

# The Standard Bearer

**A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE**

## ***IN THIS ISSUE***

### **Meditation:**

**God's Redeemer-Son Sent**

### **Editorial:**

**The Erring Views of Dr. H.M. Kuitert (8)**

### **Another Suitor In The Wings?**

**(see: Examining Ecumenicalism)**

### **Synod's Authority and the Believer's Conscience**

**(see: All Around Us)**

## CONTENTS:

Meditation —	
God's Redeemer - Son Sent . . . . .	98
Editorials —	
Editor's Notes . . . . .	101
The Erring Views of Dr. H.M. Kuitert (8) . . . . .	101
All Around Us —	
Synod's Authority and the Believer's Conscience . . . . .	104
More On The RES . . . . .	105
Come Ye Apart . . . And Rest A While . . . . .	106
In His Fear —	
Hell-Bent Branches . . . . .	107
From Holy Writ —	
The Book of Hebrews, 7:11-14 . . . . .	109
A Cloud of Witnesses —	
David Accused By Nathan . . . . .	111
Contending for the Faith —	
The Doctrine of Sin (Gottschalk) . . . . .	114
The Lord Gave the Word —	
The History of Missions: Jesus' Public Ministry . . . . .	116
Examining Ecumenicalism —	
"The Dutch Meet Dixie" . . . . .	118
(continued from Nov. 1)	
Book Review . . . . .	119
News From Our Churches . . . . .	120

## THE STANDARD BEARER

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## Meditation

## GOD'S REDEEMER-SON SENT

*Rev. M. Schipper*

*"But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."*

*Galatians 4:4,5*

But when the fulness of time was come!  
Not the time, the moment when the world was especially prepared for Christ's coming, when the world

was fully prepared to receive Him! Thus many have and still would explain the significance of the fulness of time in our text. Never is the world ready to receive Him.



Nor was it ready to receive Him when He made His entrance into the world. Nor may it be said that the church-world was ready for Him when He came.

When the Son of God came into the flesh the heathen world lay steeped in pagan darkness. And the church-world had decayed into moral wickedness so great that it had no room for Him. In fact, it may be said that as far as the world was concerned, the coming of the Son of God was at the most inopportune time. O, indeed, it cannot be gainfully said that the Jewish nation as a commonwealth had almost thoroughly disintegrated, and that the age of the shadows and types had come to an end — the end when the reality which they foretold would be reached. Nor can it be denied that the fact that the Roman government held universal dominion helped to prepare the way for the spread of the gospel of the new day. And surely it cannot be slightly passed over that God had prepared a handful of faithful ones who were waiting for the Day-Spring from on high, the Sun of Righteousness with healing in His wings. But this is quite different from saying that the world eagerly awaited His arrival. For a clear picture of the world of Christ's day we have only to confer the writings of the apostle Paul to the Romans. Indeed, the world of that day is described as totally depraved, and the world of the church as thoroughly apostate.

Rather, the fulness of time signifies the moment which was before ordained of the Father. The viewpoint is not at all that of the world into which He came; but of God, Who sent Him into the world; of God Who works according to plan, Who stipulates the exact moment of time that coincides with His plan when His Son must make His appearance in the world of darkness, when the development of history, which is nothing more than those succession of moments God uses to realize His eternal purposes, is reached.

That this is in the meaning of the apostle is plain from the context. There the apostle is speaking of the time when the church of the shadows was a minor, though an heir. Now the minor cannot enjoy the inheritance promised to him so long as he is a minor. He is then under tutors and governors until the time appointed by the father. But when the time set by the father is reached, then the minor becomes an adult, who is ready to receive that inheritance. The fulness of time, therefore, signifies not merely the moment when the Lord Jesus was born — that was only the beginning of it — but it refers to this entire new dispensation in which the Son of God gives unto the heirs of the promise the full estate of the Father.

Then God sent forth His Son!

His pre-existent Redeemer Son!

The life of Jesus does not begin at His birth. Modernism knows only of Jesus that was born — Who had His beginning like all other men in His natural birth. Who, therefore, was no different than ordinary men. Who, therefore, was only man.

Though it is true that the birth of Jesus is historic fact, occurring in a definite place and at a dated moment, this is not the full understanding of the Scriptures. The Word of God (and this is the thought of our text) presents Jesus as the eternal Son of God. The name Son of God denotes the Mediator in His essential deity.

Before the world was, the Son was! "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God." "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not." He was the Arm of the Lord, the Agent of creation, the Revealer of God, the Light of the world. Before the fulness of time the Son was.

How important this truth is! Deny it and there is no salvation possible!

To speak of the eternity of the Son is no mere, cold theological dogma, no mysterious truth having no bearing on our need. It is so vital that without it there is no hope of salvation for us. The conception that has no room in it for the pre-existent Son dwelling in the bosom of the Father has only a maimed Christ in reference to the need of sinful men. Moreover, without this truth all Divine revelation is impossible. Then the claim of Jesus that He came from the Father to declare Him cannot be true. Unless He is the effulgence of His glory and the express image of His Person, how could we be sure that the light of His countenance was the very light of God? And must we then not scrap the expressed creed of our fathers who insisted on it that the Saviour must not only be a real righteous man, but also very God Who shall mediate for us?

God sent forth His Son!

This cannot mean merely that He is sent of God, as an angel on a mission; or, as we read of the Baptist, that he was a man sent from God whose name was John. The expression cannot refer only to the Son's commission, though this thought may not be excluded. Rather, the text teaches us that He is sent out from God! Paul here shows us that Jesus is Divine, that He came out of God. This is the significance of the incarnation. The incarnation points not merely to the birth of a Child in Bethlehem; but it is itself the coming of God into our human nature. The Saviour is come out of very God — yea, is very God Himself in the Person of the Son. But there is more.

Indeed, the Son was SENT!

Not merely did God give His Son. Both the gift of the Son and His being sent are Scriptural truths with different shades of meaning. That God gave His Son stresses the point of His being a precious gift. It emphasizes the love of God. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." While the fact that He is sent of God stresses the fact that He came with a purpose. He had a definite mission to fulfill. The Father had commissioned Him for a definite



work.

Made of a woman!

Special attention should be given here to what the text omits to say. It does not mention the woman by name or generation, and inform us that she is Mary of the house and lineage of David. It does not inform us that she was a virgin, though espoused to a man. It does not speak of a man or a husband to whom she was married.

This can only mean that the Word of God here wishes to underscore the truth of the incarnation. In this wonder of grace God is the Father Who not only sends His Son, but He is the One Who gives to the woman the seed of conception, while that Word at the same time informs us that a real human nature is what He assumed. Not a specially created human nature; nor a human nature which He may have taken with Him from heaven; but a nature which is taken out of the woman. Not only, therefore, does the Word of God here reveal that the Son partakes of and is to be identified with the Divine nature — Who is sent out of God and is thus God Himself; but the text also shows us the source of His human nature. He is not merely of a woman, but out of a woman, in body and soul, in a complete human nature.

Made under the law!

The law of God!

The law that from Mount Sinai was imposed on Israel of the old dispensation who were the covenant people of God and heirs of the promise of salvation. The law that was imposed upon the promise; which, while it could not make the promise of none effect, nevertheless made the covenant people to bear the burden of it and obligated them to bear the curse of the law if they did not perfectly perform all that the law dictated. The responsibility for which curse the people assumed on another Mount called Ebal.

The law, the essence of which Jesus Himself expressed. It is to love the Lord our God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. And thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Such is the everlasting obligation of all men. It is the law under which we also are conceived and born. It is also the law which we since our first father Adam have violated and transgressed. And the curse of the law has also been imposed on us. For: "Cursed is everyone who continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." Hence, we are shut up in the prison-house of sin and death, bound in the irons of the law and its curse.

Not only was the Son of God made of woman, but He was made under that law and its curse. Under that law and its curse He descended. Thus He stands on the same plane as the children He came to redeem.

To redeem them that were under the law!

While He performed also the requirements of that law perfectly. For He must be a real righteous man. This He

was indeed. Does He not say in David: "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart?" (Ps. 40:7,8). And does not the writer to the Hebrews show us how this Son of God coming into the world declared: "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God?" (Hebrews 10:5-7). Indeed, He was sent on a mission, a mission He was willing to perform — to keep the law of God perfectly, which we had transgressed.

To redeem them that were under the law!

For not only must He keep the law perfectly, but He must at the same time redeem those under the law!

Redeem, or purchase free those who were under the law, and therefore under the curse! This can mean nothing else than the cross, and the shedding of His life's blood. The price or ransom paid for our redemption is always said to be Christ Himself through His blood.

In bondage we were! Not to the devil, as some suppose. But to the curse imposed by God because of our transgression of His law. And a bondage from which we could not free ourselves. No price could we bring in our bondage that could unlock the prison of our bondage. No blood of bulls and goats could satisfy God's justice so as to atone for our guilt. Nor could we produce one righteous man who could take our place and sacrifice himself in our stead.

Redeemed we could be only by the blood of God Who assumed our nature and to whom our guilt could be and was imputed. But how could God lay the curse on another than the man who committed the transgression? Only when that one could truly represent us. And this is what the Son of God, made of a woman, made under the law, could and did so.

He assumed our nature and with it our curse! He, too, heard the thunder of God's law, and the terror of it vibrated through His whole being, His soul and body. O, He heard it, as none other — from the bottom of hell He heard it, until the pronouncement of the curse died out, and in its place came the Divine pronouncement of His and our justification.

Our curse He assumed, and redeemed us from it!

That is the mystery of Bethlehem!

That is the mystery of the cross!

The mysteries which are inseparably bound together. Bethlehem without Calvary has no significance. What takes place in Bethlehem is finished on the hill of the skull.

That we might receive the adoption of sons! This adoption of sons is implied in our justification, whence springs the granting of the rights of children, also the right to the eternal inheritance.

The adoption of sons!



You see, God has only one natural Son, the Only Begotten. Shall He have others, it must be through adoption. And adoption requires a legal process. Just as it is when a husband and wife desire to adopt children, which cannot be done without legal procedure; for the children which are not ours by nature can become ours only by the pronouncement of the court. So it is in the highest sense when we become children of God. By nature we are the children of darkness and children of wrath, whether we belong to the old or the new dispensation. As children of Adam, and through his transgression, we become alienated from God and have lost all right to His fellowship. We may not abide in His house. But through the redemption in Christ, our legal status changes, and with it also our rights. When God pronounced us justified through the redeeming blood of Christ, our adoption papers were signed with a pen of blood. But there is more.

Back of the cross is the eternal counsel of election in which the Father decided to adopt us. We were chosen in Christ and given to Him to be redeemed by Him. Father would have His house filled with children, and with Christ the Heir He would make us co-heirs of all that He possesses. And the very essence of that inheritance is that we might know Him and taste forever His blessed fellowship. This is eternal life.

That was the reason why He sent forth His Son in the fulness of time. That is why He must be born of woman, and born under the law. That is why He redeemed us who were under the law, that all might be legally made right for us to enter into His family and be reckoned with as His children, and receive all the rights of children.

O, wondrous purpose of God!

O, blessed Redeemer!

With Him we shall abide in Father's house forever!

## Editorials

## EDITOR'S NOTES

Due to circumstances beyond my control, Rev. Van Baren's article in the November 1 issue on "The Dutch Meet Dixie" was interrupted. We regret any inconvenience this may have caused. The conclusion of that article appears in this issue in the department *Examining Ecumenicalism*.

\* \* \*

The "surprise" from the pen of Rev. C. Hanko which I promised in a previous issue appears for the first time in this issue. Every now and then you may expect a brief contribution of this kind under the same heading, "Come Ye Apart . . . And Rest A While." I think you will enjoy these "Rest Areas."

\* \* \*

The fall issue of the "Protestant Reformed Theological Journal" should appear by the time you receive this issue of the *Standard Bearer*. There is a limited amount of room on our mailing list for a few more interested readers. If you are interested, or know of a friend who would be interested, write to: Prof. H. Hanko, 4665 Ju-le-on Drive, S.W., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49504. Requests will be handled on a first-come first-served basis.

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## The Erring Views of Dr. H.M. Kuitert (8)

*Prof. H.C. Hoeksema*

### *An Evaluation of Kuitert's Dogmatical Views*

In this section of my evaluation of the ideas set forth in Dr. Kuitert's lecture before the Christian Reformed Ministers' Institute last June I am concerned with the

third division of his lecture, in which he spoke of the dogmatical implications of his view of Genesis 1-3. Since it is a few months ago that I presented a report of Kuitert's lecture, I will briefly remind the reader of the



substance of this section of the professor's speech. For the details the reader may refer to the September 1 issue, pages 462, 463. Briefly, I reported that the following main points were made by Dr. Kuitert:

1) There must be a revamping of all of dogmatics. The professor made bold to state that his views involved entirely new insights and far-reaching implications for dogmatics, a complete re-orientation.

2) We must do away with the historical order of creation, the fall, and redemption in our dogmatics.

3) Theology must "face the facts, face the data." It must confront the historical and scientific data. It "cannot talk the fossils out of existence."

4) What Dr. Kuitert repeatedly called "traditional" theology has been unable to supply a satisfactory explanation of the relation between creation and Christ, as set forth, for example, in Colossians 1:15, ff.

5) Positively, Dr. Kuitert presented the idea that Genesis 1-3 must be used as a "teaching model." I shall refer to some of the details of this later. But I must emphasize two things: a) That whatever of a positive nature Dr. Kuitert presented as a substitute for the traditional view, it was indeed radically different. b) That Kuitert dealt only in very vague generalities and admitted that there were many problems left with regard to the development of the dogmatical implications of his view, concluding by speaking grandiosely of a panorama unfolding and of life becoming meaningful under his view.

Let us look at this part of Dr. Kuitert's address, first of all, from a formal point of view. In this connection there are several observations to be made.

In the first place, it should be noted that Kuitert was busy with dogmatics long before he reached this part of his address. In fact, this was so obvious to the observant listener that it could be predicted that the last section of the professor's speech would indeed be radical. I say this especially from the point of view of the fact that Kuitert was delving into dogmatics, and that too, at its very basis, when he talked about the doctrine of Scripture. It is, after all, one's view of Scripture which is determinative for all of his dogmatics. Dr. Kuitert's address was a clear example of this, and it should be a warning to all that once you begin to tamper with the Scriptures you will inevitably "go off the deep end" in all of dogmatics.

In the second place, it must be admitted that, up to a point, Dr. Kuitert was frank to the point of being blunt. He certainly was far from attempting to hide his ideas and the far-reaching implications of his views. He made it plain that he has little use for what he calls the "traditional view." And he made it plain that he will not attempt to fit his views into the traditional scheme of things in dogmatics. There must be re-orientation, and such a re-orientation that it changes the whole structure of dogmatics. He gives a new content to the term "creation," a new content to the term "sin," and

necessarily a new content to the terms "Christ" and "redemption." And one always has to have a certain respect for someone who is open and frank about his views and lets it be known where he stands, even as one is always inclined to despise and distrust the person who is sneaky and less than frank. For the same reason, I would say that in a sense Dr. Kuitert is a less dangerous foe than he might be if he were less open and frank. At least, thus it ought to be. No soundly Reformed man should have any difficulty with Kuitert's views as he presented them in his lecture; he should without any hesitation and without any qualms whatsoever reject them out-of-hand. For the same reason, by the way, I believe it was altogether wrong for Reformed people to invite Dr. Kuitert here and provide him with a forum to give expression to his views and make propaganda for those views. It may be argued that this did not constitute an endorsement of his views, which is true. But this is not the point. It was well-known, even before Dr. Kuitert came here, that his views were radically divergent; in plain language, Kuitert is a heretic. And it is morally wrong to give a heretic a forum; let heretics find their own forum. Along this same line, I want to remark that the great problem in the Reformed community does not lie in the fact that Kuitert's views are not obviously wrong, nor in the fact that no Reformed man should have to take five minutes to decide that they are wrong. The great problem lies in the fact that there are so few Reformed men who are willing to take an unequivocal Reformed stand and to fight. The great problem lies in the fact that also the Reformed community has been smitten by such a spirit of so-called tolerance that they will engage in so-called dialogue with any enemy of the faith and will allow the church to be "dialogued" to death.

In this connection, let it be noted that I said only that Kuitert was frank "up to a point." But that point is the crucial one. In the ultimate sense Dr. Kuitert is, after all, less than frank. When I listened to him last June, one of the questions which continually arose in my soul was this: what is this man doing in the Reformed church and in the Free University of Amsterdam? In my opinion, if Dr. Kuitert were totally frank, he would openly say farewell to the Reformed faith, to the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands, and to the Free University. This would be wrong, of course; but it would be honest and frank. For I am convinced that Dr. Kuitert's dogmatical views as he presented them in his lecture and as I understood them have nothing in common with our Reformed faith as set forth in our confessions. Kuitert has no Reformed view of Scripture; he has no Reformed view of creation; he has no Reformed view of sin; and, necessarily, he has no Reformed view of Christ and of redemption. You call this a serious indictment? I fully recognize the fact; but, no less, I am fully convinced of it. And I am thoroughly convinced that it needs saying and that there is far too much fear of being critical today. I suppose



that there are those who will accuse me of lacking in love when I make such an indictment too; and my reply to that is there is no genuine love of the brethren or of the neighbor outside of the truth as it is in Jesus and apart from the love of the truth. Those who love the Reformed faith and the Reformed church will be willing to "call a spade a spade" when it comes to heresy. And God pity the denomination which will not do so!

This brings me to my third formal observation. Dr. Kuitert spoke of the implications of his views for "dogmatics." He should have changed this, or he should have added a fourth point to his lecture. He should have spoken about the implications of his views for the *confessions*. It is, of course, always legitimate to discuss extra-confessional subjects, that is, subjects on which the confessions do not speak directly. And it is always both legitimate and commendable to strive for the development and enrichment of dogmatics within the framework of the confessions. But the fact of the matter is, in the first place, that Kuitert's lecture was marked by a complete ignoring of the confessions. There was no attempt to work from the confessions nor to make plain that he was working within the framework of the confessions. But secondly, and still worse, when Kuitert was speaking of the implications of his views for dogmatics he was in fact (whether he and his audience recognized and admitted this or not) speaking of the implications for the confessions. And, to put it very pointedly, those implications were that he contradicted the confessions. I submit that this is not an inference on my part, but a very plain fact. I refer to Kuitert's statement that we must abandon the historical scheme of creation-fall-redemption. It is precisely this historical scheme which belongs to the very fabric of our Reformed creeds. One certainly does not have to read the Heidelberg Catechism any farther than Lord's Day VII in order to see that this is true of the Catechism. In the Netherland Confession of Faith you discover this same idea within the scope of four articles, Articles 14-17. The same scheme you will discover in the Canons. It is on the very surface in Canons I, Articles 1-4; and it appears very clearly again in Canons III, IV, Articles 1-6. Now I suppose the retort to this would be that we have to distinguish between the framework of the confessions and the substance of the confessions; this is quite the fashion today in the same theological circles where all these liberal ideas are arising. But I submit that the creation-fall-redemption theme in our confessions is so thoroughly a part of the substance of our confessions that if you remove it, you destroy the confessions. And therefore, I say once more: Dr. Kuitert was not merely discussing dogmatics (where, after all, you have a goodly measure of liberty); but he was actually discussing the contents of the confessions in such a way that he was militating against them. And the latter no Reformed man has the right to do under the terms of the Formula of Subscription. If

you analyze Kuitert's speech, what he was actually proposing was a revamping, a re-orientation, of the confessions, not merely of dogmatics. If any man wants to do that, he must follow the course of filing gravamina against the confessions, not the course of public propaganda for his divergent views.

My final observation, from a formal point of view, is that Dr. Kuitert engages, in my opinion, in some rather reckless theologizing. Perhaps this kind of stuff is supposed to be scholarly; I fail completely to see it. Even apart from the right or wrong of Kuitert's views, and even apart from the question whether he is in harmony with our confessions, it seems to me that one would think a hundred or a thousand times before proposing anything as radical as what Kuitert proposed. After all, it is the duty of a theologian, and this duty belongs to the very method of dogmatics, to take into account what has been produced in the history of dogma. No, this does not mean that the dogmatician must be a hide-bound traditionalist. Nor does it mean that he must follow the ecclesiastical method of dogmatics, the traditional Roman Catholic method. But it does mean that he very seriously takes into account the past. It does mean that he will certainly give it long and hard thought before he decides to go against the stream of the entire past. It does mean that he will have what is sometimes called a "sense of history." Why? The fundamental reason is that the church in the past has also had the Spirit to guide her into all the truth. For this reason it is a tremendously serious thing to decide that all through the past the church has been so wrong that now all of dogmatics needs revamping and re-orientation. Moreover, he who proposes such a thing is duty bound to have some pretty solid and well-tested reasons for it. And, besides, he had better have something pretty worthwhile to put in the place of what he wants to throw out. And I consider Kuitert to be wanting on all three counts. Kuitert is a theological radical. It seems to me that no theologian worthy of the name would attempt to propose what Kuitert proposed in the space of one-third of a forty-five minute speech. If he had no more time than that, he should have kept hands off such a weighty subject. Moreover, Kuitert presented no solid or even weighty reasons from Scripture, from the confessions, or from the history of dogma in support of his views and proposals. And, above all, he had a woefully poor substitute for the dogmatical views which he wanted to discard. It was weakly presented. It was vague. It was admittedly undeveloped and problematical. For my part, — I say again, apart from any other considerations of right or wrong, of confessional or non-confessional, — if I were given the choice of the traditional view or of Kuitert's so-called teaching model and the meager content he presented in his speech, then, *please*, give me the rich heritage of the traditional view.

The material worth of Kuitert's dogmatical views we will consider next time, D.V.



## All Around Us

# SYNOD'S AUTHORITY AND THE BELIEVER'S CONSCIENCE

Prof. H. Hanko

Apostasy and unfaithfulness in the Church is marked by the unfaithfulness of the leaders. These leaders, be they ministers, seminary professors or others in position of leadership in the Church, intent on leading the Church into new paths, seize control of the ecclesiastical assemblies and bring their influence to bear on the delegates. The results are decisions which take the denomination from the historic path that Church has walked and which put the Church squarely on the roads of false ecumenism and doctrinal apostasy.

There are, usually, in these denominations, faithful people of God who desire earnestly to maintain the historic truth of their Church and who weep because the denomination which has been their spiritual mother has been deceived and led astray. What can they do? They cannot in good conscience before God permit their beloved Church to pursue paths of heresy and evil. They must speak out. But when they do speak out, they bring upon them the wrath of the leaders and are accused of stirring up discord and mutiny in the Church. The option is then, apparently, to leave their Church to begin the Church anew. But this is far easier said than done. After all, they love their Church and are filled with sorrow to see it go from the historic path of truth. They have lived all their lives within its walls and are devoted to it because she has been their strength and help for many years. It seems, at best, a heart-rending decision that needs to be made.

But there is a question which repeatedly arises in this connection. Do these people have a right to agitate publicly against ecclesiastical decisions? May they make propaganda in the forum of public opinion for their views in spite of what classes, presbyteries or Synod's may have decided? The question needs to be answered.

Jerome De Jong addresses himself to this question in a recent issue of the *Missionary Monthly*. He quotes a letter which had originally appeared in the *Church Herald* which letter inveighs against such public agitation. The letter reads:

Since only General Synod has the authority to adopt denominational policy and may "delegate the formulation of policy to committees," it is absurd for individuals and congregations to thwart any decision of General Synod. Let us remember that we are bound as members of the R.C.A. to abide by the decisions of General Synod, no matter how displeasing these decisions may be. If we follow our own conscience and desires, however laudable, we are defeating the design of government for the Reformed Church as set up in the Constitution. Through such action, we are also

adopting a form of congregationalism. What I am asking for is the united support of every member in the R.C.A. concerning any decisions, made in the sessions, past and future, of General Synod.

The letter argues forcibly for submission to the decisions of ecclesiastical assemblies. Not surprisingly, De Jong disagrees with this position.

He acknowledges the fact that opposition to ecclesiastical decisions may lead to dissension and strife in the Church. But he takes the emphatic position that the letter violates a fundamental principle of the Reformation, the principle of the freedom of the individual conscience. He insists that this letter outlines a position of an "infallible synod" which substitutes for an infallible pope. His argument is worth paying attention to.

He reminds his readers that Scripture enjoins upon believers to try the spirits whether they are of God. Cf. I John 4:1. He quotes the Belgic Confession, Article VII concerning the supreme authority of the Word of God. He refers to some history in the Reformed Church which has to do with Article 31 of the Church Order of Dordrecht. Apparently, while the Constitution of the Reformed Church still retains regulations concerning appeals mentioned in the Article, the form of the Article as it was adopted by Dordrecht and as we have it in our Church Order including the all-important last sentence was dropped by the Reformed Church as early as 1792. This last part reads: "... unless it can be demonstrated to be contrary to the Word of God and these articles." (Quoted from De Jong's article.) On the basis of these matters, and with the fervent wish that the last part of Article 31 was still in the Constitution of the R.C.A., De Jong argues that no decision of an ecclesiastical assembly may bind the conscience of a man under any circumstances. It is then, in De Jong's words, the calling of an individual who disagrees with these decisions to "do all he can to stop such action." He writes: "If we all agree with the 'leading lights' we may find ourselves without a church to direct."

With the basic position of De Jong we agree. It cannot be otherwise. Surely ecclesiastical assemblies are fallible. They are never immune to error. That they err happens again and again. And surely no conscience of the child of God may be bound by erroneous decisions of ecclesiastical assemblies. The conscience of the believer is bound by the Scriptures alone. This is a precious heritage of the Reformation which, if we lose,



we shall suffer shame and grief.

And because the conscience of the believer cannot be bound by erroneous decisions of any ecclesiastical assembly, the believer must do something about these. He has this obligation before God. He has the solemn responsibility from which he may not shrink back to correct decisions which conflict with God's Word. Out of love for the truth of God, out of love for the Church of which he is a member, he can do nothing else.

And yet, I agree too with the basic thrust of the letter which De Jong criticizes. This may sound strange; but so it is. The question is this: Precisely what form must this opposition to erroneous decisions take? It is at this point that De Jong is vague. And it is at this crucial point that many err. It is true as De Jong says: "If you feel that any particular action of Synod is *not* for the best interests of the church you have a positive duty to *do* all you *can* through legal channels to stop such action!" But the whole article as a criticism of the letter, leaves the impression that De Jong advocates much more in the line of opposition than action through legal channels.

It is this latter which, if De Jong supports it, is wrong. If a child of God sees leaders in his Church take the denomination down roads of apostasy, he must do all he can to turn the Church back to the truth. But his opposition must be always in keeping with Article 31 of the Church Order. He must show, by way of appeal, that the decisions conflict with the Word of God and the articles of the Church Order. I do not know how the present regulation of the Constitution of the Reformed Church reads. But the right of appeal is precisely the

key right which protects the individual conscience within the Church and which recognizes that no decisions can be of equal value with the Word of God.

But the decisions taken are nevertheless settled and binding if they are not contrary to the Word of God. This settled and binding is something De Jong apparently ignores. There is only one kind of legitimate opposition which can then be tolerated. It is the opposition of appeal. Any other kind leads to dissension, anarchy, rebellion and schism. Public agitation against ecclesiastical decisions is contrary to decency and good order. It can only be disastrous for the Church.

But what then must an individual do when he does appeal to higher assemblies and his appeals are turned down? Can he then interpret this as license to agitate apart from legal channels? Decidedly not. This he may never do. It is at that point that he must face the question, agonizing as it may be, whether to leave his Church to engage in the work of reformation or to stay and see himself and his generations carried down the roads to false doctrine. This is how he still maintains the sanctity of his individual conscience. And let it be understood: he maintains the liberty of conscience when he will not remain in a Church which refuses, officially, to bow before the Word of God. This then is his only course of action. It may be difficult. It was no less for Luther. It may be heart-rending. The crisis of the times will more and more demand it. But let such a one, with genuine concern for the truth and the cause of God, not let rebellion soil his hands.

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## MORE ON THE RES

In the October 29 issue of *Church and Nation*, Martin Woudstra makes some comments on a decision of the last meeting of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod which almost passed unnoticed, but which are, in the author's opinion, perhaps the most important decisions the Synod took. He refers to certain decisions taken with respect to the doctrine of Scripture. In the publicity which surrounded the discussions and decisions on race, these all but went unnoticed.

In order to understand them, we must be acquainted with some history of this matter. In 1958 the RES, meeting at Potchefstroom, South Africa, made some decisions on Scripture which upheld the truth of infallible inspiration and the sole authority of the Word of God. In 1961, the RES received a letter from the Gereformeerde Kerken in which these decisions were criticized. The RES Synod of 1963, meeting in Grand Rapids, treated these objections and decided to request the Dutch Churches to study the problem which had been, according to the Gereformeerde Kerken, not

adequately treated in Potchefstroom. They threw the ball back to the Churches which had brought the objection. The objections dealt primarily with the content and purpose of Scripture and its relation to Scripture's authority. At last summer's Synod, the chairman of the moderamen of the Gereformeerde Kerken wrote a letter in which he spoke for all the moderamen, and by means of which he informed Synod that the instructions of the RES in 1963 were not feasible because 1) the problem was far too complex; and 2) because the problem was currently under discussion in the Gereformeerde Kerken. In point 2) reference was, of course, made to the controversy swirling in the Netherlands around the views of such men as Koole, Baarda, Kuitert and others. These men have made serious attacks on the truth of Scriptures' authority.

The advisory committee of last year's RES advised Synod to appoint a standing committee which would study the various questions involved and which would keep the churches of the RES informed of develop-



ments. This advice was rejected. Rather, Synod decided to refer the criticism of the Gereformeerde Kerken to the individual Churches who are members of the RES for study and reaction.

Woudstra claims (and I concur) that this decision may yet prove to be one of the more important ones taken

last summer. It is evidence of the turmoil and confusion regarding the question of Scripture in the Churches of the Reformed faith and especially in the Gereformeerde Kerken. The authority of Scripture is constantly under attack. But the matter is of crucial importance for the continued existence of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod.

## COME YE APART . . . AND REST A WHILE

Rev. C. Hanko

You may recognize this heading as taken from the Scriptures. Maybe you even recall that it is part of Jesus' summons to His disciples. In its entirety it reads, (Mark 16:31): *"And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat."*

The immediate occasion for this summons was that Jesus was at the height of His popularity in Galilee. The people had watched with amazement as He healed the sick, cleansed the lepers, cast out demons, and even raised the dead. They had decided that He would make an ideal king to deliver them from the Roman yoke and to create a Great Society for them right here on earth. They fairly burst with enthusiasm as they daily swarmed round about Him in hope and admiration. The disciples were so pressed by this throng that they barely found time to take a bite to eat. It was high time that they got away by themselves to catch their breath, if nothing more.

Reading the verse that just precedes this text we find that there was still another occasion for this summons. The disciples themselves were pent up with excited enthusiasm. They had just returned from a tour through Galilee. Jesus had sent them out to preach repentance to the people, for the kingdom of heaven was at hand. Christ had even empowered them to heal the sick and to cast out devils. At their word many had been cured, even devils had fled. Exhausted, but convinced that the kingdom of heaven was certainly very near, they were eager to tell the Lord of all their experiences. Obviously, they, too, were still looking for an earthly kingdom. How sorely they needed time for quiet reflection; time by themselves, and still more necessary, time with their Master.

And then a deeper look at the entire context, and comparing this with Matthew's account (Matthew 14:13), tells us that Jesus had a still greater motive in drawing His disciples apart in a quiet retreat by Himself. He had just been informed of the ghastly death of John the Baptist under the cruel blade of King Herod, because of the bitter hatred of Herod's illegal wife. They that kill the prophets and stone those who are sent unto

them were again busy, and would soon unite their forces against the Lord Himself. How well He knew it! Once more the cross loomed up, larger and darker than ever. How blissfully ignorant the disciples were of the fact that their Lord must first ascend the accursed tree before He could enter into His kingdom. How much they still had to learn. How necessary it was for Jesus to draw the "twelve" apart for some more instruction.

Come ye apart and rest a while.

Yes, we have our rest areas along the highway. It does us good when travelling to break away from the rush of traffic for a breathing spell or a snack. We sit alongside the freeway and watch the cars and trucks go by. All kinds of trucks dashing toward some unknown destination. Big cars, small cars, campers, trailers, of every kind and description. Everyone rushing along at a terrific speed, intent on going somewhere, and obviously in a big hurry.

We have our coffee breaks, our rest periods, our time off, our holidays, our vacations. We have many more than in former years, but life is so much more rushed. True, even our vacations are usually so packed with activity that we come back just as tired as when we went, or more so. But we've had the change anyway, and the rush and tumble of our daily existence drives us onward. Whereto? We hardly have time to ask.

But how about our spiritual withdrawals?

Has the inner chamber lost its significance in our lives?

Has the coffee break with friends replaced our "sweet hour of prayer"?

Have you been so busy today that you found no time to read your Bible, to spend a few moments in intimate fellowship with God in prayer, to pour out all your busy needs before His throne? Is God forgotten in our busy schedule?

Come ye apart to God.

He tells us: Cast all your *cares* upon Me, for I *care* for you.

He urges us to ferret out our problems before His face, under the guidance of His Spirit and in the light of His Word. There lies the only solution to the knottiest problems of life.



He calls us aside to Himself that He may prepare us for the trials that await us tomorrow, bigger temptations likely than we have ever faced. He is able to refresh us with renewed strength for the duties that still await us before our work is done.

And always it is so essential in our lives that we turn our myopic eyes away from the present to the future; that we lift up our eyes unto the everlasting hills, and our ears to the Most High, from whence cometh our help.

That is the purpose of this and possible future articles under this heading.

These writings are not intended to be strictly dogmatical, nor exegetical, nor meditative. They may have a flavor of each of these, and they may even have a blend

of Christian living. But they intend to draw us away in the rest area, along the side of life's rushing traffic, to watch the cars go by, and to find our seclusion in a quiet retreat. But especially to be drawn aside by ourselves *with our God!*

Why not open your Bible, preferably in the privacy of your home? You can do so alone or along with one most intimate to you.

You might even turn to Mark 6 and read the entire chapter, just as a starter.

But in any case, listen as you read. Listen to what the Spirit says to YOU. By all means, do so prayerfully.

That you may find rest.

Rest for your soul.

## *In His Fear*

# Hell-Bent Branches

*Rev. J. A. Heys*

As the twig is bent the tree will grow; and as the child is trained the man will walk.

Therefore the twig must be securely tied in the position in which you would have it grow; and by the Word and by a rod the child must be kept in the way that the man should walk.

Does it not follow then that the grotesque stance of so much of society today reveals the type of training that the world has been practicing? One would say so, except for the fact that we have that other basic truth to remember and on which to base all of our observations of man's behaviour. As we pointed out before, man comes into this world bent from the position in which God created us and in which we should go. The worldly teacher, social worker, and often the preacher on the pulpit want to ignore this fact and philosophize as though it is not true; but it is an undeniable fact that causes all their efforts to reform man, and to solve the problems of the age to fail miserably. The tree became bent in Adam, and we may say hell-bent with all that which it implies. The way in which man began to walk after the fall was not an indefinite course that could turn somewhere along the way to heaven or to hell. It was directly towards hell, because it was directly away from God. It was the way of death, as God had stated, and then, not mere physical death but the everlasting death of hell.

Only in a relative sense can we speak of bending the unregenerated. We cannot bend them upright to face God again. We cannot point them once again to Him. They are doubled over in rigor mortis, the stiffness of

death, and that of course means spiritual death. But that dead body can be swung around from one side to the other, from one evil to another. And you can train the spiritually dead into ways of darkness and wickedness in which they and the former generations had not gone, or to a degree further in that evil. And so you get a world of hell-bent branches, each helping to fill up the measure of iniquity.

We have come a long way from the days of Cain, of Jabal, Jubal and Tubal-Cain, of Sodom and Gomorrah and of Korah, Dathan and Abiram. Jude speaks of the ungodly walking in the way of Cain, of running greedily after the error of Balaam and of perishing in the gainsaying of Korah. The twig is bent, the whole tree is bent from the trunk in Adam to the last branch that appeared but yesterday. But those bent twigs can produce a variety of evil fruits and year by year bring forth bigger fruits as well. All are hell-bent; but there is a variety of fruits that they bring forth.

Take a look at the posture of today's society!

All the twigs and branches are bent downward and away from the glory of God; but look at the hippies and yippies, the rioters in the field of labor and in the fields even of education! The older generation looks on with amazement, and some of the membership of this generation have said, "We did not know that we could do these things." Well, in a way they could not, and yet in another they certainly could, and their very remark indicates that. They could not in the sense that the sin had not developed that far. Men did not have the courage to do the evil, to flaunt all authority and rule as



they do today. The sinner has found that what he cannot do with impunity individually, he can pull off as a mob and that by sheer numbers he can put rule and authority to flight. The devil has taught long and well and produced some very clever graduates. More and more of these hell-bent branches are not stopping at the high school level of education in sin but going on to college and university, and then taking a few post-graduate courses as well. And they in turn are bending their children in the way that they ought not go. On the other hand they could have done these evils of riots and violent demonstrations years ago in the sense that they had the potential and the desire but not the proper circumstances and courage.

Let us not be so naive and silly as to speak of mere man overcoming sin. Sin has been steadily developing; and of late it has been developing with tremendously rapid strides. The most ungodly will see that and acknowledge that. The unbelievers are becoming mighty fearful. Areas of safety for them as well as for the Christian are becoming smaller and smaller. Perils from their fellowmen are increasing with every year. City curfews have to be blown at earlier hours of the night. Assassinations of men, whose names become known a little better than others, increase. The curse and fear of having a little extra money is the kidnapping and possible death of your children. Moral filth has permeated every stratum of society and its suggestive pictures and language are hard to avoid no matter where you go or what piece of printed matter you may pick up, or is sent to your home. And we need not say anything about the first table of the law. Unprintable words of cursing and swearing become the spice of today's writing and speaking. Luxury and wealth, pleasure and the flesh are gods the world has placed before Jehovah and besides Him. The Sabbath is a holiday instead of a holy day. Men and lustful, seductive women are the idols of today's teenagers and children not only but of men and women who worship at their altar, the TV set, every night with fervent devotion!

And by all means, then, let us not be so naive and foolish as to speak of a restraint of sin *in the heart* of the unregenerated by the Spirit. If that is the work of any kind of God's grace, that grace is certainly losing its power, and man is going to overpower God in the end, at least for a time, until that grace of God wears so thin that it disappears, and then is replaced by so terrible a wrath that it banishes into hell these hell-bent branches! What? An unchangeable God's grace of some sort turns, because of something the creature does, into wrath? The Unchangeable One is changed by a changeable creature? Certainly the truth of Scripture presents God as the absolutely Unchangeable One and confesses Him to be far beyond the reach of a mere creature to change or to move unto change.

Mere man will never bend the human race back to where it was when it came forth from the hands of God.

All the universities of the world, all the rules and regulations of governments, all the culture and social revolutions among men are not going to change it at all. The whole human race is hell-bent *and enjoys the position*, even though some fear may be expressed about the end of the ride. Only God can reverse the order and bend us back to the upright position by His regenerating grace and the Spirit of His Upright Son. And then He takes us off that wild olive tree and engrafts us into Christ, The Good Olive Tree. Branches of the human tree whose root is Adam are hell-bent. Engrafted into Christ, the Second Adam, we are lifted upward both inwardly as far as our soul is concerned and presently with body and soul in the glory of heaven, when we walk the street of gold in the new Jerusalem.

We are reminded of that delightful passage in Canons, Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine, articles 11 and 12, which we underscore," But when God accomplishes His good pleasure in the elect, or works in them true conversion, He not only causes the gospel to be externally preached to them but *powerfully* illuminates their minds by His Holy Spirit, that they may rightly understand and discern the things of the Spirit of God; but by the efficacy *of the same regenerating Spirit* pervades the inmost recesses of man; He opens the closed, and softens the hardened heart and circumcises that which was uncircumcized, infuses *new* qualities into the will which though heretofore *dead*, He quickens; from being evil, disobedient and refractory, He renders it good, obedient and pliable, actuates and strengthens it, that like a good *tree*, it may bring forth the fruit of good actions. And this is the regeneration so highly celebrated in Scripture, and denominated a new creation: a resurrection from the dead, a making alive, which God works in us *without our aid*. But this is in no wise effected merely by the external preaching of the gospel, by moral suasion, or such mode of operation that after God has performed His part, it still remains in the power of man to be regenerated or not, to be converted or to continue unconverted; but it is evidently a *supernatural* work, most powerful, and at the same time most delightful, astonishing, mysterious and ineffable; not inferior in efficacy to creation, or the resurrection from the dead, as the Scripture inspired by the Author of this work declares; so that all in whose heart God works in this marvelous manner, are certainly infallibly and effectually regenerated, and do actually believe. — Whereupon the will thus renewed is not only actuated and influenced by God, but in consequence of this influence becomes itself active. Wherefore, also, man is himself rightly said to believe and repent, by virtue of that grace received."

Here is the hope of being delivered out of the hell-bent position. And did you note in that quotation above that the Spirit of God "softens the hardened heart"? That He infuses "new qualities into the will, which though heretofore dead, He quickens; from being



evil, disobedient, and refractory, He renders good, obedient and pliable"? There is the word which we want! The hell-bent branch must indeed be made pliable before it can be bent into the upright position which expresses the way the child "should" go. It must be made soft and pliable, and God must do that. No spirit of man is going to do anything but swing that stiff branch around into another position of sin. Education apart from that "powerful and at the same time delightful" work of the Spirit in the heart is only going to produce more clever and skillful sinners. Look about you today and do not say that the church has become irrelevant. That is the same as saying that Christ has become irrelevant and has failed! Consider what the schools and universities teach, yea and even seminaries. You will find that they have no intention of bending the mind back to an upright position that glorifies God, but instead always advocate progress in that hell-bent position. And what else can you expect? Men hell-bent themselves, standing in the grotesque position of being

bent over double to seek this world and their own glory cannot do anything else but bend the generation they teach in their own grotesque fashion. Pity the hippies and yippies? Maybe. But by all means pity the society that has produced them. The Dutch has an expression that the apple does not fall far from the tree. Well, look at that tree out of which these hippies and yippies, these revolutionists and rioters fell. Look at all its bent branches and understand. See that trunk and those roots and be wise as to what is the cause of all the corruption in the world.

And then do not become so foolishly squeamish that you dare not speak of hell-bent branches. But appreciate that regenerating grace of God that lifts you up out of this mire and makes you upright and heaven-bound and uniquely different. Rejoice that you may walk in His fear and need not fear that hell towards which the natural branches of the human race are bent. And show thankfulness by an upright walk.

## *From Holy Writ*

### ***The Book of Hebrews (7: 11-14)***

*Rev. G. Lubbers*

#### ***THE NECESSITY OF A DIFFERENT PRIESTHOOD (Hebrews 7:11-14)-continued***

For the priesthood of Aaron, called "the Levitical Priesthood," was in its very nature and purpose transitory and transitional. It is a Levitical priesthood, because it fell under the rules and ordinances of the temple of the shadows and the types as outlined in the book of *Leviticus*. From Aaron to Christ, covering a period of some 1,500 years, this priesthood obtained and was sanctioned by the law of God for Israel. However, it was never meant by God Himself to be permanent and abiding. It was so instituted as to give place for another priesthood. The law of the temple ceremonies of the Old Testament pass away when they are fulfilled in Christ!

There was a change made in the priesthood itself. The priesthood was changed. Aaron's priesthood gives way for the priesthood after the order of Melchizedek. With this change of the priesthood there was also a change of the law. Writes the author of Hebrews "For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law."

This is a very important point which we ought to understand; it is crucial to the argument here in Hebrews.

The point that ought to be understood is that this

changed law is *made necessary* by the change of the priesthood. As the priesthood is, so is the law! For the law is based upon the priesthood! This is a matter of necessity. The term necessity means in the Latin: that which cannot cease. It is from "*ne-cesso*": that which has in it a quality which cannot be stopped. The term in the Greek language is "*anagkees*" which is derived from the verb "*anaykizoo*" — to force, to demonstrate, to prove. And thus is the case here. The law must be changed when the priesthood is changed, because upon this priesthood the people received the law. The entire legality and sanction of the law rested upon this Levitical-Aaronic priesthood. This is not a mere logical necessity, based upon logical demonstration of a man-made premise. On the contrary, this is a necessity which follows from the God-ordained connection between priesthood and law as revealed by God Himself concerning the Mystery of salvation. One has but to study carefully this matter in the O.T. to see that this is implied in the very structure of the law-giving itself through Moses.

O, to be sure, this matter is truly logical. It is part and parcel of the *reasonable* service which is ours; only, it is the reasonableness not of man who thinks himself to be self-sufficient to make his own logical constructions concerning God (vain philosophy), but it is the logic of



faith which receives the words of God, and in all its premises and conclusions subjects itself to the revealed Word and will of God. Yes, then we can read here a certain syllogism, a form of logical reasoning; new wine in the old bottles, so to speak!

In this case we have then the following syllogism:

1. Only when the priesthood abides is the law of such a priesthood valid.
2. The priesthood was indeed changed with the coming of Christ after the order of Melchizedek.
3. Conclusion: the law of the Levites no longer obtains under the priesthood of Christ.

This point the readers, the Hebrews, must see. Only when this is seen will they not fall back into unbelief and lose both Moses and Christ. We too must see this point and confess very consciously what is so articulately stated in the *Belgic Confession*, Article XXV, which we quote in full.

We believe that the ceremonies and figures of the law ceased at the coming of Christ, and that all the shadows are accomplished; so that the use of them must be abolished among Christians: yet the truth and substance of them remain with us in Jesus Christ, in whom they have their completion. In the meantime we still use the testimonies taken out of the law and the prophets, to confirm us in the doctrine of the gospel, and to regulate our life in all honesty to the glory of God, according to his will.

#### *CERTAIN SALIENT POINTS CONCERNING THE DIFFERENT PRIESTHOOD (Hebrews 7:11f)*

It is important to see that this priesthood of Christ is really a unique and altogether different priesthood; that it is not merely another priesthood of the same kind, but that it is a priesthood which is really a *different kind* of priesthood! It is what the Greek calls "*heteros*."

We ought to notice the following salient points concerning this priesthood as the writer lets this pass in review before our believing eyes. It is to the following matters that the writer calls our attention.

First of all, he calls attention to the fact that the *appointment* is different in the priesthood of Christ. Now, no priest takes this honor to himself, but is appointed by God. In this case of Christ the appointment is not that which is based upon a carnal commandment, but it is based upon God's word of oath/giving, as it is written: "Thou art a priest . . . The Lord hath sworn . . ." Psalm 110:4 (Verse 17)

Secondly, he indicates that the *rule*, the *standard* of this priesthood is different. It is not according to the rule of a carnal commandment, but it is according to the standard of the power of indissoluble life. (Verse 16)

Thirdly, the *duration* of this priesthood of Christ is singled out. It is not a priesthood which is executed in a succession of generations of priests, but it is that of an unchanging priesthood in one man, Jesus, who is made the surety of a better Covenant. (verse 23)

Fourthly, we should notice that, according to the writer, the *nature* of this priesthood is different. It is

not a priesthood which can rest as the ephod on the shoulders of a mere man (Aaron) but it is that which can only be borne by the Son of God, perfected in the flesh, through His death and resurrection. (Verses 26-28)

Fifthly, *the scene*, the plain on which this priesthood is executed is different. It is really executed in the realm of the heavenly, and not on the plain of the earthly. Christ did not bring his sacrifice in the earthly tabernacle, but he brought it in the true tabernacle after which the earthly house was copied and patterned. Here he brings the true and complete service, as the high priest which became us. (Chapter 8:1 f.f.)

#### *PROOF THAT THIS IS A DIFFERENT PRIESTHOOD (Verses 13-18)*

The writer to the Hebrew Christians argues not from certain logical premises, but he unmistakably argues from certain revealed truths and facts, which God aforetime spoke through the prophets, and which were realized in these last days through His Son!

It is good for us to notice how the writer marshals his evidence from the Scriptures and from the great and mighty deeds of God in Christ.

The first piece of evidence from the Scriptures is, that Christ, although a priest, is not from the tribe of Levi, but is from the tribe of Judah. Now Moses did not at any time or anywhere say any thing in the name of God, as the law-giver, concerning the tribe of Judah to stand at the altar. And whereas Moses did not speak of Judah at the altar but only of Levi, a change must have been effected. We have a different priesthood! In the Old Testament dispensation, where the law obtained of Levi, the following syllogism was in effect:

1. Only that which Moses spoke was valid. (Even Christ himself always spoke from this premise. e.g. John 1:17; 3:14; 5:45,46)
2. Moses did not speak of Judah as having a place at the altar in the temple, but only of Aaron and Levi. (Exodus 28,29; Leviticus 8-10; 21,22)
3. Hence: Judah might not attend at the altar in the temple. (e.g. a case in point is the brazen attempt on the part of King Uzziah, who is smitten with leprosy until the day of his death for attempting to usurp the place of the God-appointed priest at the altar.)

Now here must be either something very wrong or very right. Christ is either the greatest imposter, or he is the one who supersedes Levi's priesthood with a greater and more abiding priesthood. The historical fact is that Christ is born out of the tribe of Judah as David's great Son. This is evident before. It is clear before hand! And the implication of this ought not to be obscured by unbelief. Christ does not fall under the law of the Levitical priesthood! He is a different priest and therefore the law is changed in regard to his priesthood!

The second piece of evidence is offered us in verse 15. There we read "And it is yet far more evident: for that



after the similitude of Melchizedek there ariseth another priest who was made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life . . . .”

There are various elements which we ought to notice in this piece of evidence here offered. In the first place, it ought to be noticed that the writer is here not arguing from a revealed premise, but is stating a *historical fact*. This is not so clear from the KJV of this text, but it is crystal clear from the original Greek. We notice:

1. That this is evident from the “far more evident.” Now the historical fact speaks louder than inference from revealed premises. The one is the cogent argument from Scripture, the other is the evidence of the Word made flesh; it is what God has spoken unto us in these latter days, when he came to us in Jesus, Immanuel!

2. This is corroborated by what we read in the Greek verb translated “there ariseth.” This is not a mere hypothetical possibility. The sentence is a conditional sentence of determined reality. The “if there ariseth”

really means: whereas there has arisen! The term in the Greek is “anistatai!” Perhaps this is the emphatic middle voice: if very emphatically and really one arises, so that he was born and grew up, and was actually placed in office by God directly out of heaven, as happened at the occasion of Jesus’ baptism by John. (Matthew 3:13-17; John 1:32-34)

3. That this refers to the preponderant evidence of the accomplished fact is plain from the phrase “who is made.” In the Greek this is the perfect tense. “Gegonen” is the perfect tense of something completed up till the present moment. Christ has not been made a priest after the similitude of Melchizek. He is the king-priest forever in the heavens. And this priesthood does not fall under the law of Levi, but under the law of a King-Priest. Wherefore our Lord is out of Judah, as Jacob saw the latter end of the tribes when he said: “Judah, thou art he. The sceptre shall not depart from Judah . . . .” Genesis 49:10

## A Cloud of Witnesses

### DAVID ACCUSED BY NATHAN

B. Woudenberg

*And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul;*

*And I gave thee thy master’s house, and thy master’s wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things.*

*Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon . . . .*

*And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD . . . .”*

*II Samuel 12:7-9,13*

The spiritual life of David had once again fallen to a low ebb, much lower than it had ever been before. Really it was a paradoxical situation. Externally he had more to make him happy than ever before; but internally sadness and gloom choked his soul. It had come upon him gradually, as the temptations of sin usually do, so that he had hardly known that he was slipping; but its effects were soon so numerous that his conscience couldn’t escape them no matter where he turned.

It had all begun when he had thought that he could withdraw from the battles of Israel and let Joab carry the responsibility for him. It had not been an easy decision to make, for it was really contrary to everything that he had always maintained as the leader of an army. It had been his firm conviction that a head of an army should always be out in the field ready to share every danger that confronted him. It was a matter of discretion, a way of maintaining the morale of the troops by providing them with an example of loyalty



and courage that could be followed; but it was also a matter of justice: a commander ought not to ask of his men more than he was willing to undergo himself regardless of what the danger. But the years had been long and tiring; and he had finally come to the point where his whole being cried out for a rest, but the work of subduing the heathen enemies of Israel was not yet finished. It had all seemed so very simple. After all, he was king over Israel, and all of the other kings did it. Why should he not send out his army to fight his battles while he remained in his palace seeking some rest? It had seemed all so easy, and he had told himself that it would only be a little while. After he was rested, he would return to fight beside his men in the battle. It was only that the rest he sought never did come. His heart had known much more of rest and peace in the middle of many a raging battle than he would ever know again all through his life. First there had been just that feeling of guilt from knowing that while he sat safe within his own palace his men were marching for him out into the face of danger. But that had not lasted long. Only too soon it was replaced with his feelings of guilt with regards to Bathsheba, and then those as he tried to deceive Uriah into providing a cover-up for his sin, and then the murder of Uriah, too. It kept on coming, one thing after another until he, the great hero of unwavering courage, found himself torn apart inwardly, terrorized and unable to face squarely the deeds of his own hands and the words of his own mouth.

It was strange how this feeling affected him. It seemed to make of him a different man, almost the opposite of what he had been in the years that went before. We have an illustration of this in the capture of Rabbah, the royal city of Ammon, an event that may well have taken place rather soon after the death of Uriah even though it is not recorded for us until later. This was the conclusion of a hard fought campaign against one of Israel's oldest enemies. It was the one that David had thought he could as well sit out in Jerusalem; and, without the leadership of the king, it had proved much more difficult than had ever been expected. But now at last the conclusion had come. The city itself had been taken and all that remained was the royal citadel in the center of the city. There was not a question but that this too could be captured rather easily; it was just that this, nonetheless, did constitute the nominal heart of the royal city and of the nation. It was thus that Joab sent a rather strange message to David, which read, "I have fought against Rabbah, and have taken the city of waters. Now therefore gather the rest of the people together, and encamp against the city, and take it: lest I take the city, and it be called after my name."

This was a strange message indeed for Joab to be sending to David because it was so out of tune with David's normal nature. What Joab was proposing was a farce, a pretense of a victory for no other purpose than

that of gilding David's public image. Nothing would have been more repulsive to the David of former years. To him popular recognition had never been of much concern if any; and to have to resort to pretense to obtain it would have been worse than not having it at all. But Joab was a subtle judge of people; and even from a distance he had detected a change taking place in the person of David that made all of this different. Neither was his judgment in error. Never before had David felt the need for popular approval, because he had always stood with a clear conscience before himself and before his God. Now for many a month the heavens had stood closed against him; and even his own mind dared not try to evaluate the things that he had done. Not that he could really suppress it. There were always those excuses cropping up again and again all through every day and through most of the night too, excuses which he wanted to believe were valid but which he didn't even dare try out on others lest they should discover those sins which he had tried so carefully to hide. It drove him into a mental corner and left him there alone, feeling worthless before God and before himself and before everyone else, too. Thus when the message of Joab came it was like a breath of fresh air — at least, it left some possibility for something that could be done. Surely it would do him good to hear the cheering crowds and see in their faces their wild approval. He would go. He would try it. Maybe he wasn't really as bad as he kept on thinking.

It was a clever move on the part of Joab, one in which he couldn't lose. He could never as the cold, calculating man that he was gain for himself popular approval. Neither was he about to repeat the mistake that David had made with Saul by letting his own glory outshine that of the king. It was better to keep himself in the king's good favor. That was where his strength lay. And it worked as far as he was concerned. There for a few days at Rabbah David had a wonderful time. He even forgot his troubles in the thrill of that last battle and the excitement of the victory celebration. Except that for David it wasn't really worth it, for once he returned home, that old loneliness, that darkness, that terrible gloom closed on him again even worse than it had ever before. It was that very thing that had pressed Saul to the brink of despair and beyond it; and it would have pushed David that way too had it not been for the grace of his God.

How long a time transpired before Nathan visited David, we do not know exactly, just that it was sometime after the son of Bathsheba was born. The time surely must have been a dark one for David as he reflected in Psalm 32:3,4, "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer." Even to think upon his sins was more than he could stand. The verdict of the law against the adultery he knew full



well, to say nothing of murder. It was death, and his own hand had executed men for such; and now as the king and judge of Israel it should have been turned against himself. But how could he now stand to die, alone as he was, alienated from his own conscience and from his God with this weight of sin upon him. To fall before the face of the enemy he had never feared; but this was more than he could bear.

When finally Nathan came, sent by the command of God, David may well have met him with mixed feeling. Here was an old friend whose presence he had always enjoyed; but he was also the representative of God and the thought of God made him tremble. Nevertheless, once Nathan began to speak David began to relax. It gave him a sense of relief, the report of another's sin. The story went like this, "There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds: but the poor man had nothing save one little ewe lamb, which he had brought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him." Intently David listened, and as he listened he began to feel better. Evidently Nathan did not know of what he had done, not even God had told him, and he, David, was still looked upon by them as a just and worthy judge. Moreover the case was clear, one that aroused his sense of righteous indignation. No, he would not cover up, he would not excuse the wicked. Quickly and sharply he answered, "As the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die; and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity."

The measured silence that followed must have been ominous, and yet nothing compared with the paced words that followed, "Thou art the man." Was David ever to forget it? Hard for Nathan to utter, unimaginably hard to one who was his respected king and his well-loved friend. But for David it pierced like darts to the quick. No longer was it Nathan he saw before him,

but God speaking in justice while his own lips had already declared the only verdict. Each word that followed further was like an iron blow of judgment, "Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul; and I gave thee thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things. Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house: because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife. Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. For thou didst it secretly; but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun."

His own lips had spoken the verdict, "As the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die, and there it happened. David died, not indeed a physical death, that would have been merciful, but a death that was many, many times worse. He died spiritually there before Nathan as he cried out in anguish, "I have sinned against the LORD." And now not he, but his house and his children after him, and the nation would have to bear his curse. It is something which only one who has come to see his own sins for what they really are with all of their results can appreciate — and at some time or other every Christian comes to know it.

It made the next so inexplicably amazing. Nathan went on, "The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die." But still the other followed too, "Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die." It is the tension of Christian life, a forgiving God, but a God also of justice who will not let us or anyone else forget how great is our sin, how terrible its fruits, and how amazing that there should be forgiveness still — who can understand it?

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But what is the meaning of this state of glory for which we hope, and which is the ultimate realization of the wonder of God's grace in Christ Jesus our Lord? The heart and essence of it is, undoubtedly, perfect fellowship with God as His friend-servants. To be received, according to the measure and capacity of the creature, in God's own family, to live His own life, to dwell in His house, to taste that He is good, to enter into His secrets, to know Him even as we are known, to see Him face to face, to love Him and be loved of Him without fear, to walk with Him and talk with Him in most intimate communion; and then to consecrate ourselves and all things to Him as His servants, to have our delight in His perfect will, and glorify Him for ever, — that is the heart of the heavenly blessedness for which we look.

— H. Hoeksema, "The Wonder of Grace," p. 125



## Contending for the Faith

# THE DOCTRINE OF SIN

## THE THIRD PERIOD — 730-1517 A.D.

### GOTTSCHALK

*Rev. H. Veldman*

The struggle for the maintenance of the truth goes on unabated in the history of the church of God throughout the ages. That the forces of Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism should appear to hold the upper hand in this unceasing conflict need not surprise or discourage us. Indeed, should the opposite be true, then it would be time indeed for us to "sit up and take notice."

Of interest to us, in our treatment of the doctrine of sin in this third period, is the place occupied by Gottschalk in this controversy. And then we would present to our readers, first of all, a historical survey of this champion of the truth as set forth by Philip Schaff in his *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. IV, 522, f.f.:

Gottschalk or Godescalcus, an involuntary monk and irregularly ordained priest, of noble Saxon parentage, strong convictions, and heroic courage, revived the Augustinian theory on one of the most difficult problems of speculative theology, but had to suffer bitter persecution for re-asserting what the great African divine had elaborated and vindicated four centuries before with more depth, wisdom and moderation. Incidentally, the name, Gottschalk means: God's servant.

The Greek church ignored Augustine, and still more Gottschalk, and adheres to this day to the anthropology of the Nicene and ante-Nicene fathers, who laid as great stress on the freedom of the will as on divine grace. John of Damascus teaches an absolute foreknowledge, but not an absolute foreordination of God, because God cannot foreordain sin, which He wills not, and which, on the contrary, He condemns and punishes; and He does not force virtue upon the reluctant will. (Of course, we do not believe that the Lord ever forces anything upon the will of man. God operates, in the godly and ungodly, through his will, and He does this sovereignly. — H.V.)

The Latin church retained a traditional reverence for Augustine, as her greatest divine, but never committed herself to his scheme of predestination. It always found individual advocates, as Fulgentius of Ruspe, and Isidore of Seville, who taught a two-fold predestination, one of the elect unto life eternal, and one of the reprobate until death eternal. Beda and Alcuin were Augustinians of a milder type. But the prevailing sentiment cautiously steered midway between Augustinianism and Semi-Pelagianism, giving the chief weight to the preceding and enabling grace of

God, yet claiming some merit for man's consenting and co-operating will. This compromise may be called Semi-Augustinianism, as distinct from Semi-Pelagianism. It was adopted by the Synod of Orange (Aruasio) in 529 (to which we called attention in previous articles — H.V.), which condemned the Semi-Pelagian error (without naming its adherents) and approved Augustine's views of sin and grace, but not his view of predestination, which was left open. It was transmitted to the middle ages through Pope Gregory the Great, who, next to Augustine, exerted most influence on the theology of our period; and this moderated and weakened Augustinianism triumphed in the Gottschalk controversy.

We wish to make a remark here in connection with the above quotation. Philip Schaff here corroborates what Rev. Hoeksema declared in connection with the synod of Orange concerning its failure to declare itself on the subjects of election and reprobation. However, Schaff writes, very mildly, that the synod left Augustine's view of predestination open. This, we believe, is hardly correct. We believe that the synod's failure to call attention to the doctrine of predestination constitutes a serious omission on its part, an effort to compromise with the truth. And we may never compromise with the truth. Any compromise with the truth is always a surrender to the forces of the lie and will never fail to have serious repercussions in the church of God. We now continue with the quotation from Philip Schaff.

The relation of the Roman church to Augustine in regard to predestination is similar to that which the Lutheran church holds to Luther. The Reformer held the most extreme view on divine predestination, and in his book on the *Slavery of the Human Will*, against Erasmus, he went further than Augustine before him and Calvin after him; yet notwithstanding his commanding genius and authority, his view was virtually disowned, and gave way to the compromise of the Formula of Concord, which teaches both an absolute election of believers, and a sincere call of *all* sinners to repentance. The Calvinistic Confessions, with more logical consistency, teach an absolute predestination as a necessary sequence of Divine omnipotence and omniscience, but confine it, like Augustine, to the limits of the infralapsarian scheme, with an express exclusion of God from the authorship of sin. Supralapsarianism, however, also had its advocates as a theological opinion. In the Roman church, the Augus-



tinian system was revived by the Jansenists, but only to be condemned.

Let us pause here a moment. Schaff here writes that Luther held the most extreme view on the doctrine of Divine predestination, and that in his book on the Slavery of the Human Will, he went further than Augustine before him and Calvin after him. We may have opportunity, when we call attention to the period of the Reformation, to call attention to the views of Luther and Calvin, although we must bear in mind that, strictly speaking, we are not treating the doctrine of predestination but that of sin. However, in the above quotation of Schaff, that writer adds a footnote, and we quote: "Melancthon, too, at first was so strongly impressed with the divine sovereignty, that he traced the adultery of David and the treason of Judas to the eternal decree of God; but he afterwards changed his view in favor of synergism, which Luther never did." Is this what Philip Schaff means when he declares that Luther held the most extreme view on Divine predestination? Then it surely can be shown that Calvin, too, especially in the book, *Calvin's Calvinism*, expressed himself very strongly on the doctrine of Divine predestination. And why should we not trace the adultery of David and the treason of Judas to the eternal decree of God? To do so is surely Scriptural. We read in John 13: 18: "*I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.*" This text is a quotation from Ps. 41. Jesus quotes verse 9 of this psalm. The friend of whom we read in this psalm is Ahithophel, David's trusted counsellor, who, at the time of the insurrection of Absalom, deserted David and joined the rebellious cause of his wicked son. This Ahithophel is the Old Testament type of Judas. Now Jesus knew whom He had chosen. When Jesus chose the Twelve He knew that He must select the New Testament fulfillment of Ahithophel. And this does not simply mean that Judas is the New Testament fulfillment of the counsellor of David, but it surely means that Ahithophel was called into being by God to serve as type of him who was to be the betrayer of our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ's entire passion program was outlined in the Old Testament. And this can only mean that this passion of our Lord Jesus Christ and every step of that program had been determined by the living God from before the foundation of the world. It is surely true that the treason of Judas must be traced to the eternal decree of God. Besides, does anything happen that has not been sovereignly determined by the Living God Who alone does all things according to the counsel of His sovereign will?

#### GOTTSCHALK AND RABANUS MAURUS

Gottschalk, the son of count Berno (or Bern), was sent in his childhood by his parents to the famous Hessian convent of Fulda as a pious offering. When he had attained mature age, he denied the validity of his

involuntary tonsure, wished to leave the convent, and brought his case before a Synod of Mainz in 829. The synod decided in his favor, but the new abbot, Rabanus Maurus, appealed to the emperor in defense of the obligatory character of the parental consecration of a child to monastic life. He succeeded, but allowed Gottschalk to exchange Fulda for Orbais in the diocese of Soissons in the province of Rheims. From this time dates his ill feeling towards the reluctant monk, whom he called a vagabond, and it cannot be denied that Rabanus appears unfavorably in the whole controversy.

At Orbais Gottschalk devoted himself to the study of Augustine and Fulgentius of Ruspe, with such ardent enthusiasm that he was called Fulgentius, by one of his fellow-students who had a high opinion of his learning and piety. He selected especially the passages in favor of the doctrine of predestination, and recited them to his fellow-monks for hours, gaining many to his views. But his friend, Servatus Lupus, warned him against unprofitable speculations on abstruse topics, instead of searching the Scriptures for more practical things. He corresponded with several scholars, and made a pilgrimage to Rome. On his return in 847 or 848, he spent some time with the hospitable Count Eberhard of Friuli, son-in-law of the Emperor Louis the Pious, met there Bishop Noting of Verona, and communicated to him his views on predestination. Noting informed Rabanus Maurus, who had in the meantime become archbishop of Mainz, and urged him to refute this new heresy.

Rabanus Maurus wrote a letter to Noting on predestination, intended against Gottschalk, though without naming him. He put the worst construction upon his view of a double predestination, and rejected it for seven reasons, chiefly, because it involves a charge of injustice against God; it contradicts the Scriptures, which promise eternal reward to virtue; it declares that Christ shed His blood in vain for those that are lost; and it leads some to carnal security, others to despair (these objections are not new to us — H.V.). His own doctrine is moderately Augustinian. He maintains that the whole race, including unbaptized children, lies under just condemnation in consequence of Adam's sin; that out of this mass of corruption God from pure mercy elects some to eternal life, and leaves others, in view of their moral conduct, to their just punishment (that God leaves others, because of their moral conduct, to their just punishment, is, of course, a denial of reprobation — H.V.). God would have all men to be saved, yet He actually saves only a part; why He makes such a difference, we do not know and must refer to His hidden counsel.

The Lord willing, we will continue with this historical survey of Gottschalk in our next article. But we do well to notice how the denial of the doctrine of reprobation goes hand in hand with the theory that the Lord would have all men to be saved, and that the advocates of this presentation hate the Scriptural truth of absolute predestination. Indeed, so it is said, why the Lord saves only a part of the human race, whereas He would save



all, is something we cannot explain and this must be referred to God's hidden counsel. And this we also recognize as being taught in our present day. Indeed,

our Protestant Reformed Churches are surely in good company. This is verified by history.

## *The Lord Gave The Word . . . . .*

### **The History Of Missions Jesus' Public Ministry.**

*Rev. C. Hanko*

In the previous articles we have been discussing the work of missions in the old dispensation. The question was raised whether we can properly speak of missions before the new dispensation, that is, before Christ gave the great commission and poured out His Spirit upon the church. The church of the shadows was limited within the narrow confines of national Israel. Those who were converted from heathendom were, for the most part, brought into Israel as proselytes of the gate. The same still applies to the time of Jesus' earthly ministry. And therefore the same objection might be raised.

And we naturally repeat the same answer that was given then. We saw that God did not leave Himself without witness among the heathen even in the old dispensation. He proclaimed His Word to the world as it came in contact with the church. God spoke through Enoch and Noah to the world before the flood, declaring that He alone is God and must be served. God witnessed through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to the nations of Canaan. God spoke to the Pharaohs of Egypt. He declared His Name to the kings of Babylon through Daniel and his friends. He preached the Gospel unto the repentance of many in Nineveh. Other examples could be multiplied. As we shall see, the same thing holds true at the time of Jesus.

We can even point out that in the old dispensation God gave the promise that in the fulness of time the church would extend beyond the narrow confines of Israel even to the ends of the earth. As evidence of that promise God called Rahab out of Jericho, Ruth out of Moab, and brought repentance unto Nineveh. And again other examples could be cited. This also is true in the ministry of Jesus, as will soon become evident. So if we can speak of mission work in the old dispensation we certainly can speak of it as an essential part of Jesus' earthly ministry.

In passing, a few remarks should be made concerning the ministry of John the Baptist. John is called the greatest of all the old dispensational prophets, because in his short ministry he came closer to the new dispensation than any before him. He opened the door,

as it were, declaring that the kingdom of God was at hand. It was his unique privilege to see the Christ and to point Him out as the fulfillment of all the promises. John condemned the self-righteous Pharisees who sought salvation in the works of the law. He warned that the judgment of God upon Israel as a nation was pending. He called the people to repentance, urging them to forsake their dead works and to seek their salvation in the promised Messiah, Who would presently appear. Even John already warned the people that the kingdom of God was not earthly, but heavenly, and that they should look for that eternal kingdom. Those who repented upon the preaching of John were baptized and thus ushered into the new dispensation. In that sense John's ministry was also mission work.

When Jesus began His ministry He also condemned the erroneous teachings and the corrupt practices of the scribes and Pharisees. At His first appearance in Jerusalem, which was like an inaugural sermon, the Lord cleansed the temple and warned the leaders that they were destroying the House of God, which He is come to build up. He announced to them that they would destroy the real temple, the temple of His body, and in three days He would raise it up. Although they never understood this saying, they could never forget it. Our Lord likewise in no uncertain terms condemned the "mission endeavors" of the Jews of His day. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more a child of hell than yourselves." Matthew 23:15.

In their "missionary zeal" these leaders of the Jews were willing to go to the far ends of the earth to win converts for their errors. They worked among those who served idols to convert them to Judaism. Once they obtained a "convert" they forced upon him all their traditions, to every law and precept, so that the convert boasted of his salvation by works even louder than the Jews themselves. Jesus does not hesitate to call these Pharisees "hypocrites," "children of hell," who lead others into even greater condemnation with them.

But the positive aspect of Jesus preaching is even



more important. He preached the Gospel of the kingdom of heaven, the day of the Lord, to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel." Jesus repeatedly used the figure of *sheep*. He liked to refer to Himself as the Great Shepherd Who came to lay down His life for His sheep. John 10:11,15. He knows His sheep, because they are given to Him eternally from the Father. He calls them by name and they come to Him. John 10:27. He cares for them as His precious possession, leads them in green pastures and beside still waters, feeds them and provides for all their needs, until He has brought them into the sheepfold of glory. John 10:27,28. These sheep He refers to as "the lost," whom the Shepherd seeks, finds and brings back into the fold. This was Christ's mission task. Our Lord speaks of this in the three parables recorded in Luke 15, the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal son. In Jesus' own words: "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Luke 19:10.

Jesus' mission field was the land of Canaan. Therefore He spent much of His time in Galilee, preaching the kingdom of heaven and calling the people to repentance and to faith in Him. Mark tells us: "Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel." This is significant because it shows the actual content of Jesus' message. He preached that the promise of God spoken by the prophets of old was now being fulfilled. The types and shadows were touching reality. The expected Messiah was come and was about to bring the great sacrifice for the sins of His people, and thus enter into His kingdom. He proclaimed not an earthly, but a heavenly kingdom. He called the people to repentance; Himself creating in their hearts by the Word of His power a true sorrow for sin. His Word caused them to labor and to be heavy laden. And to those who labored and were heavy laden He promised rest, actually also giving rest to their souls. He could say with a divine authority that reached into the very heart of the repentant sinner: "Thy sins are forgiven thee. Go in peace." Matthew 9:2; Mark 2:5; Luke 7:48, 50.

Thus Jesus was faithful to His calling in all the land of Galilee. He was the fulfillment of the word of Isaiah: "The land of Zabulon, and the land of Naphthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which sat in darkness saw a great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up. Matthew 4:14,15. And Jesus knew that the purpose of God was being fulfilled both in those who were saved and in those who rejected Him. Therefore He breathed a prayer of thanks to God saying: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." Matthew 11:25,26.

Jesus also labored in Jerusalem, Judea and Perea. He taught daily, even in parables, and sealed His testimony with signs and wonders to prove that He was indeed the Christ of God. Even there the purpose and result of Jesus' preaching can best be described in His own words, as He said to His disciples, "unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sin should be forgiven them." Mark 4:11,12. Jerusalem that killed and stoned the prophets also had to crucify the Christ to make the measure of her iniquity full, but not without serving the divine purpose that the Shepherd Who lays down His life for His sheep may gather His own unto Himself. Of all that the Father gave to Him He lost none, but the son of perdition, that the Scriptures might be fulfilled. John 17:12.

But Jesus also speaks of other sheep beyond the fold of the Israel of His day. In John 10:16 we read: "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice: and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd." Obviously, these other sheep are the elect of God from every nation and people of the earth. Jesus is looking into the future, beyond His death and resurrection, even beyond His ascension and Pentecost, to the time when He will be gathering His own into the fold to make the assembly of the elect complete.

Already early in His ministry Jesus "must needs go through Samaria." John 4:4. The Lord had a mission at Sychar, where the Samaritan woman and many others were brought to faith and salvation. Here were first-fruits of the Gentiles, bridging the gap between the old dispensation and the new and giving promise of better things to come. Later Jesus emphasizes to His disciples the faith of the Roman centurion whose servant was sick. "I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." And then He adds, "Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 8:10,11. Had not the wisemen who came from the east to worship Jesus at the time of His birth already promised the same thing? After His rejection in Galilee Jesus took His disciples to the border of Tyre and Sidon, where He showed them the amazing faith that God had wrought in the heart of the Syro-Phoenician woman. As much for the benefit of the disciples as for the woman herself He says: "O woman, great is thy faith!" Matthew 15:28.

This aids us to understand the Greeks in Jerusalem who wanted to see Jesus. John 12:20-24. They had approached Philip requesting an audience with his Master. Philip is aware that these are proselytes, but they are nevertheless gentiles. He consults Andrew, and together they approach Jesus with the request. Jesus



answers them by saying: "The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." You can almost sense His eagerness to finish His work on the cross that these "waiting" gentiles may be gathered in. "And I, when I be lifted up from the earth, will draw men all unto me." John 12:32.

Thus we can draw some very definite conclusions from Jesus' missionary ministry.

First, that He began at "home" by calling His own unto Himself and thus drawing them out of the apostate church, which was ready to perish.

Second, Jesus in no way depended on the free will of man. He knew very well that no man could come to Him except the Father draw him. John 6:44. And He

also knew that "All that the Father giveth unto me shall come unto me: and him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out. John 6:37. He had power with the Father both to convict of sin and to forgive sin.

Third, Jesus was not disappointed when many rejected Him. He knew that God was carrying out His good pleasure both in those who were saved and in those who perished in their sins. Matthew 11:25,26.

Finally, Jesus also spoke of greater things to come. He brought in a few firstfruits from the gentiles as promise of the full harvest that is gathered in during this present dispensation. Eagerly He anticipated the glory that awaited Him beyond the cross, when seated at the right hand of God He may gather His own unto Himself from all the ends of the earth, until the multitude that no man can number is made perfect in heaven.

## Examining Ecumenicalism

### "THE DUTCH MEET DIXIE"(III)

(continued from Nov. 1 issue)

Rev. G. Van Baren

But there is more to the subject of confessions for the proposed new church. Churches today want "new" and relevant confessions. The present instance is no exception. Although the proposed plan of union does not declare that a new confession *shall be* made — it does declare that an *attempt* shall be made to compose a new confession. Article 12 of their Covenant of Agreement states:

(1) The General Synod of the Reformed Church in America and the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States shall, following the final vote for the union of the two Churches, each appoint six members to a committee to undertake the formulation of a new Confession. The membership of this committee shall be broadly representative of the two uniting Churches, and shall be drawn from those most competent in the field.

(2) As far as possible, the whole Church shall be enlisted in a study of the great historic creeds of the Reformed Churches as well as more contemporary creeds, and in consultation with the committee, so that the new Confession will be a confession of the whole Church and a worthy witness of a living Church to her living Lord.

#### *Ecumenical relationships*

The Reformed Church in America has refused to be a full participant in COCU — the attempt to unite nine large denominations into one. The Southern Presbyterian Church is full participant in COCU. What happens should these two denominations now unite?

Would the new denomination participate in COCU or not? This question disturbs many in the Reformed Church. Union would almost undoubtedly bring the new denomination into the consultations. The plan of union proposes the following:

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Reformed Church in America, at its first meeting, shall determine the ecumenical relationships of the denomination, taking into account those previously sustained by the two uniting Churches.

#### *What now?*

The proposed plan for union was approved this past spring by the General Synod of the Reformed Church and the General Assembly of the Southern Presbyterian Church. During the next few months the various classes of the R.C.A. and the presbyteries of the Presbyterian U.S. must vote on the plan. *If* two out of three classes of the R.C.A. approve, and *if* three out of four presbyteries approve, then the plan of union must go again to the General Synod and General Assembly of the two churches next spring. If it is then approved by those two bodies again, then the proposed merger goes into effect. From reports which I have read, I gather that the general opinion is that the proposed plan of union will fail to receive the approval of the necessary two-thirds of the classes of the R.C.A. The next five or six months will tell. If it should pass that hurdle, it would likely be approved at the other levels.

Though many in both church communions favor the



merger, there are also many in both denominations that oppose it — and for various reasons. One opinion was set forth by a certain W.A. McIlwaine, a retired missionary of the Southern Presbyterian Church, in an article of the *Presbyterian Journal* of July 3, 1968. The man has a good point:

In principle, everything would seem to be in favor of uniting the Reformed Church in America and the Presbyterian Church in the United States to form the Presbyterian Reformed Church in America.

Both Churches are Reformed in doctrine and Presbyterian in government; they are similar in general outlook. And if the Plan of Union had been drawn up

so as to uphold and unite the fullness and intent of the confessions and forms of government of the two Churches, their union would strengthen both parties to it.

However, the Plan of Union will not achieve this end. On the contrary, its provisions will produce a Church that is more liberal and less Reformed in doctrine and less Presbyterian in government than either of the Churches it would unite; the issue of ownership of Church property will have been settled — perhaps beyond recall.

That is the sad fact — it will produce a church more liberal, less Reformed.

## BOOK REVIEW

*THE LITURGY of the Reformed Church in America Together with THE PSALTER*, selected and arranged for responsive reading; Gerrit T. Vander Lugt, Editor; The Board of Education, 1968; 518 pp.

Churches today are undergoing extensive liturgical changes. This is in part due to the emphasis on ecumenicity. But, I am afraid, it is also in part due to a general weakness in the Church. When Churches forsake their calling; when people become indifferent to things spiritual and when the true worship of God flounders, then Churches turn to more extensive liturgy in a vain attempt to interest people once more in the Church. It is to be feared that, at least in some respects, this book is influenced by these evils.

The book is composed of various Forms of Worship and liturgical forms for ceremonial use. The new and the old forms for the administration of baptism and the Lord's Supper are included. The new are hardly an improvement. Also included are forms, in addition to the ones commonly used in the Reformed Churches, a form for the examination of young people who confess their faith before the Consistory, a form for receiving members from other churches, a form for organization of new churches, a form for the laying of a cornerstone, and many more.

Included also are Scriptural readings for visiting the sick, for funerals, etc. There is a complete Psalter; i.e., Psalms arranged for responsive readings. There is a whole prayer book including prayers for almost every conceivable occasion. Some of these prayers are very beautiful; some of them curious and flat.

The book is recommended for use by anyone who is interested in liturgical questions and can be of some use

for ministers who wish to examine the latest in liturgical forms and gain ideas for Scriptural readings on sick visitation, funerals, etc. To evaluate all the different forms and the orders of worship suggested would require considerable space. If you are interested in these matters, purchase the book for yourself.

H.H.

An ideal gift: An Exposition of the Heidelberg Catechism, by Rev. H. Hoeksema.

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## News From Our Churches

Rev. H. Veldman, in a bulletin notice, asked his congregation to remember him in their prayers as he is confronted with the call to serve our church at South Holland, Ill. Redlands' pastor, Rev. C. Hanko, has declined the call he had from our Hull church.

\* \* \*

In a Nov. 3rd bulletin, of Lynden we found an excerpt of a letter, postmarked Big Springs, Texas, from a reader of Rev. Woudenberg's Study Sheets who writes that he enjoys the Reverend's comments very much; and adds, "I believe in Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace and Perseverance of the Saints. I believe that Eternal Life, faith, repentance and all such things are the gifts of God. And I believe that you think along these lines." Rev. Woudenberg has made friends in Ladner, British Columbia, who have invited him to conduct a weekly Bible Class in the public school building on Thursday evenings. Members of Lynden's congregation will accompany their pastor to give leadership and support to this new venture. Did you notice? Little Lynden's pastor has long arms which reach from border to border. Isn't it amazing what one man can do when the Holy Spirit crowns his efforts!

\* \* \*

Because of the Reformation Day Rally being held on Tuesday evening, Hope's catechism classes were combined with Monday's classes. Southwest's classes were assigned to attend the Lecture — and report on it the next Tuesday!

\* \* \*

Many of you have heard from the lips of Rev. Heys and of Mr. T. Feenstra regarding their work on the Island of Jamaica. But here is an opportunity to read a report from the pen of Rev. Joshua E. Frame of First Hill Prot. Ref. Church of Lucea, Jamaica. "They arrived in Jamaica at Montego Bay Airport the 25th day of June, Tuesday. Wednesday they journeyed to Lucea where they met with the Prot. Ref. congregation at First Hill. Then we had a service and Rev. Heys preached on the text from Isaiah 40:1, 2. Rev. Heys explained the text carefully and plainly. I can say without a shadow of doubt that the work accomplished here was well done. The truths preached and taught were well received. I have gathered a wider experience of the truth through his preaching. I understand much more of the scriptures. I learned more and it has made me wiser. I can safely say that the preaching of Rev. Heys has been a blessing throughout the congregations here in Jamaica. We never weary of his preaching. I have received this Reformed Faith, and I believe it to be the truth of God's Word. I believe the Five Points of Calvinism that a totally depraved sinner is saved according to Unconditional Election on the basis of limited atonement and by an

irresistible grace to persevere as a saint to the end. I have made a vow ever to teach and preach this truth and will defend this Reformed doctrine. I wish that someone would come to us again and would stay with us here another length of time to teach us more of this Reformed doctrine. O, I would be very glad to have Rev. Heys once again here in Jamaica. In conclusion let me say, 'How shall they call on Him in Whom they have not believed, and how shall they believe in Him Whom they have not heard, and how shall they hear without a preacher, and how shall they preach except they be sent?' Rom. 10:14, 15."

\* \* \*

The membership roll of Hope church is steadily growing, and this growth was reflected in a bulletin notice which stated that one elder and one deacon would be added to the Council January 1.

\* \* \*

Isabel's congregation is growing, too. From the Manse came the news that Rev. and Mrs. Moore rejoice in the birth of a son Thursday, Nov. 7.

\* \* \*

Rev. H. Veldman addressed the League of Mr. and Mrs. Societies speaking on, "The New Morality." In the absence of a report on this speech we wonder if modern morality is any newer than that of Genesis 13:3 and of Judges 17:6.

\* \* \*

The Discussion Groups which meet monthly in First Church after the evening service discussed, "The Christian and Politics" Nov. 10, with some 60 in attendance. Meeting so soon after the National Elections they must have noted that the 1968 campaigns were scarcely characterized by Christian virtues. Every four years we are vexed with the problem, where do we stand in regard to the cannibalism of the campaigns and the hypocritical embracing of former foes after the election? One is reminded of Genesis 6:5, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great upon the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart were evil continually". How long ere He will again say, "I will destroy . . . ."?

\* \* \*

According to a bulletin notice in the area bulletins our Radio Choir is being threatened as to its very existence. There is a dire need for male voices to bring the choir up to a proper balance. It would appear that men are too busy with other activities which conflict with choir practice on Monday evenings. Can it be that the men do not realize that membership in the Radio Choir involves a ministry of music, and that the gift of singing is a gift to be used in this ministry?

. . . see you in church

J.M.F.