established, would be a serious mistake.

This is true, first of all, in general. The goal of Protestant Reformed education is not merely to have *separate* educational institutions. The essence of Protestant Reformed education does not lie in the Protestant Reformed *name* on the building. The goal is separate, that is, *distinctive education*. To provide such education is our on-going calling; and, I dare say, it involves a continuing struggle. It simply will not do that, once our schools are established, we rest on our laurels.

In this connection, I wish to emphasize three items.

The first is this: we must continue to provide teachers for our schools. There was a time when it almost began to appear as though we would have a surplus of potential teachers. But this is certainly not true today. In the first place, of course, there is always a certain amount of normal loss in this regard, so that the supply of teachers must be constantly replenished. But secondly, the demand for teachers is on the increase. As we open our high school in the Grand Rapids area, and as we open more grade schools, there will be an acute need for more teachers. And therefore I cannot emphasize strongly enough that our Protestant Reformed young men and young women, when they face the question of their life's work, should give serious consideration to the teaching profession. We need you in our schools! Moreover, I wish to emphasize that *we* must provide teachers. They must come from our Protestant Reformed homes. This means not only that parents should encourage their children to train for the teaching profession. But it also implies practical measures. It is up to our school movement to help provide the necessary means whereby our young people can be trained as teachers. In this day when a college education costs in the thousands of dollars, I believe it is not amiss that our school movement provides for prospective teachers scholarships and grants-in-aid, much in the same way that our churches provide grants-in-aid for prospective ministers.

The second item is this: we must put forth greater efforts in the direction of applying our distinctive Reformed principles to every aspect of education and especially to the subject-matter of education. There is, in my opinion, a vast area here in which we have only begun to scratch the surface. This is, of course, as far as the actual work is concerned, primarily the task of our teachers. But it is also the responsibility of our school boards and school societies to see to it that this task is accomplished. This means not only that our teachers must work at the task of applying our Reformed principles in their day-to-day instruction in the classroom, but it also includes the task of providing educational materials, — notes and manuals and textbooks, — in which these principles are applied. We must continue to build in this regard. This, by the way, is one of the chief reasons for the establishment of our Federation of Protestant Reformed School Societies. This organization has now been in existence for several years. I do not know how much progress they have made; but I do know that thus far we have seen little in the way of concrete results. And I believe that we must work, and work hard, in this direction. I also believe that there are more of our school societies that could and should join this Federation. The work in which they are engaged is for the common benefit of our schools.

The third item which I wish to emphasize is this: we must continue to support our schools generously. We must see to it that we have adequate facilities. We must see to it that our teachers have adequate



salaries. And we must pay our own way; no one else will do it for us. I do not share the opinion that our grade schools in the Grand Rapids area will suffer financially because of the high school movement. Nor do I share the opinion that we must hesitate with respect to our high school because of the financial burden of our grade schools. Both are our calling. And if we must sacrifice, then let us sacrifice to provide for both. The same is true with respect to all our schools; we must be prepared to meet the costs. And truly, that cost is little enough in comparison with the high privilege of providing our children with covenant training. I believe, too, that in general our people have shown their willingness in this regard. And basically that means this: the Lord has provided for us! And we may be confident that He will continue to provide!

I also wish to emphasize that we must never, never go in the direction of accepting government aid. The possibilities of such aid seem to be increasing; and as the cost of education increases, the temptation to accept such aid also grows. As has been pointed out frequently, with state aid goes state control. And state control will mean inevitably that our schools will be deprived of their Christian principles and will be secularized. There is enough of state control already. And the time will come soon enough when the Anti-christ will try to make it impossible for covenant parents to train their own children in the fear of the Lord. Besides, it is the calling of the parent, not of the state, to educate his own children. We must, therefore, be prepared to pay our own way, even at the cost of sacrifice.

Let us, then, put our shoulder to the wheel!

## THE CHURCH AT WORSHIP—

# The Prayer of Ordination

*by Rev. G. Vanden Berg*

The prayer which brings to a conclusion the service of ordaining one in the ministry of the Word must not be construed merely as a part of the "form." Although it certainly belongs to the Form of Ordination, it is much more than this. If careful consideration was given to all that preceded, particularly the exhortations and charges given to the newly ordained minister and the congregation, this prayer will not be uttered as a mere "form," but it will express the spiritual consciousness of the church and her minister. Its content will register a lasting impression upon all those who spiritually participate in this calling upon the Name of God. This is the way it also should be. A prayer, whether part of an accepted liturgical form or composed by the officiating minister, cannot be imposed upon the praying church, but rather, the church must express from the heart her needs and supplications with thanksgiving. True prayer has its origin in the hearts of those who are genuinely conscious of their needs and sincerely seek God for their fulfillment. The effectualness of prayer depends on this and so the church and her ordained minister must not simply bring this service to its traditional ending with a word of prayer, but every utterance of the prayer must be the expression of heartfelt desires and needs.

This follows from the statement introducing this

prayer which, at the same time, expresses its motivation. That statement is: "Since no man is of himself fit for any of these things, let us call upon God with thanksgiving." This confession is more than a mere admission of human inadequacy. It implies that positively there is a sincere desire in the heart of the petitioning church to possess the blessings of God which He bestows through the offices in His Church and, realizing that no man is fit to provide these things, the earnest prayer is made to God. This desire, this hungering after the spiritual riches of the Kingdom of Heaven, is the deepest motivation of the prayer.

The prayer itself may be divided into four main parts. First of all, there is a brief but significant expression of thanksgiving. This is followed by several petitions that relate directly to the minister who has been ordained and his needs. The third section of the prayer contains supplications in behalf of the congregation, and then the prayer is concluded with the words of the well known Lord's Prayer. Briefly we make the following comments on these parts of the prayer.

## THE THANKSGIVING

From the very outset to the conclusion of this prayer we must note especially its highly spiritual content. Thanksgiving is rendered to God because "it



pleaseth Thee, by the ministry of men, to gather a Church to Thyself unto life eternal, from amongst the lost children of men." Recognition is not only given to the fact that the gathering of the Church is exclusively the work of God, but for that fact gratitude is expressed. How grateful we may indeed be that it is not otherwise. Now the gathering of the Church is sure. Nothing can hinder its realization, for the Almighty God establishes it, gathers and maintains it, according to the pleasure of His unchangeable will. And that the Lord gathers this Church from amongst the lost children of men can only be a most profound reason for thanksgiving, for this utterance is made in the realization that we, the members of that Church, are lost in trespasses and sin. That we may belong to that Church is to be attributed only to the grace of God, for which we give thanks.

The second reason for thanksgiving here is the fact that God has "so graciously provided the Church in this place with a faithful minister." We are to observe here that the provision of the ministry is correctly viewed as a product of Divine grace. God graciously provides in order that through the ministry He may bestow the blessings of His grace upon His Church. The means of grace are directly related to the office of the ministry of the Word. Without the ministry of the Word there are no means of grace, and without the latter the riches of the grace of Christ are not bestowed. In this consciousness the Church expresses Her gratitude for this provision. It is actually, therefore, a thanksgiving for all the blessings of redemption which the Church receives through the ministry of the Word.

#### PRAYER FOR THE MINISTER

In this part of the prayer the Church expresses her consciousness of the nature of the office of the ministry of the Word as this was also expressed in the Form for Ordination. She does not, therefore, pray that her minister may be a potent influence in the community, a zealous promoter of civic affairs, a successful competitor in the sports arena, a behind-the-scene lobbyist for political legislation, etc. All these things the Church of Christ does not expect of her minister, and she does not look for these things to come through the ministry. In many so-called churches today this is no longer the case and such churches cannot sincerely pray the prayer we are discussing.

That prayer contains six specific petitions in behalf of the minister. These are: (1) That he may be qualified daily more and more by the Holy Spirit for the work of the ministry unto which he has been called.

(2) That his understanding may be enlightened to comprehend the holy Word of God.

(3) That he may boldly preach the mysteries of the gospel.

(4) That he may have wisdom and valor to rule the congregation aright and preserve them in christian peace, to the end that God's Church, under his administration and by his good example, may increase in number and virtue.

(5) That he may have courage to bear the difficulties

and troubles which he may meet with in his ministry, and that he may be steadfast to the end.

(6) That, with all faithful servants, he may be received in the end into the joy of his Master.

This is indeed a very rich and beautiful prayer. The congregation may pray this often in behalf of her minister. The work of the ministry is a spiritual labor that is entirely dependent upon God and the work of His Holy Spirit. Men may indeed build organizations, but man is not able to promote the cause of Christ in his own strength or power. This is God's work which He accomplishes through the means of men; men whom He chooses and calls unto the ministry of the Word. Upon them God bestows the necessary gifts and powers to accomplish the humanly impossible task. Although God certainly does this, the prayer for these things is necessary because, as our Heidelberg Catechism expresses it, "God will give His grace and Holy Spirit to those only, who with sincere desires continually ask them of him, and are thankful for them." This is the case with respect to our individual prayers and experience but it is also true for the church. The church that does not desire and is not appreciative of these spiritual benefits does not receive them. Only when the church is spiritually hungry for the blessings of the ministry does God through that ministry bless her.

The course of the faithful ministry is always encountered by many difficulties and troubles. This cannot be avoided. Not only do the powers of the wicked and ungodly world expend themselves in opposition to the cause of Christ, but within the Church itself are found those who do not really belong to the Church and who, in countless ways, oppose the ministry of the truth. Militancy never ceases as long as the church is in this world. There are continuous disappointments and discouragements, and only because God Himself preserves His Cause can and does the ministry of the Word persevere. The Holy Spirit gives an unbreakable comfort in the assurance that the cause of Christ shall have the victory, and although things that appear often seem to emit a totally different testimony, the truth shall ultimately prevail. Then the cause of Christ shall be glorified before all men, and all who have faithfully labored in that cause will enter into the joy of their Lord.

#### PRAYER FOR THE CONGREGATION

Not only is it imperative that the minister of the Word be faithful, but it is equally important that the congregation understands and heeds her calling. Without this the labors of the ministry are to no avail. The fruits of a blessed ministry are manifest in the congregation, and therefore a four-fold prayer is also uttered in her behalf. In this respect, too, the prayer in behalf of the congregation contains no element of carnality, but is raised to a high spiritual plane. Though the church is still in the midst of the world and her members are of the earth earthy, no mention is made in this prayer for any physical or material comforts. The basic, fundamental needs of the body of Christ, without which she cannot survive, and with



which, no matter what the external circumstances of her existence may be, she can and will be manifest as the true body of Christ, are the objects of petition in this prayer.

The Church then must have grace to deport itself in a becoming manner toward their minister; to acknowledge that he is sent of God, and therefore to receive his doctrine with all reverence and submit themselves to his exhortations. The underlying supposition is that in all these things the congregation is submitting itself not to man but to God. It is His Word, His doctrine, His exhortations which come to them through the ministry of the Word that they are to heed. The fact that the church is to reject "a man that is an heretic" does not enter into consideration here. Certainly the point is not disputed that the people of God are never obligated to submit to false doctrines or the mere whims and wishes of men, but rather the positive point is established that in submitting to the doctrine of godliness which is the truth, the church is made partaker of eternal life. She must walk in the way of faith. Believing in Christ, she is called to follow Him. With her minister, who faithfully expounds the Word of Christ, she must stand in opposition to every false way and fight the battle of faith with all steadfastness, even though and when she must suffer

because of these things. It is given to her "not only to believe but also to suffer for Christ's sake." (Phil. 1:29) This is part of her glory and crown, and in her prayer she is asking for all that is essential in order that she may be a faithful church unto the day when she shall be taken into her everlasting inheritance and made partaker of eternal life.

#### THE LORD'S PRAYER

The final petition of the ordination prayer is: "Here us, O Father, through Thy beloved Son, Who hath taught us to pray"; and then follows the words of the well-known Lord's Prayer. We need not discuss the content of this perfect prayer in this connection. Only let it be observed that this prayer must not be considered as a mere appendage to the prayer offered. It is the perfect prayer expressing all that needs to be expressed in prayer. In a sense, therefore, it is repetitious of what has already been said, but the importance of the matter may well be emphasized by repetition, and in no way can it be said better than in the words of the Lord Jesus Himself. May we perhaps express the matter this way: "O Father, we have tried to express our needs and desires to Thee but we confess our inability to do so and therefore, hear us as we bring these needs to Thee in the words which our Lord taught us to pray. Amen."

### A CLOUD OF WITNESSES—

## DAVID IN EXILE

by Rev. B. Woudenberg

*David therefore departed thence, and escaped to the cave Adullam: and when his brethren and all his father's house heard it, they went down thither to him.*

*And every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them: and there were with him almost four hundred men.*

*I Samuel 22:1, 2*

It was in the cave of Adullam that David gradually came to terms with himself, the things which were happening to him, and the will of God for his future. Rather symbolically, the cave was not a great distance from that place in the valley of Elah where he had slain the giant Goliath. That event had clearly demonstrated the power of God which overshadowed him; and now that things seemed to be going so differently, his thoughts must have returned to it again and again. But there in the quietness of that wilderness valley, David had again to think and pray and meditate. And he did so too. We know from the many Psalms which come down to us concerning that period of his life. (One can still follow the spiritual development of David through that

period by reading Psalms 59, 7, 56, 34, 57, 52, 143, and 54 in that order.) For David, it was a period of comparative inactivity; but it was a period of much needed rest and refreshment also, through which he drew closer to his God. These things which had happened to him had to be understood and received in faith lest his soul should become permanently scarred with bitterness. There in the quiet wilderness it came as a healing balm.

Meanwhile, the exile of David was having its effect in Israel also. David had become far too prominent a figure merely to disappear from sight without it being noticed. Through the years, David had become a national hero, known and recognized by everyone.



Even more, it was generally realized that his source of strength and courage was much more genuine than was king Saul's. When the rumor began to circulate through the land, therefore, that Saul was determined to kill David, forcing him to flee for safety into the very borders of Philistia, the land was ripe for ferment. There were undoubtedly those who merely accepted the actions of the king as something which he had a right to do regardless of his motive; and there were those as always who received a certain sense of glee out of seeing a great hero fall. There were, no doubt, those who felt badly because of the injustice of the king but meekly accepted it in the end; and there were those whose sense of indignation was aroused and who would not be silent about it. It was this latter group which very quickly found itself in difficulty. Saul was not one to deal lightly with those who failed to support him. He had come a long way from the day when he had quietly forgiven those who failed to support him prior to the battle of Jabeshgilead, and he was now quite a different man. No sooner did a man dare to speak out in criticism of the king than the cruel hand of punishment was there to afflict him.

Among the very first to feel the heavy hand of Saul's wrath were the members of David's own family. They had actually had nothing at all to do with David's actions while serving Saul, but that made little difference to the king. The fact of the matter was that David had not done anything either to merit the disfavor of Saul. His family was counted guilty merely because they were related to David. Neither did it make any difference that David's family constituted the chief and most noble family in the city of Bethlehem. Hardly had the hatred of Saul against David come out into the open than the servants of Saul were to be found in Bethlehem, watching, asking and generally prying into every matter that had to do with the family of Jesse. Very evidently, they were looking for something upon the basis of which Jesse and his children could be blamed, while the servants of Saul neglected no opportunity to discourage everyone from giving any assistance or encouragement to the house of Jesse at all. It was not long before Jesse and all of his children realized that there could be no safety for them any longer in Israel as long as Saul was king; and gathering what possessions they could, they all fled to Adullam to live with David in the caves of the ground.

For David, it must have surely been a very encouraging thing to be joined in his exile by all of his father's house. Through the years his older brothers had gradually become reconciled to the very evident fact that the youngest of them was ordained by God to fill a most important place. Now they were among the very first to join in support behind their exiled brother, and we may be sure that David appreciated it very much. Only with regards to his parents did David find a problem. They were old and the life of Adullam was rugged and uncertain. Once again, because there was no safety for them any more in Israel, David found himself forced to appeal to the heathen. This time it was the king of Moab to whom David addressed himself, asking, "Let my father and my mother, I pray

thee, come forth, and be with you, till I know what God will do for me"; and the king of Moab, perhaps in memory of Ruth the Moabitess and grandmother of Jesse, granted them the requested refuge.

This, however, proved to be only the beginning. Throughout the land there were more who expressed their discontent with the actions of Saul, and the treatment they received was much the same until many of them had to flee to Adullam also. Each in turn was welcomed and room was made for all, with the result that soon all who were unsettled in the land, those without work and in debt, those who were rejected in their communities for whatever reason it might be began to drift down to Adullam. It was a rough, crude and motley throng that made up that wilderness community; but soon it numbered nearly four hundred and there was a joy and enthusiasm that permeated throughout, unmatched by anything else in Israel. Even more, the prophet Gad soon joined their number to teach the people and instruct them in the way of the Lord. They were poor; but they shared joyfully what little they had, and together singing the psalms that David wrote, they worshipped their God with pleasure.

At last the strength of David and his company had been built up sufficiently for them to begin to identify themselves more clearly with the nation to which they belonged. God appeared to Gad and commanded that they should leave Adullam, which bordered between Israel and Philistia and was often identified with the latter. He commanded that they should go rather into the wilderness of Juda. Thus it was that David moved to the forest of Hareth.

Meanwhile, Saul had become almost frantic because of his inability to do away with David. He felt the underlying ferment of the people, and wildly he lashed out at any one who questioned his actions toward David. It only made matters worse, until discontent was to be found everywhere. To Saul this meant treachery so that he no longer trusted anyone but his own family and his own tribe, while even here he suspected treason and was determined to weed it out. Thus it was that he called the men of Benjamin together and spoke to them saying, "Here, now, ye Benjaminites; will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards, and make you all captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds; that all of you have conspired against me, and there is none that sheweth me that my son hath made a league with the son of Jesse, and there is none of you that is sorry for me, or sheweth unto me that my son hath stirred up my servant against me to lie in wait, as at this day?"

It was a crude and utterly wicked ploy on the part of Saul to arouse support and sympathy for his own cause. He knew as much as any one about the friendship that existed between Jonathan and David, yet he would fault the men of his own tribe because none of them had thought to come and tell him about it. Even more, it was his way of letting them know that nothing was more dear to him than the destruction of David, not even his own son. He wanted every one of them to tell him everything they knew that could be used against



David, even if it reflected on his own children.

This was the opportunity that Doeg the Edomite was waiting for. He had been holding what he had seen at Nob until it could be turned to his own greatest advantage. Now the time had come. Quickly he stepped forward and spoke, "I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub. And he enquired of the LORD for him, and gave him victuals, and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine."

This was exactly the kind of information Saul wanted, not just because he wanted someone whom he could use as a demonstration of how determined he was to allow no one to give assistance to David, but it also gave him someone upon whom he could vent his frustration. Immediately he commanded that Ahimelech and all of the priests of Nob should be brought before him for judgment. Into the presence of Saul they were brought and without asking any questions Saul made his accusation, "Why have ye conspired against me, thou and the son of Jesse, in that thou hast given him bread, and a sword, and hast enquired of God for him, that he should rise against me, to lie in wait, as at this day?"

Ahimelech was indignant. The utter injustice of Saul's accusation was more than his sense of righteousness could endure. He, after all, was the priest of the Lord with as much right and authority in his position as Saul had in his. Moreover, his conscience was clear. David had come to him and told him exactly what he was doing; and there was very much more reason to trust the words of David than those of Saul. His answer was in reality a counter accusation, "And who is so faithful among all thy servants as David, which is the king's son in law, and goeth at thy bidding, and is honourable in this house? Did I then begin to enquire of God for him? be it far from me: let not the king impute any thing unto his servant, nor to all the house of my father: for thy servant knew nothing

of all this, less or more."

Little did Ahimelech realize, however, how full of hatred Saul was. His answer showed no respect for the office of Ahimelech and no desire to find the way of truth and justice. In anguished fury he answered, "Thou shalt surely die, Ahimelech, thou, and all thy father's house." Then, turning to his immediate servants and bodyguards, he said, "Turn, and slay the priest of the LORD; because their hand also is with David, and because they knew when he fled, and did not shew it to me."

A stunned silence fell upon the whole group of men standing there. These were Israelites and even the most irreligious of them had been raised in awe of the priesthood. Not one of them moved. They could not do it. But there was one there with no such inhibitions, Doeg the Edomite, and Saul knew it. To him Saul turned next and said, "Turn thou, and fall upon the priests." It was undoubtedly the darkest hour in Saul's reign. From priest to priest Doeg went unto all of forty five of them lay dead in their own blood. But even that was not enough. Next Doeg went to the city of Nob to enter the homes of the priest and to slay their wives and children. Of the whole family, only one understood what was happening in time to flee and save his own life. He was Abiathar, the son of Ahimelech. He, too, made his way to David and reported to him what had happened.

It was a dark day for David too; for he was not without guilt in the whole matter. He had lied to Ahimelech, and believing his lie, Ahimelech had defended him before Saul. Tearfully, he said to Abiathar, "I knew it that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul; I have occasioned the death of all the persons of thy father's house. Abide thou with me, fear not; for he that seeketh my life seeketh thy life: but with me thou shalt be in safeguard."

## FROM HOLY WRIT—

# The Book of Hebrews

by Rev. G. Lubbers

## THE "SONS" CALLED "BRETHREN" BY JESUS Hebrews 2:11-13

The Son is indeed perfected through suffering. He brings a great many brethren to glory, since it behooved God to perfect him through suffering for that very end. However, the writer has more to say about this Jesus and the brethren who are saved through him. It must also be made abundantly clear that the eternal Son of God comes into the most intimate relationship with all the sons to save them. He must come into such a relationship with all the sons so that the eternal Son in the flesh, through his suffering and resurrection,

causes the brethren to be one new manhood, one great family of the sanctified and the redeemed.

In verse 11 this is stated in the following words "For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." There is some difference of opinion concerning who is meant with the "one" in the phrase "all out of one". There are some who hold that this refers to God. Christ and all those who are sanctified by him are out of one, that is, they both have their sonship from God. This is evidently true in itself. But the question is whether this is in accord



with the context and the general teaching here in this entire section. The writer here is emphasizing the very humanity of the Christ who is exalted at God's right hand rather than his Deity. It is strong and intimate relationship to the brethren by means of participation in blood that is emphasized and enunciated. (verse 14) It is for this reason that we hold that the sense of the Spirit here in the "all out of one" is that both Christ and all the brethren are out of one flesh. They are all from one common human stock, they are all out of Adam. This is clearly stated in Luke 3:38, where we read "...and Adam the son of God." All are out of the one Adam, the first Adam, and thus out of God. For Christ did not assume the nature of angels, but he assumed the nature of the sons of Abraham.

Furthermore, in this relationship each has its own role, Christ the eternal Son in the flesh, and the sons of adoption. The former is the sanctifier and the latter are those who are sanctified. Not only does God bring the sons to an external glory, but that glory to which God brings all the sons is one which befits saints, inwardly sanctified, free from all sin and guilt, in the true liberty of sons, whom the Son hath made free indeed. And therefore we read here of both those who are sanctified and of him who sanctifies.

To indicate the close relationship between the sanctifier and those sanctified the writer tells us that Christ is "not ashamed to call them brethren." The fact is that there is every reason why one would think that Christ would be ashamed to call us brethren. He is the Most High God as to His divine nature, He is holy, harmless and undefiled, while we are very filthy and guilty sinners. Yet, he is not ashamed to call us brethren. Such is not only his love for us, but such is his station toward us. He is like unto us in all things, sin excepted. He is born, grows and develops, and suffers and dies.

Where did Jesus call all those, who are sanctified by him, brethren?

This Jesus did before his coming into the flesh through the Spirit in the prophets, and this he also did while upon earth in his suffering and resurrection, and this he does now from out of heaven. However, the writer has specifically in mind that thus Christ spoke of the church already in the Scriptures of the Old Testament. Here already the church could read of one who is to come and who will be a brother amongst the brethren.

The writer quotes from various passages of the Old Testament Scriptures.

The first passage which is quoted is taken from Psalm 22:23. This passage is quoted in verse 13, and it reads as follows "I will make thy Name known among my brethren." Here the writer is speaking to God. And he is speaking of what he will do with God's name in reference to his brethren, who are called "my brethren." These brethren are not mere "blood-brothers," but are the brethren which belong to the "church" elected unto everlasting life. Wherefore we read further in this Psalm (and it is quoted here) "in the midst of the church will I praise thee." The Christ will cause God to dwell upon the hymns and the praises

of Israel. It will therefore be a faithful church in the unity of faith and hope upon God. From the east and from the west, from every tongue, tribe, people and nation they will be gathered. It will be a holy catholic church, in which each member is a brother, a living member. And this will be brought to pass after the author has cried out "my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me." Did not Jesus say in the high priestly prayer in John 17:6 "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world"? And this "Name" is God's saving power and grace and truth. The blind received their sight, the lame walked and the lepers were cleansed, and the poor had the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who is not offended at such a brother!

The writer could have stopped here with the quotation from the Old Testament Scriptures to prove his point. That he proceeds is not redundancy, but rather it will cast more light on this important gospel-truth of Christ's relationship to the "brethren."

Yes, there is still another Scripture passage which teaches clearly that Christ is not ashamed of the brethren, who are his, being given to him by the Father in sovereign election of grace. The writer quotes from Isaiah 8:17 as follows "I shall put my trust in him" Here the Christ in the flesh is presented as being very really man. He is introduced as having his personal confidence upon the Lord, and sanctifying the Lord in his heart. He would live by the promises of God, and would believe the promises of God's aid and protection as spoken of in the Scriptures. A little study of Isaiah 8 will show that this has great significance. For the situation was that in Isaiah 8 the prophet and the great multitude of the people did not see eye to eye. The vast majority in Israel in the time of Isaiah and King Ahaz were such that they looked to the king of Assyria for help and not to the Lord. The promise of God to David by the prophet Nathan did not mean anything to them. They did not look for that Stone laid by God in Zion. They sought their safety and salvation in a confederacy, and did not place their hope upon the living God to sanctify Him in their hearts. But the prophet here speaks in such a way that he introduces the Christ as saying, that in the midst of this all and notwithstanding what Israel does in placing her trust upon a confederacy, he will place his trust in the Lord. This is also what happened historically. For, when Christ is hanging on the Cross, the enemies accuse him jeeringly "He trusted in God." (Matthew 27:43) He trusted in God in the midst of the brethren. He was not ashamed to call the children "brethren" and to walk trustingly as a brother amongst them.

The writer has one more passage to show that the eternal Son was not ashamed to call those who are sanctified by him "brethren." I refer to verse 13b, where we read "Behold, I and the children which God hath given me" The quotation here too is from Isaiah 8:18. There we read, "Behold I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion."

How must we understand this passage? Who are



these children? No doubt these "children" are literally the two sons which God gave to Isaiah in those most troublesome and faithless times in Israel. The one son was given the name Shear-jashub, which meant; a remnant shall return. The other son was given the name Maher-shalal-hash-baz, which meant; making speed to the spoil he hasteth to the prey. In these two names the entire history of Israel is shown to be in the hands of God, and is connected with the name of the birth of the Son of the virgin, whose Son will be called Immanuel, God-with-us! These two sons which God gave to Isaiah would all their life long be for signs and the wonders of God in Israel. For the Lord would surely make a speedy end to both Ephraim and Syria as they rose up against the Lord and His anointed king on David's throne. The Lord will bring up Assyria against both of them and destroy them. That was the meaning of the name Maher-shalal-hash-baz. On the other hand the true Israel would go down into Babylon with Judah. However, they would not remain there forever. Although all shall not return again to the land of Immanuel where the "Child" shall be born, whose name is called Immanuel, yet a remnant shall return to the land of promise from the Captivity. And that was the meaning of the prophetic and significant name of the son called Shear-jashub.

These sons of Isaiah therefore are prophetic of the return and salvation of the "remnant," (*Shear*). And these "*shear*" are the remnant according to election of grace. And Christ stands in the midst of this remnant of election and is not ashamed of them, but says "Behold, I and the children which God has given me." He says this trusting in the Lord even in the deepest depths of his suffering at Calvary; he says this now in glory while he ever lives to pray for them, "for the men which thou hast given me out of the world." (John 17:6)

Christ is ashamed of some men in the world. There

are those to whom he shall say: Depart from me ye workers of iniquity, I never knew you. But he is not ashamed of the many brethren, but brings them forth from the captivity of Babylon, taking captivity captive and gives gifts unto men." (Ephesians 4:8; Psalm 68:19)

However, this must not be misunderstood. It is not all Israel that is out of Israel. We must keep this in mind also when we come to the next verse here in this chapter. Only then will we be able to see the glory of this section in which the true humanity of Christ is taught.

#### **CHRIST LIKEWISE TOOK PART OF THE FLESH AND BLOOD OF THE CHILDREN - Hebrews 2:14**

The writer to the Hebrews here continues to say something about organic unity of Christ to the "children" of election of grace as this relates to "blood and flesh." Yes, they are all out of one, both he who sanctifies and they who are sanctified. But this relationship must not be misunderstood. Writes the author "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." (Hebrews 2:14)

Perhaps we may state at the outset that we must properly distinguish in the text between "blood and flesh," the "sons" who are partakers of the same, and finally the place which the eternal Son has in "partaking of the flesh and blood" in the midst of the children. The larger outer circle of flesh and blood (mankind), the more limited circle of the sons, according to election, within the larger circle (a smaller circle) and finally in the center of this smaller circle the Christ of God, as he took part by the Incarnation of the flesh and blood as the children took part of the same.

## **CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH—**

# **The Doctrine Of Sin**

## **The First Period, 80-250 A. D.**

*by Rev. H. Veldman*

The Canons of Dordt, of course, also express themselves on the subject of sin. Articles I through IV, of Heads III and IV, which articles speak for themselves, read as follows:

Man was originally formed after the image of God. His understanding was adorned with a true and saving knowledge of his Creator, and of spiritual things; his heart and will were upright; all his affections pure;

and the whole man was holy: but revolting from God by the instigation of the devil, and abusing the freedom of his own will, he forfeited these excellent gifts; and on the contrary entailed on himself blindness of mind, horrible darkness, vanity and perverseness of judgment, became wicked, rebellious, and obdurate in heart and will, and impure in his affections....Man after the fall begat children in his own likeness. A corrupt stock produced a corrupt offspring. Hence all the



posterity of Adam, Christ only excepted, have derived corruption from their original parent, not by imitation, as the Pelagians of old asserted, but by the propagation of a vicious nature....Therefore all men are conceived in sin, and by nature children of wrath, incapable of saving good, prone to evil, dead in sin, and in bondage thereto, and without the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit, they are neither able nor willing to return to God, to reform the depravity of their nature, nor to dispose themselves to reformation ....There remain, however, in man since the fall, the glimmerings of natural light, whereby he retains some knowledge of God, of natural things, and of the difference between good and evil, and discovers some regard for virtue, good order in society, and for maintaining an orderly external deportment. But so far is this light of nature from being sufficient to bring him to a saving knowledge of God, and to true conversion, that he is incapable of using it aright even in things natural and civil. Nay further, this light, such as it is, man in various ways renders wholly polluted, and holds it in unrighteousness, by doing which he becomes inexcusable before God.

Also in these articles the same truth concerning sin is held before us. Man has retained glimmerings of natural light, but this must never be confused with spiritual light. Sin, also here, is a vicious corruption of man's entire nature. He has retained glimmerings of natural light, but he is so corrupt that he is incapable of using even this natural light aright in things natural and civil.

We now return to the writings of the early Church Fathers, in the period 80 to 250 A.D. Justin Martyr, an Apologist of the second century, complains of the universality of sin and declares that the whole human race is under the curse, when, in his dialogue with Trypho, a Jew, he writes in chapter 95, discussing the topic: "Christ took upon Himself the curse due to us," he writes as follows:

For the whole human race will be found to be under a curse. For it is written in the law of Moses, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." And no one has accurately done all, nor will you venture to deny this; but some more and some less than others have observed the ordinances enjoined. But if those who are under this law appear to be under a curse for not having observed all the requirements, how much more shall all the nations appear to be under a curse who practise idolatry, who seduce youths, and commit other crimes? If, then, the Father of all wished His Christ for the whole human family to take upon Him the curses of all, knowing that, after He had been crucified and was dead, He would raise Him up, why do you argue about Him, who submitted to suffer these things according to the Father's will, as if He were accursed, and do not rather bewail yourselves? For although His Father caused Him to suffer these things in behalf of the human family, yet you did not commit the deed as in obedience to the will of God. For you did not practise piety when you slew the prophets. And let none of you say: If His Father wished Him to suffer this, in order that by His stripes the human race might be healed, we have done no wrong.

Clement of Alexandria, a Greek writer of the third century, directs our attention in particular to the

internal conflict which sin has introduced into the nature of man; it does not form a part of our nature, nevertheless it is spread through the whole human race. We come to sin, writes he, without ourselves knowing how.

Origin, born about the year 185 and having died probably in the year 254, also conceives of sin as a universal corruption, since the world is apostate. In his writings against Celsus, III, 66, he writes: "Now here Celsus appears to me to have committed a great error, in refusing to those who are sinners by nature, and also by habit, the possibility of a complete transformation, alleging that they cannot be cured even by punishment. For it clearly appears that all men are inclined to sin by nature, and some not only by nature but by practice, while not all men are incapable of an entire transformation." And in III, 62, he declares the following:

"While if by those 'who were without sin' he (Celsus, H.V.) means such as have never at any time sinned, -- for he made no distinction in his statement, -- we reply that it is impossible for a man thus to be without sin. And this we say, excepting, of course, the man understood to be in Christ Jesus, who 'did no sin.' Now we assert that it is impossible for a man to look up to God (adorned) with virtue from the beginning. For wickedness must necessarily first exist in men. As Paul also says, 'When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.'"

Nevertheless the writers of this present period do not express as strong a sense of sin as those of the following. On the contrary, jubilant feelings preponderated in view of the finished work of the Saviour; counterbalanced by external contests and persecutions, rather than by internal penitential struggles. It is as one sided to expect in the first centuries the experience of later times, as it is to misconceive the necessity of the later developments.

### THE DOCTRINE OF SIN IN GENERAL

Though sin was recognized as a fact, yet definitions of its precise nature were to a great extent indefinite and unsettled during this period. The heretical sects of the Gnostics in general (Gnosticism believed in dualism. The Most High God is an unfathomable depth. Over against Him stands the material world, itself evil, and formed by a God of lower rank, the Jehovah of the Old Testament. Gnosticism also made a haughty distinction between the lower, common faith of the masses and the higher knowledge of the elite), forerunners of Manichaeism, with their dualistic notions, either ascribed the origin of evil to the demiurge, or maintained that it was inherent in matter. On the other hand, the Christian theologians, generally speaking, agreed in seeking the source of sin in the human will and clearing God of all responsibility. Such a view easily led to the opinion of Origin, that moral evil is something negative. This will become plain when presently we quote Origin in this matter.

A definition of sin, akin to that of the Stoics, is given by Clement of Alexandria. He writes in the



Instructor, Book I, chapter 13, "Virtue Rational, Sin Irrational," as follows:

Everything that is contrary to right reason is sin. Accordingly, therefore, the philosophers think fit to define the most generic passions thus: lust, as desire disodient to reason; fear, as weakness disobedient to reason; pleasure, as an elation of the spirit disobedient to reason. If, then, disobedience in reference to reason is the generating cause of sin, how shall we escape the conclusion, that obedience to reason—the Word—which we call faith, will of necessity be the efficacious cause of duty? For virtue itself is a state of the soul rendered harmonious by reason in respect to the whole life. Nay, to crown all, philosophy itself is pronounced to be the cultivation of right reason; so that, necessarily, whatever is done through error of reason is transgression, and is rightly called (*hamartnma*) sin.

But that which is done right, in obedience to reason, the followers of the Stoics call *proseekon* and *katheekon*, that is, incumbent and fitting. What is fitting is incumbent. And obedience is founded on commands. And these being, as they are, the same as counsels—having truth for their aim, train up to the ultimate goal of aspiration, which is conceived of as the end (*telos*). And the end of piety is eternal rest in God. And the beginning of eternity is our end. The right operation of piety perfects duty by works; whence, according to just reasoning, duties consist in actions, not in sayings. And Christian conduct is the operation of the rational soul in accordance with a correct judgment and aspiration after the truth, which attains its destined end through the body, the soul's consort and ally. Virtue is a will in conformity to God and Christ in life, rightly adjusted to life everlasting. For the life of Christians, in which we are now trained, is a system of reasonable actions—that is, of those things taught by the Word—an unfailling energy which we have called faith. The system is the commandments of the Lord, which, being divine statutes and spiritual counsels, have been written

for ourselves, being adapted for ourselves and our neighbors.

In this quotation Clement writes that everything that is contrary to right reason is sin. Virtue itself is a state of the soul which is rendered harmonious by reason in respect to the whole life. He further considers sin as error; whatever is done through error of reason is transgression, and is rightly called *hamartnma*, sin. The different kinds of sin are lust, fear and pleasure. One consequence of sin, he also writes elsewhere in another passage, is forgetfulness of the truth, and, lastly, eternal death. That which is done right, in obedience to reason, the followers of the Stoics call *prosnkon* and *kathnkon*, that is, incumbent and fitting. What is fitting is incumbent. And obedience is founded on commands. Christian conduct is the operation of the rational soul in accordance with a correct judgment and aspiration after the truth. And the life of Christians, in which we are now trained, is a system of reasonable actions, the things taught by the Word. This system is the commandments of the Lord. Virtue is, therefore, rational, in harmony with reason. Sin is irrational, anything that is contrary to right reason. However, we do well to bear in mind that, although Clement speaks of sin as irrational and of virtue as rational, he nevertheless also states that the life of Christians is a system of reasonable actions, that is, of those things that are taught by the Word, and that this system is constituted of the commandments of the Lord. That sin is irrational and virtue rational, therefore, does not mean that man himself determines, in the way of his reason, what is virtue and sin. Yet, the language of our Reformed Confessions is surely more profound than this in its description of sin and the power of it. This, of course, is to be expected.

## EXAMINING ECUMENICALISM—

# The Reformed Ecumenical Synod - And Its Ecumenism

by Rev. G. Van Baren

In a former article our attention was directed toward that organization called "The Reformed Ecumenical Synod," or, R.E.S. for short. To this body belong several of the Reformed and Presbyterian church denominations from various parts of this earth. We as Protestant Reformed Churches has also considered the possibility of sending observers to its

Synods. Because of our own interest in this body, it is proper that we know what has been done by the R.E.S. in the past. It has made decisions, and has committees making studies, on various issues. To some of these I hope, D.V., to call your attention in this and later articles.

One significant subject, which remains a matter of



continuing study, is the question of ecumenism. It would seem that as soon as two or more church groups gather together in our day, this subject inevitably arises. I present some of the decisions taken by the last R.E.S. in 1963 in this field of study.

#### UNITY AND UNION AMONG REFORMED CHURCHES

Two documents before the last R.E.S. urged study and decisions with regard to the relationship of Reformed denominations with each other. One of these documents came from the Reformed Churches of Australia, another from the Gereformeerde Kerken in the Netherlands. Both favor closer ties between Reformed groups. The R.E.S. decided:

1. Synod declare that it is desirable that the member churches seek to establish contact with other churches of Reformed structure, whether in the R.E.S. or outside it, in order that, under the operation of the Holy Spirit, Reformed Churches may be brought into closer ecclesiastical fellowship with one another.
2. Synod declare that the unity among its member churches, now coming to expression in mutual understanding and cooperation in many spheres, should come to expression in union wherever possible.
3. That Synod refer this matter to the member churches for their earnest consideration, and request them to inform the secretariat of the R.E.S. on any developments on recommendations 1 and 2. (pg. 50).

Such a decision is rather vague. There is the question of the meaning of "closer ecclesiastical fellowship." If such "fellowship" involves correspondence between denominations to apprise each other regarding mutual problems and solutions — this could prove very beneficial. But possibly this "fellowship" involves something different than this. It should be further defined.

The second point reminds one of the many other ecumenical organizations of our day which urge unity of churches. It is true that this is modified by the addition, "wherever possible." What does that mean, to urge unity "wherever possible" of member churches of the R.E.S.? Does this mean that doctrinal differences among Reformed churches of the R.E.S. ought to be ignored? Or is it doctrinal differences which make union impossible? One receives the impression from the decision that those who subscribe to the doctrinal basis of the R.E.S. ought to be able to unite together denominationally on the same basis. Is this the intent of the R.E.S. decision?

#### ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

The "attention of the R.E.S. is called to a certain development in the Roman Catholic Church of which the Second Vatican Council gives evidence." The question was raised whether there ought not to be a revision in the attitude of the churches of the Reformation over against Rome. The following declaration was made:

Although the latest development in the Roman Catholic Church seems to have raised high expectations in some Protestant circles regarding the possibility of a reapproachment of the Churches of the

Reformation and the Church of Rome, there are no decisions of the Second Vatican Council to make such expectations realistic.

Although the Roman Catholic Church shows a tendency to soften its attitude towards those who do not belong to that communion, and seems to have under consideration a re-evaluation of the Bible in relation to tradition, yet there has not been any attempt on its part towards removing the real barriers between the Churches of the Reformation and the Church of Rome, i.e., the unscriptural doctrines and practices of the Roman Catholic Church.

The Churches of the Reformation in their approach to the Roman Catholic Church and its members cannot do otherwise than to point to the infallible Word of God as the sole rule for faith and conduct, while praying that the Holy Spirit may open the eyes of the Roman Catholic Church to the sole mediatorship of Christ, and the truth of salvation by grace alone, as set forth in the Holy Scriptures.

The Churches of the Reformation should assiduously resist tendencies to compromise with such practices of the Church of Rome as are at variance with the centrality of Holy Scripture in the service of God and the simplicity of the New Testament worship. (p. 51).

#### FIVE RECOMMENDATIONS ON ECUMENICITY

The *Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland* presented a copy of a report on *Ecumenicity and "Pluriformity"* to the R.E.S. for their study and opinion. The report was prepared by "Deputies for Ecumenicity" of the *Gereformeerde Kerken* for their Synod of Utrecht in 1959. The R.E.S. gave the following recommendations with respect to that study:

1. That Synod express its appreciation of the vast amount of valuable material contained in this study, particularly the statement of the nature of the Church in relation to ecumenicity: that the Church of Jesus Christ is one, that the church in its visible aspect must strive to manifest this oneness, and that in consequence membership in the R.E.S., important though it is, does not exhaust the ecumenical task of a Reformed Church.

2. That Synod express the hope that the "Deputies for Ecumenicity" will continue to labor at the admittedly unfinished task of solving "the concentration problem"; that is, the basic question of the extent of the doctrinal agreement prerequisite to ecumenical relations among churches.

3. That Synod express the wish that the "Deputies for Ecumenicity" expand their study so as to include the consideration of Calvin's evaluation from the viewpoint of ecumenicity not only of the Church of Rome and the Lutheran Churches and the reformed episcopal Church of England, but also his attitude towards the Anabaptists of that day; in other words, that the deputies face the ecumenical problem involved in the distinction between churches and sects.

4. Taking note of the fact that the "Deputies for Ecumenicity" have not completed their study, and in view of the undeniable fact that outspoken liberals are active, and in some instances prominent, in the W.C.C. and that some of its member churches knowingly tolerate and even highly honor as preachers and teachers, deniers of cardinal truths of the Christian religion, Synod is assured that in their further study



the deputies will do justice to the antithesis of belief and unbelief, the true Church and the false, as taught in Article 29 of the Belgic Confession and Chapter XXV, v of the Westminster Confession of Faith and in such passages of Scripture as Gal. 1:8, 9; II Cor. 6:14-18; and II John 10, 11. Synod looks forward with great interest to the results that may be expected of further study of these deputies, presuming that no definite steps concerning affiliation with any ecumenical organization will be taken by the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, without consultation beforehand with the R.E.S.

5. That Synod express the desire that the "Deputies for Ecumenicity" in their further study emphasize on the one hand the need of strengthening the R.E.S. and on the other hand give serious consideration to the question whether a Reformed Church should affiliate itself with one or another of the existing evangelical

councils or ought rather to help bring into being a new evangelical council of churches.

That expresses the "ecumenism" favored by the R.E.S. Can we as Protestant Reformed Churches work with this organization which has adopted the above? The above five paragraphs represent only a declaration in response to a study made by one denomination. Yet questions arise. What does the R.E.S. conceive the "ecumenical task of a Reformed Church" to be? (paragraph 1). They state that it includes MORE than membership in the R.E.S. How much more? The questions raised in paragraph 4 concerning the W.C.C. are very pertinent. The passages of scripture and confessions on that subject are relevant. Fact is, though, that answers are not definitely given to the questions which are asked. One must wait and see what their final stand on the W.C.C. will be.

## THE LORD GAVE THE WORD—

# Some Principles of Missions

*by Prof. H. Hanko*

Our thesis has been that the preaching of the gospel is the principle sign of the return of Jesus Christ. It is the principle sign because it is the means in the purpose of Christ to bring about the other signs both in the history of the world and in the development of the church. In our last article we discussed in what way the preaching of the gospel realizes the fundamental division of the world into the two camps of Christianity and Paganism, "Jerusalem" and "Gog and Magog." We pointed out that in the Christian nations, the gospel has national impact. The gospel has influence on the life of the nation and alters its character so that the nation becomes civilized. But the gospel never accomplishes this in all the nations of the earth. Nor is this God's intention. Rather, in the nations of paganism, the gospel only saves those "who are ordained to eternal life" without having this national influence which brings the nation into the camp of civilization. The nations themselves remain in dark heathendom.

As the end of the world nears therefore, there is a fundamental difference between the two camps into which the world is divided by means of the gospel. On the one hand there is the camp of Christian nations. Already in our day these nations are clearly defined. They are the nations in which the gospel has run its

broadest course. When the gospel was first preached, it was limited to Jerusalem and surrounding environs. But, according to the Lord's command, the gospel was brought to the entire known world of that day. It spread to Antioch in Syria. And from there the gospel of the cross was carried into Asia Minor and Greece, Macedonia and Italy. With the close of the apostolic era, the gospel had been preached in every nation then known.

With the fall of the Roman Empire and the settlement of Europe by the barbarian tribes, the gospel was also brought into the heartland of Europe north of the Alps. Through extensive and oftentimes heroic missionary labors, the gospel was brought to every barbarian tribe and Europe was converted. With the opening of a new continent in our own land, the gospel was preached here also. And when the vast migrations of Europe filled this land, the gospel was brought to these shores and the church established in America.

But always in these nations the gospel influenced the entire life of the nation so that it became Christian. The entire nation was affected by the preaching of the gospel; civilization was developed; the lands were Christianized. This has continued till the present day.

The result is that the nations of the "West" are what we commonly call "Nominal Christendom."



However, this does not mean in any sense of the word that all the citizens of these Christian nations are elect people of God and members of the church which is the body of Christ. Such is far from the case. We need only look about us today at our own land to see how far from the truth this really is. Yet these Christian nations are characterized by certain distinguishing marks. In the first place, as we have already said, these nations have become the centers of civilization. In them has been found the progress of science, art, technology, philosophy and all branches of learning. They have been the leaders in subduing the earth and have stood in the vanguard of the advance of knowledge. No doubt, this is chiefly true because the gospel in its very nature emphasizes education and learning because it emphasizes the knowledge of God. And therefore as the gospel has penetrated into the very life of the nation, the nation has become a repository of culture.

In the second place, generally speaking, this has taken place in nations divided according to the age-old division of the sons of Noah. It is particularly the descendants of Japheth who have been chiefly involved in this. That is, the gospel has been brought to bear upon these nations who are descendants of him of whom it was said: "Japheth shall dwell in the tents of Shem." The civilizing force of the gospel has been chiefly found among these people.

In the third place, the entire nation has been brought into the institutional church. Not simply a few scattered individuals; not simply a minority of families; but the entire nation has become a part of the institution of the church of Christ. The result is that the nation, in its generations, and organically considered, is composed of those who belong to the broad lines of the covenant. The generations are born within the historical dispensation of the covenant, are brought up under the influence and teaching of covenant instruction, receive the signs of the covenant and live within its historical influence. In subsequent years, many of these children no longer are a part of the covenant lines; but this is because in the generations that follow, many fall away. They did belong to the covenant at one time; and the results of this are still evident in them.

In the fourth place, no matter how wicked a nation may become, it still retains some evidences of the fact that it was part of the church. In our own country there is, e.g., an ostensible belief in God. This is recognized to such an extent that the name of God is included in many state documents; the motto "In God we trust" is included on our coins; the name of God is retained in oaths taken for public office; the pledge of allegiance to the flag includes the phrase: "one nation under God", etc. It may be *nominal* Christianity which characterizes our nation; but it is most emphatically Christianity. So much is this true that Scripture calls such nominal Christendom by the name of "Jerusalem" or "the camp of the saints," etc.

These distinguishing features are of considerable importance in our understanding of the role of the preaching of the gospel as a principle sign of Christ's

return. These characteristics do *not* mean that all these people in the nation are God's elect. This is far from the case. Rather, the situation is as it always was in the nation of Israel during the Old Dispensation. The nation as a whole was Israel "to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises." But the fact of the matter was that "they are not all Israel that are of Israel." This was never the case. Many who belonged to the nation were not true Israel. They were a part of the nation; they bore in their flesh the sign of the covenant. But they were not God's elect. The true Israel was only a small minority, a "remnant according to the election of grace," a "seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal," a "cottage in a vineyard, a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, a besieged city."

So it is true in the nations which belong to Christendom. Outwardly Christian they are; but outwardly only.

Yet this is precisely the reason why Antichrist comes from these nations. He is *Antichrist* (anti christ) only because he comes in the place of Christ and opposes Christ. But he must know about Christ in order to do this. He must be one who retains an outward profession of the Christian religion and maintains that what he proposes as the religion of his realm is indeed true Christianity. Thus the chief feature of the kingdom of Antichrist is that it is apostasy from the revelation of God in Christ given through the preaching of the gospel. Christendom develops into *nominal* Christianity; and nominal Christianity develops into anti-Christianity. But Antichrist could not possibly come out of paganism. His kingdom retains the name of Christendom and he is insistent that this be so. No clearer evidence of this is to be found than in our own country, where the church has become in the most literal sense of the word anti-Christian. While indeed there is an effort to retain the name "Christianity" and while surely to deny the fact that our country is a Christian country is to run the risk of denunciation; the fact is that our country is not Christian in the true sense of the word — the sense of a pure and untarnished confession of the truth of Scripture.

But paganism is quite different from all this.

Indeed the gospel has come into these nations. It has been preached in many of them for a millennium now. And there is no doubt about it but that the church has also been gathered from these nations, for God gathers His Church from every nation and tribe and tongue. But a profound difference nevertheless remains between these nations and the nations of Christendom. In the first place, these nations (particularly of Africa and Asia) have, for the most part remained in the darkness of paganism. Civilization and culture have not flourished among them, but passed them by. They remain uncivilized and barbaric. They did not contribute to the advance of knowledge. This is no doubt due to the binding of Satan described so vividly in Revelation 20, for in his binding he was unable to deceive the nations on the four corners of the earth. But this is also due to the fact that the gospel did not enter into the life of the nation and alter its character. The



Church was plucked out as the gospel "glanced" off the periphery of the nation.

In the second place, and closely connected with this, the nation was not brought into the institutional church. As far as its national character is concerned, it continued to live in paganism with pagan religions. The religions which characterize these nations are fundamentally different even from the nominal Christianity of the West. Buddhism, Hinduism, fetishism, Confucianism and all the others are pagan religions which bear no resemblance to the religions of Western denominations of whatever kind they may be. And the difference is that while the religions of the West are apostasies from the true faith of God in Christ, pagan religions are corruptions of the manifestation of God in creation. The heathen have not the revelation of God in Christ. They have the speech of God in the things that are made. And their religions are apostasies from this speech of God. These are described in their essential character by Paul in Romans 1. And, no matter that the gospel came also into these nations and gathered the church, as nations they remained wedded to pagan religions. This has not changed until the present day.

In the third place, this fundamental difference between these two "camps" in the world is so great that there is a mutual distrust, a mutual hatred, a mutual bitterness that time cannot erase. Pagan nations cannot tell the difference between true Christianity and false Christianity. And they hate it all. They therefore consider the West to be truly Christian and they deal with them as such. But as nations they have no sympathy with Christianity and with the Christian nations; they despise them and will not have a part of their religion.

Perhaps it is true in our day that these nations are eager to lay their hands on the fruits and luxuries of our advanced civilization. Indeed, who can blame them for wanting a share in our material prosperity so that their lives of poverty, disease and early death are changed? But the Christianity of the West they detest. How evident this is. As the nations which have been sleeping in dark paganism for so many years gradually emerge from sleep and become aware of what is happening in the world about them, they, too, want their own place in the community of nations. But it is *their own place* they want. The strong nationalism recently characteristic of these countries is a major news item of our times. They want to erase all traces of their former domination of foreign peoples. While they desire to join the community of nations and while they readily receive the benefits of the advanced technologies of their neighbors, they want nothing of the religion of the West. When they become nations, as often as not they expel immediately all the missionaries who labored there. Who can deny that the doors of the nations are rapidly being closed to missionary work? And it happens with startling frequency that once a nation has achieved independence, many in the nation who once were called Christians immediately revert to their old pagan ways. All traces of the religion of the West must be rooted out of these nations. They have their own religions — pagan religions; and with

them they are content.

The gospel does all these things. This is the point we are making. And, as the gospel does all these things, the purpose of God is being accomplished.

No doubt, inasmuch as Antichrist will rule over a world-wide empire, he will succeed for a brief time in imposing Western civilization and culture upon these nations against their will. There are strenuous efforts being exerted to accomplish this end today. Antichrist apparently will succeed in welding the entire world together into one empire. But the basic differences that exist between paganism and nominal Christendom are not so easily destroyed. The differences remain. The chasm persists. The unity of Antichrist's kingdom is a veneer which only hides a bad crack underneath. And before the end comes again, the differences will burst forth and the antagonism which has always characterized the relations between the two will break out in fury.

It ought to be evident that these truths have important implications with respect to the character of missionary work. And to these we shall turn, the Lord willing, in our next article.

## An Open Letter

### From the Board of the R.F.P.A.:

*To our beloved subscribers, consistories and pastors*

Have you ever asked yourself the question, "Why do I subscribe to the *Standard Bearer*?" Or to put it another way, "What can I get from the *Standard Bearer* that I can't get elsewhere?" Certainly, there must be something about the *Standard Bearer* which recommends itself to me. Unlike other periodicals, it is not humorous; it is not light reading; and a picture between its covers is a rarity. Well, then, what is its attraction?

We believe its attraction lies in its sound exposition of God's Word, its fearlessness to face opposition, and its determination to sound the alarm in a church world that has gone almost completely apostate. Take this away from your *Standard Bearer*, and substitute pictures, a glossy cover, human philosophy, humor, and a few human interest stories, and you would have just another average church magazine, — interesting from a human point of view, but spiritually dead.

Certainly, in gratitude to God we must do our best to obtain the widest possible circulation and make the best possible use of the excellent material offered by our pastors. May we suggest to our churches:

- 1) The occasional recommendation of articles from the pulpit.
- 2) Finding room in your church bulletins for a weekly reading schedule.
- 3) The placing of a few issues of the *Standard Bearer* in the lobby of your church for visitors.

We feel that these three suggestions, if followed, will promote interest, spiritual growth, and circulation.

Yours in His Service,  
Board of the R.F.P.A.



## BOOK REVIEWS—

# A Serious Call To A Devout and Holy Life

## God With Us, A Life of Jesus For Young Readers

### The Minor Prophets

### Calvinism, Its History, Principles and Perspectives

### Herman Bavinck En Zijn Tijdgenoten

A SERIOUS CALL TO A DEVOUT AND HOLY LIFE, by William Law; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1966; 313 pp., \$1.95, paper.

This paperback is an Eerdmans re-publication of a book first published in 1728. William Law, the author, was born in 1686, a time which puts this book in the era of dead orthodoxy in England. And it is this dead orthodoxy which is challenged by the book. Law writes in protest against the external religious practices of the day and calls the church to live a holy and devout life in keeping with their outward confession.

The book is wholly practical, without any attempt being made to defend and develop the truth of Scripture. This is also an objection which has been raised by others against it. This objection is answered by Geoffrey W. Bromiley who insists that this was the type of book required by the times. While this is perhaps true, it nevertheless remains a serious defect in the book since the Christian's life from a practical point of view is rooted in, and therefore can never be divorced from, his confession of the truth.

While the book is of considerable value and contains many pointed insights into the dangers of hypocrisy (a large part of the book deals with prayer), it has strong ascetic and mystical tendencies. One also wonders what Law's theology really was. E.g., he writes on p. 306: "The greatest spirits of the heathen world, such as Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, Epicetetus, Marcus Antoninus, etc., owed all their greatness to a spirit of devotion.

"They were full of God; their wisdom and deep contemplations tended only to deliver men from the vanity of the world, the slavery of bodily passions, that they might act as spirits that came from God, and were soon to return to Him."

The value of the book is to be found especially in the glimpses of the spiritual state of the church in Law's

lifetime and in this period of English church history.

Prof. H. Hanko

GOD WITH US, A Life of Jesus For Young Readers; by Marianne Radius; William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1966; 286 pp., \$4.50.

This Bible Story Book, written by a daughter of Catherine Vos whose own Bible Story Book is perhaps better known, is not recommended to our readers. The least of its faults are sometimes strange explanations for the miracles; this explanation is offered of the miracle of changing water into wine: "This was the first miracle Jesus did. Do you know why I think He did this first? It was because He wanted us to know that we must serve Him first of all in our daily lives. You do not have to go to Africa as a missionary to serve Jesus. Perhaps some day He will call you to go to Africa. And if He does, He will give you the special rewards He has promised to all those who leave family and home for His sake. But you must not wait till that day comes to start serving Him. He wants you to love Him, and obey Him, and to enjoy Him too, right now, beginning today, at home, at school, yes, and in your play and fun, and even at your parties"; a not always accurate presentation of the history; a confusing introduction into the book of stories from the Old Testament. The worst of the faults is a constant play of Arminian theology of the worst sort. So bad is this that I would not want my children even to read the book.

All of which points to the fact that there is an important place yet to be filled for a good Bible Story Book which can be of general use in our homes and which will be a means to instruct our children in the marvelous truths of Scripture. It is to be hoped that some day someone will take upon himself or herself the writing of such a book.

Prof. H. Hanko

THE MINOR PROPHETS, by Jack P. Lewis; Baker Book House, 1966; 103 pp. \$1.95.

If some society wanted to study the minor prophets in their historical setting and as far as their chief thoughts are concerned, this book could serve as an introduction. It is somewhat brief and sketchy, but written from a conservative viewpoint and contains information which gives to these little known prophets attention which they deserve. Recommended.

Prof. H. Hanko

CALVINISM, ITS HISTORY, PRINCIPLES AND PERSPECTIVES, by Simon Kistemaker; Baker Book House, 1966; 104 pp., \$1.50 (paper).

This book is intended to be a study manual. It contains a short biography of John Calvin, a brief history of Calvinism, a discussion of the principles of Calvinism (chiefly God's sovereignty), and a discussion of perspectives of Calvinism: the church's political task, educational task and calling towards separate Christian organizations. Each chapter has a list of questions added intended to stimulate discussion. If any of our young people's societies are looking for material for after recess programs, it would be well to consider this book. It is also a handy book for reference, usable by anyone interested in the broader questions of Calvinism.

Prof. H. Hanko

"HERMAN BAVINCK EN ZIJN TIJDGENOTEN," Dr. R. H. Bremmer; J. H. Kok N.V., Kampen, The Netherlands; 306 pp; Price, f 22,75

This book is a biography of a man who was undoubtedly not only a leading theologian in the churches in the Netherlands but a leading figure in the



entire life of the Gereformeerde Kerken. But this is more than a biography. When we remember that Bavinck's life-span extended from 1854 to 1921, that this was a critical period in the history of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, and that the Reformed movement in this country especially in those years was very strongly and directly influenced from the Netherlands, then we can understand that the biography of Bavinck is at the same time, — be it from a very definite viewpoint, — the history of the Reformed movement in the Netherlands, and that it is very important for the understanding of that period of

history. Something of this is expressed in the title of the book also: for it speaks of Bavinck's "*Tijdgenoten*," contemporaries. The author explains this part of the book's title by pointing to the fact that Dr. Bavinck's contemporaries played an important role in his life. However, it is equally true that Dr. Bavinck played an important role in the lives of his contemporaries, including Dr. Abraham Kuiper, Sr.

The book is interestingly written, and it is also well documented. And it furnishes many an interesting insight into Bavinck's character and into the behind-the-scenes aspect of his life

and activities, as well as of his contemporaries. In fact, it rather amazes me how much of his private correspondence is made available to the public in this book.

I would call this book a "must" for anyone interested in Dutch church history or in the Dutch background of the Reformed movement in America. In fact, I would like to see a book like this translated and published in our own language. But perhaps the market would not be large enough to warrant this.

Perhaps a few well-chosen photographs would have added some value.  
H.C.H.

#### NOTICE

The Protestant Reformed Christian School of South Holland, Illinois, is in need of a teacher in the lower room, to teach in grades 1 through 3. Please submit applications to:

Mr. Gise Van Baren  
16057 School Street  
South Holland, Illinois 60473

#### NOTICE

The Northwest Iowa Protestant Reformed School, the Lord willing, will open its doors September of 1967. Two teachers are needed: one for grades 1 to 4, the other for grades 5 to 8. Prospective teachers may write:

Mr. Ray Brunsting  
R.R. 2  
Rock Valley, Iowa 51247  
The Northwest Iowa Protestant Reformed  
School Board

#### NOTICE

The Free Christian School of Edgerton, Minnesota is in need of a teacher for the lower room for the coming school year. If interested, please contact:

Mr. Allen Hendriks  
R.R. 2  
Jasper, Minnesota 56144

#### NOTICE

Adams Street Christian School has need for six teachers for the 1967-68 school year. Four needed in lower grades, two in Junior High. Half day basis available for some grades. If interested, or for further details call collect to:

Mr. Edward Ophoff  
Phone CH 3-5874  
1107 Boston St., S.E.  
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49507

#### IN MEMORIAM

The Ladies Aid Society of First Protestant Reformed Church expresses its sympathy to the family of Mrs. L. Vanden Berg in the loss of their Mother, who was an honorary member of the Society.

Psalm 116:15 "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints."

Mrs. D. Jonker, Pres.  
Mrs. J. Newhouse, Sec'y.

#### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Mary Martha Circle of the Southeast Protestant Reformed Church wishes to express its sympathy to Mrs. H. Kuiper, in the loss of her father,

MR. W. J. DE VRIES

"For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." I Thess. 4:14.

Mrs. M. Schipper, Pres.  
Mrs. C. Westra, Sec'y.

#### GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY

On April 26, 1967 our beloved parents

MR. AND MRS. JOHN VELTHOUSE  
hope to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. We give thanks to our Covenant God for sparing them for each other and us these many years. We pray that God may continue to bless and comfort them.

Mr. and Mrs. Henry Velthouse  
Grandchildren

Mr. and Mrs. John Velthouse  
Mr. and Mrs. Irvan Velthouse  
Robert Dale  
Great Granddaughter  
Debbie Lynn



## NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES—

April 1, 1967

Rev. D. Engelsma is considering two calls; the first from our church in Randolph, Wis., and the second from our church at South Holland, Ill.

\* \* \*

Beacon Lights Singspiration turned out to be one of great satisfaction for the young people of the Beacon Lights staff. The evening of Resurrection Day saw the largest crowd ever assembled in First Church for an after-service singspiration. The spirited singing was led by Mr. Phil Lotterman, of our Southwest Church. Special numbers included a vocal duet and a piano-organ duet. Mr. and Mrs. C. Jonker sang "Christ Arose", accompanied at the piano by their daughter, Marilyn; Mary Kregel was at the console of the organ and her sister, Ellen, at the piano keyboard as they presented "The Risen Lord" in a beautiful duet arrangement. The Easter holiday was a factor in the large number of school children attending this late evening hymnsing with their parents. The offering received was for the Beacon Lights' needs.

\* \* \*

The Mr. and Mrs. Society of Hudsonville, in an after recess program, discussed, "Protestant Reformed Secondary Education", touching upon such aspects as: necessity, difficulties, curriculum, goals, distinctiveness, and needs. We trust that after having learned the curriculum and its distinctiveness, and understood the goals, the members of the society were also convinced of its necessity, and that the difficulties could be surmounted and the needs met.

\* \* \*

The Mr. and Mrs. League Meeting is scheduled to be held in Hudsonville Church May 12 with Rev. J. Kortering as speaker. Rev. Kortering was also slated to speak at the Men's League Meeting to be held April 3 at Hope Church. The topic of the latter speech was, "The Importance of Maintaining the Three Forms of Unity and the Formula of Subscription".

\* \* \*

On March 14 Rev. R. Decker, of Doon, Iowa, gave a public lecture in South Holland under the sponsorship of the local Men's Society. The topic of the lecture was announced as "Striving for the Faith of the Gospel."

\* \* \*

During a multiple-purpose Church Visitation-Classis visit to Illinois Rev. C. Hanko, of Redlands, Calif., was privileged to conduct both services March 12 in our Oak Lawn Church where he held a ten-year pastorate some twenty two years ago.

\* \* \*

The Young People of our Michigan Churches held a Mass Meeting in Hudsonville's Church on Resurrection Sunday afternoon. Prof. H. Hanko was invited to speak

on "Proof of the Resurrection". Special music and refreshments were also provided to enhance this hour of Christian fellowship.

\* \* \*

*Parents of young men*, are your sons interested in attending our Seminary in the future? If so, they may obtain a Seminary Catalogue from your pastor or consistory clerk at their convenience. The Theological School Committee and our professors have made this booklet available to them, which contains such information as school calendar, courses taught, requirements for entrance as well as graduation, etc. A close look at the curriculum reveals that our Seminary leans heavily in the direction of exegetical and dogmatical studies with special emphasis on preparations to *preach*, affording six semesters of practice preaching. Young men, interested in the course of study offered in our seminary, who are not members of our denomination, may also obtain this catalogue by requesting it from the Theological School Committee, addressing their request to the secretary, Rev. M. Schipper, 1543 Cambridge Ave., S.E., Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506.

\* \* \*

Redlands' congregation, in a March 17 meeting, decided to purchase the proposed 5-acre tract of land for a future site for "our own school, and a new church and parsonage". The success of this project, following their decision, rests upon raising the necessary downpayment which is expected to be met by loans made by members of the congregation.

\* \* \*

The third of our Lecture Series was held in another snowstorm-evening when the streets were slicked to the extent that it was very dangerous driving on many of the roads leading to First Church. Despite this natural (?) handicap a goodly number of interested people were present to hear Prof. H. C. Hoeksema expound the theological concept, "Limited Atonement", but much more than a mere concept — an eternal truth revealed in the Scriptures and embodied in our Confessions! May our churches never loosen their grip on those five points of Calvinism which are the subject of our own current lecture series!

\* \* \*

The next in the above series is scheduled to be held April 20 in First Church. Rev. G. Van Baren has been named to give this fourth lecture, which will be on, "Irresistible Grace", the "I" of the word TULIP which so handily initials the famous Five Points. Consider this announcement to be an invitation to you and your friends to attend this timely lecture, when we hope to —

...see you in church

J.M.F.