

# The Standard Bearer

**A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE**

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**Desiring A Better Country**

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## THE STANDARD BEARER

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## Meditation

## Desiring A Better Country

Rev. M. Schipper

*"But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city."*

Hebrews 11:16.

*"But now they . . ."*

The writer of this epistle is still speaking of those heroes of faith mentioned in the preceding context, particularly Abraham and Sarah, who had demonstrated a faith all the saints of God ought to emulate. And the words "but now" indicate that the words of our text are not in a temporal, but a logical connection

with the immediately preceding context. In other words, the writer to the Hebrews is not contrasting what took place in the old dispensation with what is true now; but he is referring to the faith and hope of the saints of whom he had been speaking. In the immediately preceding verse he had written: "If they had been mindful of that country from whence they



came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned." That is, if these patriarchs had wanted to return to the place where they came from (i.e., their earthly fatherland), they could have done so. But now, as things really were, they didn't desire this, but they desired and sought after a better country, an heavenly.

The patriarchs, those heroes of faith, sojourned in a strange country, and while they did so, they looked for a better.

Of Abraham we read in verse 10, that he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

We read in the verses 13 and 14 of these heroes of faith that all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, confessing that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. And the writer to the Hebrews notes in this connection that they who say and who do such things show plainly that they seek a country, a country of their own.

In our text we read, that they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly.

A heavenly fatherland!

No one understands better than the emigrant, one who migrates from the land of his birth to another land, a strange land, what is implied in the term "fatherland." Coming to another country which to him is strange, with strange customs, with its entirely different manner of living, he is a stranger in it. And even though he is purposed to remain in it and not return whence he came, his old fatherland, the land of his nativity, of the language and customs of his youth, pulls at the heart-strings. Fatherland has the love of his heart. There he felt at home in the fullest sense of the word. There he lived with his own people, and spoke the language which was familiar to him.

However, the fatherland which the saints seek after is not the land or a return to the land of their natural birth. But it is the land of their second birth. It is the heavenly fatherland, for they have been born again and from above. They seek a better country, that is, an heavenly.

O, assuredly the heavenly fatherland is a country!

It is not an abstraction, merely a fanciful idea that has no reality!

Heaven is a real place, and much higher than all the lands of the world. Of that country Canaan, to which Abraham was called, was but a type, and a very faint picture. To this earthly Canaan Abraham and Sarah went, and there they lived with Isaac and Jacob in tents, and moved about in it as strangers. All that Abraham owned in it was the cemetery of Machpelah which he bought of the sons of Heth for four hundred shekels of silver. Never was it his intention to make the land a permanent abode. For he had a desire for a better country, that is, an heavenly.

A better country!

Always in the epistle to the Hebrews the Word of God by comparison speaks of the better: a better hope, a better covenant, better promises, better sacrifices, a better and enduring substance, a better resurrection; and according to our text, a better country.

Always the reality is better than the type, the heavenly better than the earthly. Therefore also while the elect strangers wandered in the typical land, they could not be satisfied until they had attained to the better. And the reason, no doubt, was that the typical always pointed away from itself to the reality. O, indeed, the typical was beautiful, a land that flowed with milk and honey. But it was so imperfect. God was there, but always behind curtains where none could approach to Him but the priest and that only with blood. God's covenant was realized there in the generations of the believers, but always in a reprobate shell and not without sin. Life could be lived there, but not without death and its attending miseries. And peculiarly this is precisely what the Lord was always teaching His saints as they roamed amid the types and shadows. Actually He was always saying to them: You must look for something better, far better. You must look for the highest manifestation of My covenant of friendship as it will be realized when you shall see Me face to face, when you shall dwell in My house of many mansions, when you shall experience the highest possible manifestation of My grace, the pleasures that are to be found at My right hand where you shall know even as you are known, and dwell with Me forevermore.

To this better country the heroes of faith looked in hope! They had to see, as the Lord also taught them, that the type, beautiful as it may have appeared, as a shadow would pass away. It was so temporary. It would soon be overrun by enemies and destroyed. In it the Israel of God was never really safe, and soon it would be taken away from them and given to the invaders. But the heavenly fatherland was of endurable substance: because God Who is the center of it all is the everlasting God. There in the very center of it dwells the Triune God in the face of Christ Jesus, in the light of His eternal covenant.

Nothing is conceivably greater and more glorious than that! In the new heaven and new earth where righteousness shall dwell — that is the better country which the saints desire.

Because of that desire, they are willing for a while to be strangers and pilgrims in the earth. Because of that desire, they are also willing to lose all which they have invested in the temporary. They are willing to be marked as strangers by the world round about them, even willing to bear the reproach of that world that continually mocks them for being so stupid as not to seek the things below. O, when they speak of their hope of something better, the world may deceptively agree that they too are always looking for something



better. The world realizes that what it has is filled with many ills. Therefore the world is always seeking for improvement. It desires to eradicate all its ills, and make the world a better place to live in. But it has no use for a world in the center of which God dwells. The hope of the world ends in death. The elect stranger is not deceived with the philosophy of something better of which the world prates.

We should not make the mistake, however, to conclude that the elect strangers seek and are searching for an undiscovered land, and possibly at last will discover that the land of their hope does not exist. Nor should they in the expression of their hope ever leave the impression with others that that possibility exists. Nay, they seek not in that unsatisfactory and disturbing sense. But they seek in the sense of projecting themselves and their desire onward to the blessings God already prepared for them, and their faith grasps the promise, and their thoughts expatiate into the future, which is as sure to them as the present, because God has made it so. Thank God they have not to seek their native soil as wanderers who may perchance fail in their quest, and die at last homeless. The better country is brought to them and certified to them by divine promise, and sealed to them by divine power, and made possible for them by divine mercy. In this hope they are saved. And all other longings are subjected to it.

Because this hope, this constant longing, this fervent desire is in them, God is not ashamed to be called their God.

Not ashamed of them is their God because He recognizes in them the working and the power of His own grace which He has given to them. O, how ashamed of them He must be when they do not always live out of this hope, and reveal this desire! And what saint is he who can boast that his desire is constantly fixed on the better country? Does not Scripture itself reveal how that men like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had their moments when hope was dim and desire was weak? And is there anyone of us who moves about in our affluent society today, who dares to boast that all his hope and all of his desire is stayed on the city which has foundations? But when we observe these weaknesses and failures, neither can we boast that God is not ashamed to be called our God. The text, therefore, means to teach that God is not ashamed to be called our God when His grace in us comes to manifestation, when it reveals itself in this fervent longing for our heavenly fatherland. That the text speaks in this nega-

tive way, must certainly encourage us to continue constant in our hope. Positively, this implies that God is greatly delighted in those who live out of this other-worldly principle, and set their affection on the things above.

Because God is not ashamed to be called their God, and because He positively finds delight in them, they also shall never be ashamed.

For He hath prepared for them a city!

The figures of the city and that of the fatherland are not essentially different. Both refer essentially to the blessed estate and glorious inheritance God has prepared and promised to His saints. The difference between the two is only one of viewpoint. The city makes the idea of fatherland more concrete. The city is a well-planned, well-established entity containing all that which is requisite for well-rounded life and fellowship. It stands in direct contrast to the tent in which the elect strangers are now required to dwell. The tent is fragile, while the city is substantial. The tent is temporary, while the city is permanent. Not forever shall the child of God live in a temporary, moveable, and fragile dwelling; but his future home is permanently established. "We are come," says the writer to the Hebrews in another place, "unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." Paul, in Galatians 4, says: "But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all." And John on Patmos was privileged to see "that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God."

That city God has prepared for them!

He prepared it in His counsel when He planned it; and in that counsel it was prepared from before the foundation of the world. Therefore Abel, Enoch, Noah, and Abraham looked for a city which had foundations, because it was there to the eye of their faith, and into that city they did enter when their earthly pilgrimage was over.

He prepared it also in and through Christ, through His perfect obedience and righteousness. And in His day that city shall be revealed in all of its glory. At God's right hand exalted, He has received power to fulfill His promise to us that He will prepare a place for us in it. And when we are prepared by His grace and Spirit for that place, we also shall enter into that city, and the house with many mansions.

Keep your eye of faith, and your desire of hope fixed, therefore, on that city in the midst of the fatherland of God, pilgrim, and you shall never be ashamed, world without end, Amen!

Reserve September 24 for the Annual R.F.P.A. Meeting at Southwest Prot. Ref. Church



## Editorials

### EDITOR'S NOTES

*Publication News.* The first volume of the projected 3-volume reprint of the Rev. Herman Hoeksema's *The Triple Knowledge, An Exposition of the Heidelberg Catechism*, will be published in early fall. As of this writing, the last details of preparation are being cared for before this volume goes to press; and thereafter it should be ready within two months. This first volume will include the first three volumes of the original 10-volume set (several of which are now out of print), and it will be attractively and serviceably published at an extremely reasonable price. Plans are to complete the reprinting of the entire set within a year. Watch for further announcements of this next RFPA publication!

\* \* \*

Copy for some of our departments did not come in this month; this accounts for a larger than usual quota of "Believers and Their Seed," (which we also, by the way, plan to publish in book form when it is completed in the near future). We have received several questions for our Question Box; and we hope to begin answering them in the September 15 issue. To those who have sent in questions: patience, please!

\* \* \*

*Seminary Convocation* will be held, D.V., at 8 p.m.,

Wednesday evening, September 9, at the Hope Protestant Reformed Church. Why this unusual change? The answer is that this will also be the previously promised Seminary Night, held under the auspices of our Theological School Committee. An interesting program, in which faculty and student body will take part, is being prepared for the evening; and as many of our people as live near enough are invited and urged to attend and thus to "live along" with our seminary a bit. Meanwhile as we begin a new term of instruction and study, we commend our seminary to the prayers of our churches. Mark this important date on your calendar of events!

\* \* \*

We call the special attention of our men to the announcement of the annual meeting of the R.F.P.A. which appears elsewhere in this issue. Only too often this meeting is poorly attended, due partly to the fact that it gets crowded out by other events when the fall season of activities begins. We urge you, one and all, to keep this date, Sept. 24, open for this meeting. If you are not a member of the R.F.P.A., join! The R.F.P.A. and the *Standard Bearer* need your active support!

## Evaluation of ACT's Translation

*Prof. H.C. Hoeksema*

Continuing our evaluation of ACT, we call attention to a few more points at which, in our opinion, it does not offer any improvement over the King James Version. In some instances its translations are not accurate; in some they are inconsistent; in some ACT follows rather radical tendencies in textual criticism; and in some instances, there appears to be no weighty reason for any change of language, nor any need of clarification. Admittedly, some of the changes which ACT offers are not of great importance; and yet, in the light of the fact that ACT purports to give a more accurate rendering, even some of these less important changes ought to be examined, in order that we may determine if ACT truly offers improvement.

First of all, we call attention to John 1:30. We present both translations:

**KJV:** This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me.

**ACT:** This is the one I meant when I said, 'A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'

Here is a rather minor change, perhaps. But the fact remains that in the original we do not read, "This is the one I meant when I said. . . ." The KJV presents an accurate and literal translation; ACT does not, but even in a minor expression such as this it inserts its own commentary by the words, "This is the one I meant when . . ." Besides, it is at least doubtful whether ACT offers any improvement and help by substituting "has surpassed me" for "is preferred before me."

In John 3:6 we find another instance where the translation is not accurate. Here is the passage:

**KJV:** That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

**ACT:** Flesh gives birth to flesh, but Spirit gives birth to spirit.



Here again, if the question is one of *accuracy* of translation, the producers of ACT will have to grant, on the basis of Greek, that the KJV is accurate, while ACT is not. Nor is there anything difficult to understand about the language of the KJV here. Hence, there does not appear to be reason for change of any kind.

A third example is John 3:36, where we find the following well-known words:

KJV: He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.

ACT: Whoever puts his faith in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see that life, for God's wrath remains on him.

There are three changes made by ACT in this verse: 1) ACT unnecessarily uses the words "puts his faith in." Why not simply "believes in," especially in the light of the fact that ACT itself is not consistent, but elsewhere renders the very same expression in John 6:40 by "believes in"? 2) ACT offers the highly questionable translation "rejects," a strong and positive word for a term which in the Greek is negative and can very well be rendered by "believeth not" or by "disobeyeth." 3) ACT inserts the word "that" in the last part of the verse, an insertion which is neither accurate nor necessary. The word "that" does not occur in the original. It might even leave the impression that while he who does not believe shall not see *that* life, he could see some other life, while the meaning of the text is that he shall not see any life whatsoever.

Next, we call attention to two instances where the inclusion or omission of parts of the text is involved. The first is the much debated passage about the man at the pool of Bethesda in John 5. ACT omits the last part of verse 3 and all of verse 4, which are found in the KJV. We will quote the KJV, vs. 2-5, and bracket the parts which ACT omits: "Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, [waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: Whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.] And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years." Now admittedly, there is a goodly amount of manuscript evidence in support of omitting these words or part of these words. But it should be remembered, in the first place, that manuscript evidence is not the only evidence to be considered here. Secondly, there is by no means unanimity of opinion on this point among scholars. Thirdly, the exclusion of these words presents a difficulty when it comes to the explanation of vs. 7: "The impotent man answered him, Sir,

I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me." In general, my preference is to include in the text that which our King James Version includes in all so-called doubtful passages, and to leave such matters for commentaries. Call it the mind of safety if you will, but personally I would much rather include too much in a Bible version than too little.

The second instance which involves the text itself is the entire passage of John 7:53 to John 8:11. This includes the entire narrative of the woman taken in adultery. ACT includes this passage, but inserts before the passage a disturbing note which can serve no useful purpose and which can only serve to raise doubts in the mind of the reader not only about this particular passage but also about the whole matter of the trustworthiness of our Bible. Here is the note which is inserted: "The consensus of textual scholarship is that John 7:53-8:11 is not a part of Scripture. It appears in some manuscripts here or after John 7:36 or after Luke 21:38. It may, however, report a true incident in the life of Jesus." Now it seems to me that if ACT states that this is the consensus of textual scholarship, and if ACT puts any confidence in such textual scholarship, then it should also have the courage of its convictions and simply leave the passage out; and in that case I would prefer that the passage be left out without even a footnote. Why raise doubts in the mind of the ordinary Bible reader, especially doubts which he cannot possibly resolve by personal study? For my own part, however, I would certainly leave the passage in, as the KJV does; and I would leave it in without a footnote. Evidently when all is said and done, according to ACT's note, it must be granted that this passage "may report a true incident in the life of Jesus." It is perfectly safe, therefore, to include the passage, while it is risky to exclude it. And it is both risky and confusing to the ordinary Bible reader to insert a note of this kind.

Next we return to a few matters of translation in John 6. A very important question of accuracy arises in connection with verse 39:

KJV: And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.

ACT: And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day.

Perhaps the KJV does not succeed completely in bringing out the fact that the original uses the singular throughout this verse. But ACT fails here on two counts: 1) It changes the emphasis of the original by changing the position of the words "all which he hath given me." And, 2) it obviously changes the singular to the plural. I will not enter into the difference of



meaning that is at stake here. I merely point out that ACT has no right to speak of *accuracy of translation* here, on the basis of the original.

Also in John 6:45-b ACT, in our opinion, does not offer any improvement when it translates, "Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me," instead of the KJV, "Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." Even apart from the question of tense ("listens" or "hath heard"), ACT's use of the word "listens" instead of "heard" presents a different idea, and not the correct one.

In John 6:60 there is also an unjustifiable change as far as literal accuracy is concerned.

KJV: Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it?

ACT: On hearing it, many of his disciples said, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?"

Here it is a simple fact of the Greek that the word "accept" does not occur, but the word "hear." ACT is not accurate.

Again, an inaccuracy which can only involve a deliberate and misguided attempt to clarify is involved in verse 65 of John 6:

KJV: And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.

ACT: He went on to say, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him."

It is a simple fact of the Greek text that it does not say, "unless the Father has enabled him," but very definitely, "except it were given unto him of my Father." A change of this kind on the part of ACT is in the nature of a commentary rather than a translation; and I submit that it is not even an accurate commentary. When the text speaks of coming to Jesus as a matter of being given of the Father, this says much more than that it is only a matter of *enablement*.

In John 7:39, where ACT had a good opportunity to prove that it was intent on accuracy, it falls into the same mistake as the KJV, but adds to the mistake by failing to italicize the word "given." This verse reads as follows (KJV): "But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified." It is accurate in this instance to translate simply: "for the Spirit was not yet." But ACT, like the KJV, adds the commentary of the word "given."

Turning to John 10, we find several instances where ACT does not offer real improvement.

In the first place, there are again some instances where ACT substitutes the word "listen" for the word "hear." To say the least, this change is not helpful. To this reader it does not convey an accurate connotation

when we read concerning the sheep in vs. 16: "... and they shall listen to my voice." The same is true of verse 27, where the KJV reads: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." In the second place, ACT is neither accurate nor consistent in verse 25 when it translates: "Jesus answered, 'I did tell you, but you do not believe. The works I do in my Father's name *speak for me.*'" The words which I have italicized are rendered in the KJV: "bear witness of me." And ACT itself renders the very same word elsewhere by "testify," which is an accurate rendering. Why not be consistent? In verse 26 two changes are made. The first concerns the translation. In the KJV we read: "But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you." ACT substitutes the word "flock" for the word "sheep," a change which is completely unwarranted in the original, as well as altogether unnecessary. In the same verse, secondly, ACT eliminates the words "as I said unto you," words for which there is rather good manuscript evidence.

In John 12:27 ACT arbitrarily substitutes the word "heart" for "soul" in Jesus' statement: "Now is my soul troubled." This is a change which is in no wise founded on the original, and a change which radically changes the meaning of the text. There is a great difference between trouble of soul and trouble of heart. Scripture speaks of both, but does not mean the same thing by these two expressions.

In John 13:31, 32 there is another example of a change which is both useless and inaccurate. Compare the following renderings, of which the KJV is the accurate one:

KJV: Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him."

ACT: When he was gone, Jesus said, "Glory comes now to the Son of Man, and glory comes to God in him. If God is glorified in him, then God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once."

In John 20:3-9, where we find the narrative of Peter and John at the tomb of Jesus, ACT spoils the narrative when, in verses 5 and 6, it speaks of "the strips of linen" instead of "the linen clothes." This rendering of ACT leaves the impression that the linen grave clothes which had been wound about Jesus' body by Joseph and Nicodemus had been unwound by Jesus at the time of His resurrection and left lying as so many strips of linen on the floor of the sepulchre. But a careful study of the narrative will reveal that this was exactly not the case, but that it was the very fact that those linen clothes were lying in the tomb just as they had been wrapped about Jesus' body which drew the wondering and believing attention of the disciples. Again, the KJV is to be preferred.



Finally, in John 20:16 we find another blatant change of the original text in ACT when it translates: "She turned toward him and cried out, 'Rabboni!' (which is Aramaic for teacher)." Now the text simply does not say, "which is Aramaic for teacher." It does not mention "Aramaic" at all. The KJV is again correct when it renders, "which is to say, Master." While this, again, may be considered a minor point, it is nevertheless a taking of unwarranted liberties with the text of Scripture and does not reveal a proper respect for the language of Scripture and for accuracy of translation.

Our conclusion, therefore, — even apart from all our other objections to this and all the new translations —

is that in this sample ACT does not measure up to the standard of accuracy which is required in a good Bible translation. Not only has the King James Version stood the test of time and won a large place in the hearts of the people of God; but also, in spite of many criticisms aimed at it, it furnishes a translation which is amazingly accurate and sound. Our vote continues to be for the King James Version. If you like to study and compare versions, get ACT when it is completed; and get some of the other versions for your library shelf. But use them with discretion even for study purposes. And for daily Bible reading, for society use, for school use, and for use in public worship, stick to the King James Version.

## *In His Fear*

# Dangerous Retirement

*Rev. John A. Heys*

The children are back in school again.

At least for most of the children it is a case of being *back* in school. In some instances it will be a going to school for the first time. And what an ordeal that is for both mother and child! The mother, if it is her first or last child to enter school, will find herself in her thoughts going to school where the child is in first grade or kindergarten. The child in school finds himself going home in his thoughts to mother. And it takes a while before both are adjusted to this new experience. For these, who are just beginning their formal education in school, there is stretched out a long road of eight, twelve, sixteen or more school-term miles.

For many children it is a return to school. Yea, for most of those in school it is a going back to that long road after getting off a few months for the summer vacation rest alongside the road.

Many children there are who, in order to continue their schooling, have departed from home to be in a distant city, state or even country for specialized training, or for instruction in an institution that will teach them according to the doctrines of their churches.

That these children are in school in our land is most likely due to the fact that the State requires it up to a certain age. It is not because Scripture demands it. Nowhere does Scripture tell the parent that he must send his child to an institution that will give him the formal education in the things of his natural life which the State requires. Sending our children to a school is being obedient to the Word of God only in the sense that this Word demands of us that we be obedient to the laws of the State.

However, Scripture is clear and emphatic about the demand that the child be trained and brought up in the fear and nurture of the Lord. God's Word clearly and emphatically insists that spiritual training and instruction in spiritual matters be given to the child. Deuteronomy 6:6 and 7 declare, "And these words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." Psalm 48:11-14 tells us to walk about Zion to see her strength and beauty that we may tell it to the generations following. Many other passages there also are which demand such instruction. And believing parents, heeding this command of the State, establish and maintain Christian schools and hire believing teachers so that their children may have that kind of instruction while they are taught the things of their natural life, and may have the things of their natural life taught in the light of these spiritual truths. It is also for this reason that the church arranges for the instruction of the child in the knowledge of Scripture and in the doctrines of the church.

Your children, therefore, are in a Christian school or college, are they not? And you send them, do you not, to their classes which the church provides for them, whether now you call it catechism or Bible class or the like. That is where they belong. To that they have a right; and it is a privilege that is theirs as children of the covenant. If you do not send them to a Christian school, and it is possible for you to send them, because



there is such a school in the area, do not ask the question, after they leave the faith and turn their backs upon the church and the truth, "Where did we fail them?"

But the observation which we wish to make at this time is that it is not enough simply to enroll your children in such a school and to send them to the classes provided by the church. This is necessary. Parents who do so are to be commended for their action and interest in God's covenant. But having *hired*, we must not now assume the position of being *retired*. The parent who cannot send his child to a Christian school knows that he cannot retire when he has no believing teacher he can hire for his children. He has a full-time job. He has no help and instead must constantly be fighting the forces of darkness. The State demands such a schooling. That parent finds the lie being taught as well as the philosophies of men that ridicule the truth. The child is between two forces. This is no time to retire from the important work of teaching according to the truth of God's Word. But the parent who does send his child to a Christian school, and to those classes provided by the church for spiritual instruction, must not think that he can retire and leave it all to those Christian school teachers. God's command comes to the parents and not to the teachers. These are the children of those parents, and nothing in the world can ever change that and transfer the responsibility from the parent's shoulder to those of the teacher. Indeed, that teacher will have to answer before God for what he has taught. But that parent will have to give answer for what he allowed others to teach his child. The large sum of money spent as tuition does not buy the parent freedom from his responsibility for the training of his child. That parent brought forth this child, and it is his child as long as he and that child lives.

That parent better be sure that he knows *what* is being taught his child. It is not enough simply to know *that* his child is being taught. We like to get our money's worth, and therefore we want to be sure that the teachers whom we hire are doing their work. We do not wish to spend hundreds of dollars only to find at the end of the year that our children learned little or nothing because the teachers resorted to many of their own pet projects and neglected the basic elements of "reading, writing and 'rithmetic." More important is it to be sure that our children are being taught the truth and all things in the light of that truth.

This is so necessary today because the Christian schools are often so similar to the schools of the world. There was a time when evolution was taught in the schools of the world and denied and condemned in the Christian School. Now it is taught in the schools of the unbelievers as a theory of man, and in the Christian (?) schools as the testimony of God in His Word!!! The teacher in the schools of the unbelievers digs into the

earth for support of this theory of men. Teachers in Christian (?) schools dig into the Word of God to help the unbelievers, who have not this Word, make a good case for their atheistic ideas. In former years the Christian schools were erected and maintained because believing parents were convinced that there was night and day difference between the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light and that God's people indeed were a peculiar people. And the teachers in the school of the world shook their heads at this "narrow-minded, silly" people! But now some Christian (?) schools go out of their way to show how much they are like the schools of the world, how much good there is in the world, and how much of it we ought to seek. There was a time when Christian schools had a world and life view that pointed in the direction of Christ and His kingdom. That is why they were called *Christian* schools, is it not? But today many teach a worldly life view that directs the child towards the kingdom of the Antichrist. In days gone by the Christian schools taught the pupils to put on the whole armor of God in recognition of the fact that there is a powerful spiritual enemy that would like to destroy us. In many Christian (?) schools today the pupils are taught to seek the friendship of that enemy, who is presented not as an enemy but an inherently good man who can be won by kindness and needs not regeneration and the Spirit of Christ. The cross in many Christian (?) schools has been replaced with money, the Spirit with the scientist's laboratory. And the children are taught to go out with these and make this a better world in which to live. The cross and the Spirit have failed. Money and science must be worshipped and religiously be sought as the solution to man's problems. Sin is only a mistake and due to ignorance. Love is thinking of man and forgetting God and His Christ. Loving man is looking out for his material good and not being so "cruel" as to tell him that he is a sinner and needs that cross and that Spirit. Tell him that God loves him no matter how vile and evil he may be, but be not so void of love that you tell Him, "The foolish shall not stand in Thy sight: Thou hatest all *workers* of iniquity," Psalm 5:5; "God judgeth the righteous and God is angry with the *wicked* every day," Psalm 7:11; "Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things (filthiness, fornication, covetousness, idolatry etc.) cometh the wrath of God upon the *children* of disobedience," Ephesians 5:6. It would be cruel and a lack of love to say such harsh things to him.

You had better, therefore, be sure that you know *what* is being taught to your child. You had better find out how strongly it is advocated that Jerusalem and Athens, the Church and the World, should get married and live a peaceful life, the life of the world! Jesus said that He did not come to bring peace but a sword. Where is this enmity of Genesis 3:15 between seed and seed to be seen in our Christian school system today?



O, indeed you can see a fight on the basketball court, on the baseball diamond and football field. Then you can hear the cry from the school of the world: Beat Christian! And from the side of the Christian school comes the militant cry: "Fight! Fight! Fight!" But where do you see anything like a battle of faith? Where do you see any need for a Christian School? You will read in the papers: "Christian Beats Catholic," "State and Christian Meet Friday in Crucial Battle." Indeed, they meet on Friday, and for a couple of hours on Friday and only about worldly, material, carnal matters, that they may fight about them. Where is the unceasing battle of faith? Where is the distinctiveness? Where is the antithesis?

Well, where is the distinctiveness in the home? Hire and then retire is the slogan so often. Hire a teacher. Wash our hands of the whole business of training our children; and then retire for the enjoyment of the flesh. But this is dangerous regardless of what Christian

school it is to which you send your children, and regardless of what minister it is to whom you send them for instruction in the doctrines of the church. You parents are responsible for what he teaches them, for what you allow him to teach them. And these have their flesh as well as you do. Be sure your children are taught the truth and nothing but the truth.

Your diligence in this will reveal how serious you are about doctrinal differences and purity; how sharp an antithesis you see between the church and the world, between the truth and the lie; how spiritually sensitive you are; how much value you attach to the things spiritual; how eager you are to see your children serve God rather than serve mammon; yea, how much you love God.

If you love God, your love for your children will be a true love that declares that you want your children to live in His fear.

## *All Around Us*

# **Synod of the Christian Reformed Church Decisions of the R.C.A. The Presbyterian Church US (Southern) McIntire Under Fire**

*Prof. H. Hanko*

### **SYNOD OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH**

We include in our article for this issue a brief report on some of the decisions of the Christian Reformed Church which will be of general interest to our readers. We include this report without much comment, for it is not our purpose here to evaluate these decisions, but to acquaint our readers with important decisions of a denomination in which we are interested.

— Appointments to the college and Seminary were important business. The appointment of Dr. Willis De Boer to the department of Bible was postponed because of statements which he has made which indicate views similar to Dr. Kuitert in the Netherlands.

Dr. Wilson was appointed to the college even though he holds evolutionistic views.

The appointment of Dr. Johannes Verkuyl for a two-month period to the department of Missions in the Seminary was rejected because of unacceptable political views.

Dr. Mel Hugen was appointed to the seminary in the field of pastoral counselling though objections were

raised against him. He was on nomination with Rev. Ralph Heynen, pastor at Pine Rest. Dr. D. Hoitinga was appointed to the lectureship in ethics at the Seminary even though he is a pacifist.

— The relationships between the Christian Reformed Church and the Gereformeerde Kerken came under review. It was decided to postpone any decision on this question till a study committee appointed last year can report. Nevertheless, a letter of warning and admonition is to be sent to the Gereformeerde Kerken.

— Some organizational changes in the Synod are in the making. The Synod decided to appoint a committee which will contact the delegates to the 1971 Synod and appoint them to committees of pre-advice so that they will be able to prepare for their work prior to coming to Synod. This decision was made after long debate, and it is to be re-examined by next year's Synod. The objections were particularly that such arrangements are contrary to Reformed Church Polity which holds that no Synod is a continuing body.

— The question of the new liturgical forms was also



before this Synod. Presented to the Synod were new forms for public confession of faith, and for ordination and installation of officebearers. These were returned to the committee. The new forms for both infant and adult baptism were not yet ready — in part because many objections have been brought against them.

— The difficult and bitter controversy between the Lawndale Church in Chicago and the Timothy School Board also came to Synod. The parents in Lawndale, mostly black, wish to send their children to the Timothy Christian School. The School Board has refused to accept them chiefly on the grounds that Cicero (where Timothy School is located) is all white and that many threats have been made against the school if black children were accepted. The Synod faced the problem of the support of Classis Chicago North which had supported Timothy's school board. The Synod decided that Classis had to change its ways and bring its policy in line with the statement on race adopted by the Synods of 1968 & 1969 which favored integration. If Classis failed to do this, they were to be held in contempt of Synod. What this means was not made clear. The Synod of 1971 will have to judge on the matter. In the meantime it is hoped the problem will be solved or will go away.

— La Grave Ave. Christian Reformed Church had come to Synod with an overture concerning the character of church services, asking whether the traditional form of church services which emphasizes the preaching of the Word was necessary. Synod answered that Arts. 51-55 (of the Revised Church Order of the Christian Reformed Church) required a sermon to be preached at every service.

— The liturgical committee was instructed to consider the question of a more flexible liturgy and the introduction of more modern hymns into the worship service such as songs which Negroes sing. This was in the light of the fact that the Church is incorporating into her fellowship more people from other races.

— The question of a Reformed Seminary in Nigeria once again came up — as it has for more than a decade. The Tiv Church in Nigeria wants a Reformed Seminary; Synod has hesitated because of its commitment to an interdenominational Seminary in Nigeria. This year the Tiv Church informed Synod that they intended to go ahead with their own Seminary and asked for two teachers and \$75,000.00. Synod dodged the issue by promising a 4-year certificate course, something the Tiv Church did not request.

— The question of membership in lodges came up from Classis Lake Erie. Synod decided that membership in lodges is incompatible with membership in the Church. But Synod appointed a committee to review the grounds for this decision.

— A committee was also appointed to study ways in which the calling of ministers could be improved in the light of the growth of the Church and the wide geo-

graphic spread of the denomination.

— The question of graduate studies at Calvin College came up. This became a difficult problem because of the efforts already in progress to establish a Christian University in Toronto, Canada by the A.A.C.S. Synod decided to begin such a graduate program with financial support for the first ten years.

— In the light of the fact that various member churches of the R.E.S. permit women officebearers in the Church, the Synod decided to restudy the matter.

## DECISIONS OF THE REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA

A few of the more important decisions taken by the Synod of the R.C.A. include:

— One of the most difficult of the problems faced by the Synod was the problem of the merger of part of the denomination with part of another. The Particular Synod of New Jersey formed a united Synod with a Particular Synod of the United Presbyterian Church. This took place last May.

Four members of that Synod lodged a complaint with the General Synod that such a merger was in violation of the rules. The matter was referred to the Judicial Committee of the R.C.A. Synod. The Judicial Committee concluded that the plan constituted no violation of rules and advised that Synod dismiss the complaint.

By a rather close vote this advice was rejected by the General Synod. But, when a motion was made to declare the merger null and void this also failed. Apparently Synod did not know what to do about the business. Finally a motion was passed as innocuous as it was meaningless: the New Jersey Synod was instructed to enter into conversation with its churches and classes and further refine its plan for a united Synod. Then it was to report back to next year's Synod for approval.

The United Presbyterian Church, in its General Assembly meeting, gave approval to the merger.

— In answer to an overture which asked for the Synod to take steps for complete union between the R.C.A. and the United Presbyterian Church, the Synod voted to take no action.

— In answer to an overture calling for Synod to become full members of the Consultation on Church Union (COCU) Synod decided again to take no action, but to send a copy of COCU's plan for union to all the churches.

— A committee was appointed to begin work on the drawing up of a new and relevant Confession of Faith for the Church.

— Youth radicals were also given their say at the Synod. The Synod refused to accept the draft cards of those who wanted Synod to act as a repository for them. But it did decide to direct its General Program Council: "in the light of the needs of young men who find themselves in good conscience unable to partici-



pate in the war or in selective service, to maintain and deepen denominational fellowship with these young men and their families.”

#### THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH US (SOUTHERN)

A few decisions of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church US are also of interest to our readers.

- The Assembly voted to continue merger talks with the United Presbyterian Church; and the Committee was instructed to have an outline of a plan of union ready by next year.

- It was decided to expand the union talks to include the Reformed Presbyterian Church, the Cumberland Presbyterian Churches, the Reformed Church in America (which recently rejected a plan of union with the Southern Presbyterians) and the Hungarian Reformed Church in America.

- There was much talk at this Synod of setting up a “provisional Synod” to serve as a “holding body” for congregations and presbyteries that do not favor many union proposals. Really these provisional Synods recognize that many present union proposals are going to result in some kind of split in the Southern Presbyterian Church. A resolution to set up such a Synod to receive congregations who desire to become a part of the new church being formed by COCU was defeated. Another proposal to set up such a Synod for Churches who do not want to go along with present mergers with the United Presbyterian Church was referred to the Permanent Judicial Committee and will be considered again next year.

- Inasmuch as many believed that women were not given a large enough voice in church affairs, it was decided to set as a guideline the proportion of one-third women on all boards and agencies.

- Young people are also to be given a larger voice in church matters. One youth delegate, in addition to regular commissioners, would be sent to the General Assembly each year. This youth delegate must be over sixteen years old and under twenty-five.

- A hotly debated plan of restructuring the synods and presbyteries was not decided upon this year. Action was postponed till next year.

- Debate also arose over *Colloquy* magazine, a paper published by the United Church of Christ, the Presbyterian Church US and the United Presbyterian Church USA. Objections had been brought against the magazine that included charges of blasphemy, immorality, obscenity and pornography. The Assembly voted to continue to support the magazine.

- The Assembly issued a call for the withdrawal of American troops from Southeast Asia.

- It liberalized a stand on abortion, ruling that abor-

tion was permissible in many instances. Some of these instances are when there is medical evidence of a physical or mental deformity in the unborn child, when conception is the result of rape or incest, when the physical or mental well-being of either the mother or the child was threatened, or when socio-economic conditions of the family warranted abortion.

Even a swift survey of this nature gives clear indications of the general trend of the church-world today. And the picture is not pleasant.

#### MCINTIRE UNDER FIRE

Dr. Carl McIntire has run into trouble with the Federal Communications Commission. The Seminary which he heads, Faith Theological Seminary, owns station WXUR — AM — FM in Media, Pa. This station is the keystone of McIntire’s radio network over which he broadcasts daily. The FCC has recently refused to renew the licenses for this station which means that it will have to be operated by others. Its reasons were that the stations had “departed in a substantial manner from the programming proposals the licensee had made, and that the licensee had failed to ascertain the community’s needs and interests or to demonstrate that it had met those needs and interests.”

The strange part of it is that the FCC had appointed an Examiner to examine the station. He did his work over a period of nine months and reported that no violations of FCC rules were apparent. Yet the FCC overturned this report and unanimously ruled not to renew the license.

McIntire, who says that he will appeal the ruling all the way to the Supreme Court, has found in this the attack of the liberals who detest his type of broadcasting and are determined to get him off the air. They are particularly enraged by his religious fundamentalism, his strong anti-communism and his political conservatism.

While we do not agree with McIntire’s religion and politics in many important and basic respects, we share in McIntire’s alarm over the ruling now being appealed. There is no question about it that this is a real warning to all religious broadcasters that, if their programs do not meet with current views as to what is good for the American public to hear, they stand in real danger of having their programs blacklisted. This can be done easily by the pressure which the FCC is able to exert against stations carrying these programs. The day is perhaps not too far distant when the air waves will be closed to the preaching of the truth of the gospel.

We do not know what is being broadcast over station WXUR. We do know that McIntire must be given the right to broadcast if freedom of speech is to be preserved.

**Reserve September 9 for Seminary Night at Hope P.R. Church**



## *Come Ye Apart... And Rest A While*

(For Children Only. Or, for parents who are accompanied by their children.)

Rev. C. Hanko

So you are going to school soon?

Is this for the first time? For some of you it must be. You have been waiting for this for a long time, haven't you? Maybe you are the oldest in the family. Then it really will be new for you. Maybe you have older brothers and sisters, who told you what fun it is to go to school. Do you? Anyway, now it is time to go. And you can hardly wait, can you? Are you a wee bit scared? Wonder whether you'll have a nice teacher that smiles at you? Do you think you will like her? And then there will be all those other children. Do you know some of them? Well, you soon will.

For some of you this is old stuff. You know what school is like, its fun, its hard work, and all that. But you are going into a new grade. Will you have harder work than last year? When I went into the third or fourth grade (sort of forget which), the very first day, the very first word that the teacher wrote on the board for spelling was "Ge-ra-ni-um." That floored me. I thought, if that is the first word already, what will the last one be? I'll never make it. But it seems I did after all.

Or maybe you are now in junior high. No, in high school already? Even then, back to school it is. Now for another year of new experiences; all a part of growing up.

You are going to *school*.

And you are going to school to *learn*. Maybe you will learn to read or write. Maybe you are far past that. You will learn arithmetic, grammar, geography, science, and the like. Or maybe you are looking forward to subjects like algebra, geometry, physics, and all that.

God gives to children special gifts. One of these is the gift of *memorizing*. Maybe that seems hard at times; you say the same thing over and over, or read the same thing again and again, and it just won't soak in. You throw the book down in disgust. But most of the time, when there is not a ball game or so on your mind, it is really quite easy. You see something, hear something, or read something, and it sticks in your mind, stowed away up there. (My mother used to say that the bad things stayed put much better than the good things. Do you suppose that she was right?) We older folks cannot do that nearly as well as you can. Very old people cannot do that at all. They do not remember anything that happened recently. They forget it just like that. The only things they remember – and that may seem hard to believe, but it's true – are the things that they learned *when they were very young*, as you are now. *That* they never forget. No wonder that the Bible says: "Remember your Creator

in the days of your youth."

God also gave you another gift. Do you know what that is? You can store away what you learn, and *get it out to use it later*. Your brain is like an automatic filing cabinet with all kinds of drawers in it. As you learn it neatly files things away, this here, that there. And when you need it, the file pushes it out for you. Click, click, and there it is – even years later. You can tell others, you can write it down, or use it in whatever you are doing.

Isn't that wonderful, though? Only God can make an intricate instrument like that. But that is why it is so important for you to learn while you are young. Now! And you must store your storehouse full of good things, things worth remembering, things you will need later.

Study hard, won't you. And be sure to keep out the bad things, the trash that messes up your mind. I am thinking of such things as lies about God and His creation. But I am also thinking about the bad things that are shown on television, or that you read in bad books. Pigs and rats thrive on garbage, you know. And they grow up to be big pigs and poisonous rats. But our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. Don't defile that temple, will you? Don't clutter up any part of it.

You are going to a *Christian School*.

You know why your parents send you to a Christian School. Your Dad or Mom must have told you more than once that when you were a wee babe, just a few days old, they brought you to church. Something very special happened that day. You were *baptized*. Your father and mother will never forget that big, red-letter day for them and for you. Even in judgment day they will remember it. Dad and Mom stood before the whole church, and there before God they promised "to bring you up to the aforesaid doctrine to the utmost of their power." Yes, there are some big words in that last sentence, but you heard your minister say them many times, especially when a baby was baptized. This means that your parents made a vow, a promise before God and His church, to teach you all things as they really are. They promised to teach you about God Who in six days made the heaven and the earth, Who now cares for them by His Almighty power, Who rules over them, so that nothing happens except by His will. They promised to teach you about Jesus, Whom God sent to save His people from their sins. And they promised to show you that when we sin – and we do every day, you know – we must ask God to forgive them and take away our sinfulness. They even promised to show you how you can live all your life serving God.



So that when you pick out your life's calling, you do that with the prayer in your heart: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me do?" Because the one thing worth while in life is that we serve God to His glory. (Look up Ephesians 2:10 and have Dad or Mom explain that to you. O.K.?)

Likely you are going to our own school.

If not, your parents are working hard to get our own school in the place where you live. Do you know why?

One reason is that they do not want you to go to a public school. A public school is not *our* school at all. Your parents promised to teach you, and not leave that to the government, which does not even teach you about God.

But there is another reason why we have our own schools. And that is because we do not want to mix you up.

When you go to another Christian School that teaches you wrong things, you get all mixed up. That is what a little girl told me not long ago, "I get all mixed up, because you tell me one thing, and my teacher tells me something different." So it is important that your

parents at home, your minister in the catechism, and your teacher in school all teach you the same thing. Then you don't get mixed up. And then you grow up to be men and women of God, who know the Lord as He taught us in His Word.

And now off to school.

But do not forget to pray before you go. I mean, pray every morning. No, not just along with your father and mother, and along with your teacher. But pray your own prayer that God may help you. And learn to pray while you are working. Little children need God's help as much as we grown folks do. Ask Him to help you with your school work, but also ask Him to teach you to love and serve Him every day. Ask Him to make you afraid of saying bad words, afraid of doing wrong. Ask Him what He wants you to be when you grow up. Because you are growing up so very fast, and soon you will be Daddies and Mamas. That will happen before you know it. And then you must teach your children. . . . Isn't it wonderful that God works that way?

## Contending for the Faith

# The Doctrine of Atonement

FIRST PERIOD — 80-254 A.D.

*Rev. H. Veldman*

Continuing with the history of the doctrine of the atonement as set forth during the early years of the Church in the New Dispensation, in the years, 80-254, we would now call attention to Tertullian Concerning this Church Father, we read in Vol. III of the *Ante-Nicene Fathers* the following, and we would quote:

(A.D. 145-220) When our Lord repulsed the woman of Canaan (Matt. 15:22) with apparent harshness, he applied to her people the epithet *dogs*, with which the children of Israel had thought it piety to reproach them. When He accepted her faith and caused it to be recorded for our learning, He did something more: He reversed the curse of the Canaanite and showed that the Church was designed "for all people," Catholic alike for all time and for all sorts and conditions of men.

Thus the North-African Church was loved before it was born: the Good Shepherd was gently leading those "that were with young." Here was the charter of those Christians to be a Church, who were then Canaanites in the land of their father Ham. It is remarkable indeed that among these pilgrims and strangers to the West the first elements of Latin Christianity come into view. Even at the close of the

Second Century the Church in Rome is an inconsiderable, though prominent, member of the great confederation of Christian Churches which has its chief seats in Alexandria and Antioch, and of which the entire Literature is Greek. It is an African presbyter who takes from Latin Christendom the reproach of theological and literary barrenness and begins the great work in which, upon his foundations, Cyprian and Augustine built up, with incomparable genius, that Carthaginian School of Christian thought by which Latin Theology was dominated for centuries. It is important to note (1.) that providentially not one of these illustrious doctors died in Communion with the Roman See, pure though it was and venerable at that time; and (2.) that to the works of Augustine the Reformation in Germany and Continental Europe was largely due; while (3.) the *specialties* of the Anglican Reformation were, in like proportion, due to the writings of Tertullian and Cyprian. The hinges of great and controlling destinies for Western Europe and our own America are to be found in the period we are now approaching.

The merest school-boy knows much of the history of Carthage, and how the North Africans became



Roman citizens. How they became Christians is not so clear. A melancholy destiny has enveloped Carthage from the outset, and its glory and greatness as a Christian See were transient indeed. It blazed out all at once in Tertullian, after about a century of missionary labours had been exerted upon its creation: and having given a Minucius Felix, an Arnobius and a Lactantius to adorn the earliest period of Western Ecclesiastical learning, in addition to its nobler luminaries, it rapidly declined. At the beginning of the Third Century, at a council presided over by Agrippinus, Bishop of Carthage, there were present not less than seventy bishops of the Province. A period of cruel persecutions followed, and the African Church received a baptism of blood.

Tertullian was born a heathen, and seems to have been educated at Rome, where he probably practiced as a jurisconsult. We may, perhaps, adopt most of the ideas of Allix, as conjecturally probable, and assign his birth to A.D. 145. He became a Christian about 185, and a presbyter about 190. The period of his strict orthodoxy very nearly expires with the century. He lived to an extreme old age, and some suppose even till A.D. 240. More probably we must adopt the date preferred by recent writers, A.D. 220.

The reader will notice, from the above quotation, that "the period of Tertullian's orthodoxy very nearly expires with the century." The writer of the above words states that it seems to be the fashion to treat of Tertullian as a Montanist and only incidentally to celebrate his services to the Catholic (not to be confused with Roman Catholic) Orthodoxy of Western Christendom; but he wishes to reverse this and emphasize Tertullian's services and contributions to the Catholic Orthodoxy of Western Christendom. Be this as it may, he is recognized as a contributor to the defense of the gospel, and it is in these writings that we are interested.

We have already called attention to the fact that Reinhold Seeberg remarks that these early Church Fathers certainly emphasized that the sufferings and death of Christ were the fulfillment of prophecy. This also applies to the writings of Tertullian. In his writing against Marcion, Tertullian writes (Vol. III of the *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, in connection with the steps of the passion of the Saviour as predetermined in prophecy):

In like manner does He also know the very time it behoved Him to suffer, since the law prefigures His passion. Accordingly, of all the festal days of the Jews He chose the passover. In this Moses had declared that there was a sacred mystery (sacrament — H.V.): "It is the Lord's passover." How earnestly, therefore, does He manifest the bent of His soul: "With desire have I desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer." What a destroyer of the law was this, who actually longed to keep its passover! Could it be that He was so fond of Jewish lamb? But was it not because He had to be "led like a lamb to the slaughter; and because, as a sheep before

her shearers is dumb, so was He not to open His mouth," that He so profoundly wished to accomplish the symbol of His own redeeming blood? He might also have been betrayed by any stranger, did I not find that even here too He fulfilled a Psalm: "He who did eat bread with Me hath lifted up his heel against Me." And without a price might He have been betrayed. For what need of a traitor was there in the case of one who offered Himself to the people openly, and might quite as easily have been captured by force as taken by treachery? This might no doubt have been well enough for another Christ, but would not have been suitable in One who was accomplishing prophecies. For it was written, "The righteous one did they sell for silver." The very amount and the destination of the money, which on Judas' remorse was recalled *from its first purpose of a fee*, and appropriated to the purchase of a potter's field, as narrated in the Gospel of Matthew, were clearly foretold by Jeremiah: "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of Him who was valued, and gave them for the potter's field."

In the rest of this quotation Tertullian opposes the teachings of a certain Marcion. Marcion distinguished between Christianity of the New Dispensation and Judaism of the Old Dispensation. He did not believe that there is only one supreme God Who rules over all, the evil as well as the good; and, as far as the Lord Jesus Christ is concerned, it was his contention that Christ merely appeared and that He did not really take upon himself the flesh and blood of men. Tertullian calls attention to the words of Christ in the upper room: "This is my body." He maintains that the bread in Christ's hand was a figure of His own body, but that there could not have been a figure unless there were first a veritable body. According to Tertullian, an empty thing, or phantom, is incapable of a figure.

Then, in a paragraph following upon the quotation above, Tertullian continues to show that the sufferings and death of Christ are the fulfillment of prophecy:

"Woe," says He, "to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed!" Now it is certain that in this *woe* must be understood the imprecation and threat of an angry and incensed Master, unless Judas was to escape with impunity after so vast a sin. If he were meant to escape with impunity, the "*woe*" was an idle word; if not, he was of course to be punished by Him against whom he had committed the sin of treachery. Now, if He knowingly permitted the man, whom He deliberately elected to be one of His companions, to plunge into so great a crime, you must no longer use an argument against the Creator in Adam's case, which may now recoil on your own God: either that he was *ignorant*, and had no foresight to hinder the future sinner; or that he was *unable* to hinder him, even if he was ignorant; or else that he was *unwilling*, even if he had the foreknowledge and the ability; and so deserved the stigma of maliciousness, in having permitted the man of his own choice to perish in his sin.



This, and what immediately follows, incidentally, is an interesting passage. Tertullian would maintain in this quotation the truth that the Lord is God. He, evidently, wants no part of that conception that would present Christ as either being ignorant of Judas' design or of being unable to hinder the son of perdition in his foul deed of betraying the Christ. And this church father also applies this truth to the case of Adam. But now we continue with this quotation:

I advise you therefore (willingly) to acknowledge the Creator in that god of yours (Tertullian is writing this against Marcion), rather than against your will to be assimilating your excellent god to Him. For in the case of Peter, too, he gives you proof that he is a jealous God, when He destined the apostle, after his presumptuous protestations of zeal, to a flat denial of him, rather than *prevent his fall*. The Christ of the prophets was destined, moreover, to be betrayed with a kiss, for He was the Son indeed of Him who was "honoured with the lips" by the people. When led before the council, He is asked whether He is the Christ. Of what Christ could the Jews have inquired but their own? Why, therefore, did He not, even at that moment, declare to them the rival (Christ)? You reply, In order that He might be able to suffer. In other words, that this most excellent god might plunge men into crime, whom he was still keeping in ignorance. But even if he had told them, he would yet

have to suffer. For he said, "If I tell you, ye will not believe." And refusing to believe, they would have continued to insist on his death. And would he not even more probably still have had to suffer, if he had announced himself as sent by the rival god, and as being, therefore, the enemy of the Creator? It was not, then, in order that He might suffer, that He at that critical moment refrained from proclaiming Himself the other *Christ*, but because they wanted to extort a confession from His mouth, which they did not mean to believe even if He had given it to them, whereas it was their bounded duty to have acknowledged Him in consequence of His works, which were fulfilling their Scriptures. . . . But yet for all this, He with a solemn gesture says, "Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God." For it was on the authority of the prophecy of Daniel that He intimated to them that He was "the Son of man," and of David's Psalm, that He would "sit at the right hand of God."

It is evident from this passage also that Tertullian viewed the passion of Christ as the fulfillment of prophecy. However, this church father also has something to say about the nature of our Lord's atonement on Calvary, although it is true that clarity of thought with respect to the cross is not fully developed until later.

## From Holy Writ

# Explanation of I John 2: 1-3 (cont.)

Rev. G. Lubbers

*JESUS, THE RIGHTEOUS ONE, OUR ADVOCATE WITH THE FATHER (I John 2:2)*

The apostle John writes a very comforting word here. He writes concerning the "paraclete" which we have with the Father. And of him he says that we "have him." This is our great ever-present glorious possession which none can take from us. He has entered for us into the most holy place, having passed through the heavens. There he is in our behalf. Fact is that this is an indication that we are dealing here with Jesus as our resurrected and ascended LORD. Of this matter Paul writes too in Romans 8:33, 34: "Who shall bring any charge against the elect of God? God it is who justifies; who shall condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died; yea rather who is risen, who is at the right hand of God, *who also intercedes for us*." Thus we have the sum of the entire matter stated in this triumphant, jubilant song of the redeemed. Truly, the gospel concerning the Christ as our "advocate" is most comforting to us. Comfort ye, comfort ye my people,

saith your God. We have a new and living way, since we have such an high priest who has passed into the holy place through the veil of His own flesh. In this advocate we have an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast within the veil of the holy place, whither the forerunner of our faith has entered now to intercede for us. (Hebrews 6:19; 7:23)

He ever lives to pray for us!

The reason why he is called "paraclete" is evidently to express the comfort and assurance for the struggling saint. The term itself means someone summoned for help. In secular Greek from the 4th Century B.C. the sense is of a "person called to help, summoned to give assistance." This gives the meaning of "helper in court." Scholars such as Behm write that in Classic Greek "even when there is no reference to a representative in court, the idea is still more or less clearly legal . . . but the use of *Paracleetos* for representative is to be understood in the light of legal assistance in court, pleading of another's case" (Vol. V, page 801, *Theo-*



*logical Dictionary of The New Testament*). The same writer further delineates concerning the New Testament usage of the term as follows: "I John 2:1, where Jesus Christ is called the *Parakleetos* of sinning Christians before the Father, the meaning is obviously "advocate," and the image of a trial before God's court determines the meaning." (page 803)

Now this is very basic and comforting for the child of God, who has sinned and who is filled with a deep sense of guilt, and who has a broken and contrite heart. When we thus stand before the tribunal of the righteous judge of heaven and earth, we have an advocate with the Father! We need not fear for the Judge is our "heavenly Father" and the advocate is Jesus Christ the righteous One! The judge is faithful and just, who does not require payment twice for the same sins. And the Advocate never loses his case because he pleads and intercedes upon the basis of his own righteousness which he fulfilled for us on the Cross! Here is one court in which the guilty enter and in which they leave pardoned, innocent free in their deepest conscience and heart.

The name of our Advocate with the Father is JESUS!

He saves His people from their sins. He is JEHOVAH-Saves, or Jehovah is SALVATION. In Him God Almighty descends upon us and causes the very heavens to bow low to earth in condescending love. Mercy and truth kiss each other in Him. From His fulness have we all received, grace for grace. He saves His people from the guilt of sin, so that, "although their conscience accuses them that they have kept none of God's commandments, yea, that they have transgressed them all, yet, that God deals with them as though they had never sinned, yea, as though they had kept all of God's commandments, since they receive this benefit with a believing heart." However, he also saves His people from the corruption and pollution of sin, sanctifies them by His grace and Spirit, so that His blood cleanses them from all unrighteousness. He is a faithful and merciful high priest in things pertaining to God. Indeed, He is Jesus, who saves His people from their sins. Either we seek all our salvation in Him; He is a complete and mighty Savior or He is not Savior at all.

This Jesus is the Christ, the anointed Son, the Messiah set upon the hill of Zion over all things. He is the appointed one of God to be the Savior-Advocate. No one taketh this honor to himself. Aaron in his priesthood had to be appointed by God Himself. Thus also it is with this High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. Furthermore, He is also qualified by the Lord. The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Him, to proclaim glad tidings to the poor, and to set the prisoners free, to clothe the naked, and heal the broken-hearted!

This is very important to confess, to wit, that *Jesus* is the Christ. This is tantamount to saying: Jesus is the Son of God. He that denies that Jesus is the Christ is

antichrist. Thus we read in I John 2:22: "Who is a liar but he that denieth that *Jesus* is the Christ? He is antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son." Again we read in I John 4:15: "Whosoever shall confess that *Jesus* is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him and he in God." And, once more, we read in I John 5:1 and 5 respectively, "Whosoever believeth that *Jesus* is the Christ is born of God. . . ." "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that *Jesus* is the Son of God?"

In all these passages the meaning and import of the NAME Jesus, as the only Name under heaven in which we must be saved is brought clearly and forcibly to the foreground. He is Jehovah-save. He is the LORD our righteousness, JEHOVAH-TSIDKENU! (Jeremiah 9:23, 24; I Corinthians 1:26-31) He is God with us. He is the Mystery that is great. God is manifested in the flesh — taken up in glory. (I Timothy 3:16)

This Jesus, this Son of God, our righteousness before God, is our Advocate! If any one of the little ones, the dear children, sin, we, the children of God, have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous one!

#### *JESUS, THE PROPITIATION (I John 2:2)*

That Jesus is our Advocate with the Father we have seen. However, to understand the depth of this his being our "advocate" (*Parakleetos*) we must also notice that he is the "propitiation." The term is very significant for our salvation and is indeed important to be understood correctly. The late Dr. A. Kuyper Sr., in his book entitled *Dat De Genade Particulier Is*, (That Grace is Particular) reflects on this. Battling the proponents of general grace, ("algemeene genade") he takes issue with those who insist that Christ Jesus is the propitiation of the sins of all and every man, head for head, and insists that the term here in the Greek text is not the means of reconciliation but is the propitiation itself.

Writes Dr. Kuyper (and we translate): "Even if the words were to be interpreted (sins of the whole world) as referring to every man, then strictly logically and exactly according to the rules of the Greek language, the terms "concerning (*peri*) the sins of the whole world" would be the Holy Spirit's language to express Christ is the sum-total (*inbegrip*) of all reconciliation and propitiation, not only as concerning our sins, but also concerning the sins of all men. This would mean nothing more than "A different reconciliation than which is in Christ is inconceivable even to the unbelieving world." "

And the writer further states: "And in the foregoing we have already touched upon a third, and by no means lesser, mistake of those who vehemently insist on teaching general grace in Christ, to wit, they who conceive of the term 'propitiation' (*verzoening*) as if we read the 'sacrificial offering' (*zoenoffer*), or if



you will that the same terms were employed here as we read in Romans 3:25, where Paul writes 'Whom God hath set forth to be the place of propitiation (*hilasterion*) for our sins through faith in his blood.' Meanwhile that is not at all the case here. In Romans 3:25 Paul employs a term which refers to the *means* of reconciliation, and where Christ is presented as the one who brings about the reconciliation. But here, even as in I John 4:10, we find a wholly different word, which does not refer to the means by which the reconciliation is realized, but which indicates the act, the essence, the sum-total of the reconciliation and expiation itself."

And once more we let Dr. Kuyper speak, where he writes: "Naturally we do not herewith deny at all that Jesus truly and really became the offering for our sins in his blood, which represents all the sins of all the elect before the face of God, but we would only assert, that in this passage something more encompassing is taught, to wit, the 'silencing of the wrath of God against sin' in its entire and full compass, as it touches *the sphere of life*, and this expiation as rooted in the whole Messianic-personality of the Christ. He is the only author of this reconciliation. It is all in Him." And further, "The apostle states nothing more than what we may paraphrase as follows: There are believers and unbelievers. Both have sin which lies under God's wrath. This wrath can only be silenced by means of reconciliation. And he who now will seek reconciliation, be it then for the sins of believers or unbelievers,

cannot find such reconciliation except in Christ Jesus. For Christ and reconciliation are one!"

On page 317, Vol. III (*Theological Dictionary of The New Testament*) we quote from Büchsel who agrees with Dr. Kuyper's interpretation that the term here in I John 2:2 is "*Hilasmos*" as meaning "the *action* in which God is propitiated and expiated. It is the ransom price, it is what appeases." And this term is only used by John in the Bible. Perhaps this is over-against the teachings of the Gnostics who taught another way of salvation. Jesus *is* this propitiation. There is none other besides Him. For He sacrificed Himself through the eternal Spirit. (Hebrews 9:14) This cuts off all "common grace" too of the universalist who teaches that Christ made salvation in God's intent possible for all!

This agrees with the context also. For the apostle is writing here to "the little children." We have an advocate with the Father. Jesus came to save His people from their sins. He is not the Savior of every man head for head. This is clearly not the teaching here at all, as should be evident to all Bible students who are honest and do not pervert the Scriptures to their own destruction. If any of you sin, little children, we have an advocate with the Father, and He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world.

Does that sound contradictory? We shall explain this in the next essay.

## *Pages from the Past*

### **Believers and Their Seed**

#### THE REPROBATE IN THE SPHERE OF THE COVENANT

(continuation of Chapter X)

*Rev. Herman Hoeksema*

To begin with the last question, it may be observed that there certainly can be no doubt whether there is indeed a certain influence of God's covenant upon the children of the kingdom who are cast out. All Scripture reveals this very clearly. Already in the figure of the vine and the branches, used by the Lord Himself (John 15), there is the idea that also the branches which are cast out, which are cut out, nevertheless stood in a certain connection with the vine and also drew their life-sap out of that vine. Plainly, the distinction between the branches which abide in the vine and those other branches which are cut out is not the same as the difference between living and dead branches. The branches which are cut out are not dead branches,

which stand in no living connection with the vine whatsoever. No, the distinction is between branches which *do* bear fruit and other branches which *do not* bear fruit. Also those non-fruitbearing branches are in the vine. The Lord Jesus states it as follows: "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit . . ." There is, therefore, a certain being in God's covenant in Christ without bringing forth fruits of faith and conversion. There is indeed an influence of the vine upon those unfruitful branches. So also there is an influence of God's covenant upon those who are in it without ever coming to repentance. This is also clear from the previously cited figure of the vineyard, described by Isaiah. Everything that could be done has been to that vine-



yard. But under all that labor wild grapes are brought forth. This same idea is probably pictured most strongly in Hebrews 6:4-8: "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned."

This last passage of Holy Writ casts considerable light upon the question under consideration.

In the first place, it is plain that the text here speaks of children of the kingdom in the outward sense of the word, of the ungodly in God's covenant, who never actually come to repentance. As might be expected, this passage is often quoted by those who hold to the possibility of a falling away of the saints. Superficially considered, one might be inclined to draw this conclusion from the text. After all, Scripture here describes men who were once enlightened, who have tasted of the heavenly gift, and who were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, who have tasted the good Word of God, and the powers of the world to come. It speaks of men who so much resemble true children of God that it is well-nigh impossible to distinguish them from the latter. But the doctrine of a falling away of the saints lies wholly in the line of Arminianism and militates so flagrantly against the whole of Holy Scripture that we may immediately rule out the very possibility that the text would teach such a falling away. Those whom God has predestinated unto salvation will also surely be glorified. The unchangeable love of God, the blood of Christ, the intercession of our great High Priest in the heavens, the powerful preservation of the grace of God — all these are the sure guarantee that nothing shall be able to separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Regeneration and conversion and the entire work of God in His elect is begun by God, and He will never forsake that which His hand has once begun. This is absolutely sure. And if this is established, then it follows that in this passage we are dealing with men who live very close to the stream of grace, so close that they understand and taste something — or sometimes even much — of it, but always with a natural understanding and an impenitent heart.

Now this can only take place and does only take place in the sphere of God's covenant as it is revealed in the world. What is here stated could not be said of men of the world who perhaps come into contact with the gospel of Jesus Christ only once or possibly a

few times. The text therefore teaches us nothing else than the influence which proceeds from this living in the sphere of that covenant of God upon those who remain ungodly. It is true that we may undoubtedly add here that this strong language is not applicable in all its force to *all* the reprobate in the sphere of the covenant. It even requires a certain class of ungodly children of the kingdom to stand as high as those who are here described without being partakers of grace. Not all attain to this status. They are perhaps to be sought among those who stand foremost in the church. But this, after all, concerns only a question of degree. In principle this may undoubtedly be said of all the ungodly in the sphere of God's covenant. Of all of them it may be said that in that sphere they receive something whereby they are distinguished from those who stand entirely outside, that by their being in that covenant — be it then, that this is only in the outward sense of the word — they are spiritually influenced. But the question remains yet: what is it, really, that they receive?

In answer to this question we wish to remark, first of all, that also in that covenant as they belong to it in an outward sense they receive *no grace*. In some circles they like to speak of a general covenant grace, a certain grace of which all covenant members, all those who are baptized, become partakers. According to this view, taught for many years at Calvin College and Seminary by Prof. W. Heyns — the view on which we reflected earlier in this treatise — all those who are baptized receive a certain subjective grace by which they are put in a position to accept or to reject God's covenant. Of course, this is pure and simple Pelagianism applied to the area of God's covenant in the world. This presentation is very dangerous, but it has nevertheless found wide acceptance in the Christian Reformed Churches. According to it, the covenant is merely a promise to all. Those who are baptized must consent to that covenant, they must accept that promise, if they are to be truly members of God's covenant. And God bestows upon every covenant member sufficient grace either to accept or to reject that promise. Others do not go so far, but speak nevertheless of a certain general covenant grace in the same sense in which some also speak of a general, well-meant offer of salvation in the preaching of the gospel. That they are baptized, that they bear the sign and seal of the covenant on their forehead — the sign and seal in which the Lord God signifies and seals the benefits of the covenant, — that they may enjoy a covenant upbringing and may be under the good Word of God from earliest childhood, that some of them may even sit at the table of the covenant, in a word that with the church they may enjoy all the means of grace — this, then, is grace for all who live and grow up under the covenant. And in all this they may see the grace of God, God's well-meant offer of His covenant.



Now let it be remarked, in the first place, over against this view that also in the seals of the covenant there is nothing common. There is neither in baptism nor in holy communion a general offer of grace. It is simply not true that God in holy baptism promises and seals something to all who are baptized. No more than this is the case with His Word, with the gospel of salvation, no more is it true with respect to the seals of God's covenant. In holy baptism the Lord God, in final analysis, seals something to no one else than to those who believe. For it is the *righteousness which is of faith* which is sealed and confirmed both in baptism and in the Lord's supper. The Lord does not lie — not even when the reprobate and ungodly receive the seal of the covenant! When the Lord affixes His seal upon this truth that He reckons faith for righteousness, then it is surely plain that such a seal is *particular* in its content and that no unbeliever can ever appeal to it.

But, in the second place, such a presentation is exactly rejected and refuted by the passage in Hebrews 6. For the holy writer exactly demonstrates by the example which he uses that such an ungodly man, though he may receive much, receives precisely no grace and no blessing from God. He cites the example of "the earth which drinketh in the rain which cometh oft upon it." Now if in that earth the good seed lies hidden, and if under the influence of that rain that earth brings forth good fruits, then in that rain that earth receives blessing from God. But also, if there lie hidden in that earth the seeds of thorns and thistles, and those seeds of thorns and thistles sprout forth through that gentle rain, then in that very same rain that earth receives the curse and becomes ripe for rejection and destruction. By means of that rain, then, it exactly comes to manifestation what the real character of that earth is and what kind of seed lies hidden in it. Now the Scripture brings this in connection with those who indeed live under the covenant but who nevertheless are and remain ungodly. The rain falls in the sphere of that covenant many times. They do not dwell in the desert, where all remains dry and barren. No, the rain of baptism and of the Lord's supper, of instruction and preaching, of the operations of the Spirit in the church, of the powers of the world to come — that rain falls, plentifully or less abundantly, in the sphere of God's covenant on earth. And if, now, there is hidden in any heart the grace of God, the seed of regeneration, then through the means of that gentle rain that good seed sprouts forth and reveals itself presently in the good fruits of repentance and sorrow, in knowledge of sin, in faith and conversion, in the knowledge of the Savior, in the fruits of sanctification and of the battle for God's covenant in the midst of the world. In that instance everything is grace and blessing. But when there is hidden in a heart the evil seed of ungodliness, and nothing more, then also that comes to manifestation exactly through that same rain. The heart in that

case remains entirely without. Then it may very well be that someone is enlightened by the good Word of God according to his natural understanding, even to such an extent that in a powerful manner he can speak of the mysteries of God's kingdom, while he nevertheless in the deepest sense of the word stands at enmity against it all. It may be, then, that he even obtains a certain taste of the things of God's covenant. They taste the good Word of God. They acknowledge that it is good. They taste something of the powers of the world to come. They can even see in a certain sense the beauty of heaven, and speak of it. They cannot even entirely escape the vibrations of the Holy Spirit as these operate and reveal themselves in the church. But with all this, they remain but natural men. Their own heart does not only remain outside all these things, but even stands spiritually at enmity against them.

And now, the consequence of all this is that such ungodly men become hardened to the most hopeless degree, and either already in this life or in the day of judgment become revealed in all the dreadfulness of their wickedness. Far and away the majority of them fall away already in this life. Sooner or later, under the influence of various circumstances, they are compelled to reveal how they really have an inner loathing of the truth of God and of His covenant. And it is precisely from among these that first the apostate church and presently the power of the Antichrist is born. And so the reprobate shell in the sphere of God's covenant never receives anything else than cursing and wrath. In nature the chaff, under the influence of rain and sunshine, grows up luxuriantly, along with the grain. But it nevertheless never becomes anything else but chaff. In the field the grain and the weeds both sprout forth under the same influences; but those weeds never become grain. In the vine, in a certain sense of the word, the fruitful branches stand under the same influence as the unfruitful branches. In fact, the latter can frequently manifest themselves much more luxuriantly than the former. But the unfruitful branches nevertheless only become ripe to be burned. And it is no different in the sphere of God's covenant. Israel dwells alone. Also ungodly Israel on earth dwells alone. It becomes, under the influence of God's covenant, much more ungodly than the heathen round about Israel. Israel shall even dwell alone yet in hell. For the children of the kingdom who are cast out shall certainly be beaten with double stripes, precisely because they despised and trampled upon that which they once tasted.

At the same time, here also lies the answer to the question: what is God's purpose with all of this? In the first place, we answer that it is exactly God's purpose as far as such ungodly members of the covenant themselves are concerned, that sin shall come to complete manifestation as sin. God must be justified when presently He judges. The first root-sin of Adam in Paradise must bear its fruits to the full. The man of sin



must come fully to revelation. Now this takes place not in the world of the heathen where men do not live in the sphere of God's covenant. This does not even take place fully when in that world of the heathen the gospel is preached and some receive it while others reject it. But this takes place indeed in the sphere of God's covenant. It is also, then, in that sphere that the power of the Antichrist is born. There sin comes to its most dreadful manifestation as sin. If Esau had not once possessed the right of the firstborn, he would never have become the fornicator; and he would never have been able to reveal himself in his Esau's nature. But now this is different. He becomes Esau to the full, the ungodly man, who prefers a mess of pottage above the glory of God's covenant. And God is justified when He judges Esau. And thus it is with all the ungodly. Presently they shall be punished with everlasting punishment in body and soul in the unspeakable anguish of hell. The equity of this judgment of God in proportion to the wickedness of sin must be seen, in order that God may appear to be justified when He judges. Therefore the terrible character of sin must also become revealed to the full. And this comes to manifestation in the sphere of God's covenant, where the ungodly count the blood of the New Testament an unholy thing.

In the second place, it is exactly through this divine arrangement that the antithesis comes to manifestation and the battle for the cause of God's covenant in the world is fought. The believers do not have their fiercest battle with those who are outside, but with those who in the external sense of the word are within. These are always inspired in principle, and presently manifestly, with the spirit of the Antichrist. It is through them that the church on earth suffers and battles and wrestles for the sake of God's covenant. The spiritual seed is persecuted and harassed by the carnal seed. The latter kills the prophets and nails the Lord of glory to the accursed tree and causes the blood of the servants of God to flow upon the earth. But in all this it nevertheless serves to make God's elect people ripe, through suffering and battle, for the final glory. For that people has the victory, through their King, Who is given to them by Israel's God, and according to His eternal good pleasure.

## Chapter XI

### Covenant Children Who Die In Infancy

The last question which we wish to discuss in connection with our subject is that concerning the salvation of children of believers who die in infancy.

Among believers there is a great measure of interest shown in this question. When the question of the salvation of little children who die in infancy is broached, often the thoughts of the heart come to manifestation and the emotions are stirred. There is, of course, good

reason for this. In the first place, the entire covenant is frequently considered as nothing else than a way of salvation; and then, of course, the great advantage of that covenant people lies in the fact that also their children are saved. If the subject of the covenant comes under discussion, many think not so much of a relation between God and His people as of a relation between believers and their seed. And if the question of being saved is then presented as the chief idea of the covenant, it follows that the question of the salvation of infants automatically is placed on the foreground. In the second place, this is a question which cuts very deeply into our natural life. For it is a fact that there are very many who are taken away by death in their childhood. Dr. Abraham Kuyper, Sr., writes about this as follows (*E Voto Dordraceno*, III, pp. 6, 7; we translate): "Of every generation that is born at least half die before they have developed to a full and clear consciousness. Before his twentieth year one is seldom full-grown. Our civil law first grants the right of self-determination to one who has reached the age of 23 years. Now statistics show that of every 100 persons buried in our land in 1886, 7¼% were dead at birth, 28% in their first year, 12½% from their first to their fifth year, 4% from their fifth to their fourteenth year, and almost 2% in their fifteenth to twentieth years. From the ages of 1 to 20 years, therefore, approximately 56% of those who died. And even if one assumes that children from their seventh or eighth year on know some difference between good and evil, then the number of those who die between the ages of 1 and 7 years old is still approximately 45 out of 100. He who is a serious Christian, therefore, must not say that the question of children who die in infancy is an incidental one. That it certainly is not. Already when we limit the question to those who attain an age of 7 or 8 years old, this question concerns almost half of those born; and if one goes a bit farther, it concerns a generous half." Now the latter conclusion of Dr. Kuyper is certainly not entirely true. For the basis of the statistics given by Dr. Kuyper above was not the number of those born in 1886, but the number of those who died. And it may be assumed that in all likelihood the latter figure was considerably smaller than the former. One cannot assume, therefore, that if he divides the number of deaths on a percentage basis according to their various age-groups, that this percentage remains the same when he figures on the basis of the number of births. The latter percentage would be considerably smaller. But that does not take away the fact that the great majority of those who die are children — if, at least, one reckons childhood up to the twentieth year. The subject under discussion, therefore, is one of vital concern. Add to this the fact that here one of the tenderest relationships of natural life is involved — for the bond between a parent and his dead infant is a very tender one — then it is quite under-



standable that at the grave of a little one, of a darling taken away by the Lord, the question arises in the heart of the parents whether that little one whose tiny body is laid away in the grave at that same moment rejoices in glory before the throne of God and of the Lamb. It is also readily to be understood that as often as this question comes under discussion, much interest is shown in it, especially by the many parents who themselves have had to bring their children to the grave.

Thus it is also to be explained, perhaps, that an article concerning this question was included in the Canons of Dordrecht (I, A, 17). Especially when, in connection with this, we take into consideration the fact that the Arminians delighted in depicting the presentation of our Reformed fathers as monstrous, and berated them that they took pleasure in the idea of a hell full of innocent little children, it is understandable that the Synod of 1618-'19 undertook to make of this matter a point of confession. We read there: "Since we are to judge of the will of God from his Word, which testifies that the children of believers are holy, not by nature, but in virtue of the covenant of grace, in which they, together with the parents, are comprehended, godly parents have no reason to doubt of the election and salvation of their children, whom it pleaseth God to call out of this life in their infancy."

This article leaves much to be desired as far as clarity and sharpness of definition are concerned; and it cannot be denied that in the form in which the matter is here cast it really cannot be considered an item for a confession. In a confession the church expresses what it believes concerning the truth of God revealed in the Scriptures. And it can hardly be said that the church here does that. If the Synod of 1618-'19 had really wanted to express a definite view concerning the salvation of children who die in infancy, then there would have had to be something entirely different in this article of the Canons of Dordrecht. Then it would have had to say very definitely: "We believe that since we are to judge of the will of God from his Word, which testifies that the children of believers are holy, not by nature, but in virtue of the covenant of grace, in which they, together with their parents, are comprehended, that all children of believers whom God takes away in their infancy are saved according to their election." Then the church would at least have expressed something definite, something about the meaning of which there would have to be no doubt. But this the article does not do. There are indeed very many who understand the matter thus. There are not a few who do not hesitate to say that every baptized child who is taken away by the Lord in infancy is saved. Parents who bring their young children to the grave often say without hesitation that they were covenant children, and that for that reason those children are certainly saved. And many preachers follow this example and in

their funeral sermons comfort the parents by giving them to understand that all covenant children who die in infancy are saved. They even tend to stretch more and more the age-limit of those who die in childhood; and it even occurs that in such funeral sermons comfort is extended on this same basis when the dead have reached the age of 14 to 18 years old and, besides, have not seldom given reason to fear by a life in and according to the world that they actually went lost. The difference is on the surface. The fathers do not express an objective item of faith and confession in the article quoted above. They only said, "... godly parents must not doubt..." But many, especially if they proceed from the idea of a pre-supposed regeneration as the basis for infant baptism, express it as a matter of faith: all baptized children who die in infancy are saved.

Meanwhile, we would remark, in the first place, that even if one declares that all covenant children who die in infancy are saved, he still does not have anything definite whatsoever. For the question remains: who are to be counted as belonging to such children who die in infancy? There will be wide divergence of opinion about this question. The matter is rather elastic. As we have already remarked, there are at the one extreme those who would extend the life-span of those who must be classified as children who die in infancy to the age of 20. Others will condemn this as being extreme; they would rather put this age-limit back to the fourteenth year. But even thus the problem is not solved. He who observes children will have to concede that the difference between those who fear the Lord and those who will have nothing of God's covenant frequently is noticeable already long before their fourteenth year. There are, indeed, children about whom, judging by their entire life's manifestation over against the things of God's covenant in the church, in the catechism class, on the street, or in their homes, one fears the worst long before they have reached the age of fourteen. And, on the other hand, there are children who at that same age have already long revealed that it is their desire to fear the Lord and to walk in the ways of His covenant. Even if you would want to fix the age-limit in your confession as extending not farther than the tenth year, you would still not by any means gain agreement on the part of all believers. For one who has stood at the death-bed of children who have not even reached the age of ten it is perfectly clear that the grace of God in Christ can come to manifestation very wonderfully on such death-beds of little children. A dying child of six or eight years old can speak of his confidence that he is going to Jesus, can exhort those who stand about that death-bed not to weep over him, and can presently depart this life singing, while at other death-beds any such manifestation is totally absent. And although the latter certainly cannot be regarded as proof that such little ones therefore went



lost, nevertheless many will point you to the fact that the ear-marks of grace can come to manifestation very early in life. We have even more than once met people who maintained that their children already at the age of two years old gave very plain indications of respect and reverence for the things of God's covenant, while others manifested the very opposite attitude already at that same age. Probably you will remark that this is going to the opposite extreme. But this does not change the fact that from all these divergent opinions it is sufficiently evident that you express very little if you affirm that all children of the covenant who die in infancy are also saved. And it is indeed certain that you would not be able to confess this concerning all the children of the 45% mentioned by Dr. Kuyper.

From this point of view it certainly would not have been any great loss if Article 17 of Canons, I-A, had never been included.

But, in the second place, it ought to be plain that it will not do to say: a child is baptized and comprehended in the covenant, and therefore it is saved if it dies in infancy. The question is not now whether children *can* be regenerated already in early childhood, and therefore *can* inherit salvation if they die before they arrive at years of discretion. That this is true, surely, no one will doubt. But the question is rather whether on the ground of their being in the covenant in the historical sense of the word it may be said of *all* baptized children who are taken away in infancy that they are saved. The latter is not possible. It would indeed be possible if it could also be maintained that all children born in the covenant are also really regenerated and saved. But it has exactly become clear to us that this is not true. If there is anything which is clearly taught in

Holy Scripture, then it is this, that not all is Israel that is called Israel. Not all the children who are born of believing parents are therefore also elect and saved. There are reprobate; there are even — to judge from the history of Israel — *very many reprobate* in God's covenant in this outward sense of the word. From their being in God's covenant by reason of birth from believing parents the salvation of infants does not simply follow as a necessary conclusion.

*(to be continued)*

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#### NOTICE

Classis East of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet, D.V., on Wednesday, October 7, 1970, at 9:00 A.M. in the Southeast Protestant Reformed Church. Consistories will reckon with this in the appointment of their delegates.

Rev. M. Schipper, S.C.

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#### NOTICE!!

All ministers and clerks of our congregations please note this change of address. Please send all orders for catechism books to:

Mr. Seymour Beiboer  
2193 Clyde Park Ave., S.W.  
Wyoming, Mich. 49509

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#### NOTICE

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in Hull, Iowa on September 2, 1970, at 8:30 A.M.

Rev. David Engelsma,  
Stated Clerk Classis West

## ANNUAL MEETING of the R.F.P.A.

DATE:	SEPTEMBER 24, 8 P.M.
PLACE:	SOUTHWEST PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCH
SPEAKER:	REV. JOHN A. HEYS



NEW MEMBERS WELCOME!



## News From Our Churches

A sure sign that summer is about over is that this column will have to be written *twice* a month again from now on. Certainly was nice while it lasted.

By the time this appears in print, the 1970 Young People's Convention will be a thing of the past. But at the time of its writing, we have only a couple of advance notices. Take this one, for example: "Celeryland Convention: Where? Hudsonville. When? August 19-24. Participants? All Protestant Reformed Young People!" Their theme is "Strangers in a Strange Land," from I Chron. 29:15; and the speakers — Rev. D. Engelsma, Prof. H. Hanko, and Rev. B. Woudenberg.

A couple of our ministers have received calls from their old congregations. Rev. G. Van Baren, presently pastor at First Church of Grand Rapids, has received the call from Randolph, which congregation he served from 1962 to 1965. The call from Hull, Iowa, has gone to Rev. J. Kortering who served that congregation during the first six years of his ministry. Rev. C. Hanko has received the call from the congregation of Southwest, which will be left without a pastor after Rev. Lubbers leaves for Jamaica.

Rev. Lubbers, our Missionary to Jamaica, "will be installed into that office," according to the bulletin of the calling church, "Wednesday evening, Sept. 2, D.V. Rev. Schipper will preach the sermon and Rev. Van Baren will read the Form for Installation. Sunday, Sept. 6, Rev. Lubbers will conduct both services in our church, and a short program will follow the service in which we will bid him God-speed. Rev. Van Baren will address the new Missionary in the name of the calling church and of our denomination."

Rev. C. J. Elliott of Islington, Jamaica, finally arrived in our country on Monday, July 20, after several delays because of red tape involved in obtaining a passport. He stayed, during his visit to the United States, at the home of Rev. and Mrs. Lubbers. According to bulletins of our churches in the Grand Rapids area, Rev. Elliott is making the rounds. On July 26 he attended the evening service at First Church, after which service he spoke a few words of greeting from the Protestant Reformed Churches in Jamaica, and of appreciation for the work which we have done for the churches there. On August 23 he was to do the same after the morning service in Holland. On August 2 he met with the Sunday School and the congregation of Hudsonville Church, after the morning service. He spoke about

the children and Sunday School of Jamaica. On August 16, he planned to do the same at Southeast Church, after its morning service.

The visit of Rev. Elliott constituted, perhaps, the feature attraction at that program at Southeast. But it wasn't the only part of the program. Besides a few numbers by the Sunday School, there was also a performance by what Southeast calls its Summer Choir. This choir originated just this summer, and, according to reports, is enjoyed immensely by those who participate. Every Sunday, immediately after the 5:00 evening service, interested members of the congregation get together for an hour of singing. They sang under the direction of Mr. C. Westra and, later, his daughter Beth, a college music major.

Incidentally, that meeting of the Sunday School at Southeast Church will be the last held in the summer. They were a little better than half way through their first season of summer Sunday School on a trial basis. It took about that long to determine that absenteeism was a problem to such an extent that it would be in the interest of wisdom to make an immediate change back to winter Sunday School.

It seems that the seminary students have spent a rather profitable summer — at least, if we may judge from this quote from the bulletin of Randolph: "The consistory received the following letter from student R. Van Overloop: I would like to thank you for the privilege given to me to preach in your church for six weeks. I believe that it was of great assistance to me in my training for the ministry. . . . May the Lord bless you spiritually and soon give you a pastor of your own, if it is His will."

We notice that the Reformed Witness Hour has discontinued Stations WNAX in Yankton, North Dakota, and KLOV-FM in Loveland, Colorado. And on July 19 it began to broadcast from KBBI-FM in Lamirada, California, which covers the territory around Redlands, Bellflower, and Los Angeles.

Again, there's an excess of news, thanks to those churches who so faithfully send bulletins. On occasion, even, a minister has sent a "news sheet" of his own. That that's appreciated by the news-editor goes without saying. But it's also of great value for all the *Standard Bearer* readers, many of whom, no doubt, find this their only source of information concerning what's happening in the distant churches. So, to all senders of news — thanks!

D.R.D.