

# The Standard Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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**Receiving Our Salvation in Christ**

### **Editorial:**

**As To Dr. K. Runia on Reprobation**

**About Instruction in Protestant Reformed Doctrine**

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## THE STANDARD BEARER

Semi-monthly, except monthly during June, July and August.

Published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association, Inc.

Second Class Postage Paid at Grand Rapids, Mich.

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Editorial Policy: Every editor is solely responsible for the contents of his own articles. Contributions of general interest from our readers and questions for the Question-Box Department are welcome. Contributions will be limited to approximately 300 words and must be neatly written or typewritten. Copy deadlines are the first and the fifteenth of the month. All communications relative to the contents should be sent to the editorial office.

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Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506

Subscription Policy: Subscription price, \$7.00 per year. Unless a definite request for discontinuance is received, it is assumed that the subscriber wishes the subscription to continue without the formality of a renewal order and he will be billed for renewal. If you have a change of address, please notify the Business Office as early as possible in order to avoid the inconvenience of delayed delivery. Include your Zip Code.

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Bound Volumes: The Business Office will accept standing orders for bound copies of the current volume; such orders are filled as soon as possible after completion of a volume. A limited number of past volumes may be obtained through the Business Office.

**Meditation****Receiving Our Salvation In Christ**

Rev. M. Schipper

*"Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into."*

I Peter 1:8-12

Whom having not seen, ye love!

And that "whom" refers, of course, to Christ Jesus, of Whom the apostle had spoken in the last part of the preceding verses, to which we called attention in our last Meditation.

Wonderful, and humanly inexplicable fact!

We have never seen Him, yet we love Him! Though we now do not see Him, yet we believe, and we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory!

Even the apostle must have marveled that his readers had never seen Him, and yet from the heart loved Him. He had seen Him. He was of those who were privileged to be near Him when He dwelled in the flesh and upon the earth. He even belonged to that triumvirate which was closest to Him in those important moments in the life of the Saviour when He was transfigured before them on the holy mountain, and when He in the garden crawled in the dust as a worm and no man. He, of all men least expected, had denied Him in His darkest hour; but was restored to His love most wonderfully after His resurrection. That he should love Him Whom he had seen, that, too, was a miracle of grace; but that those should love Him Whom they had not seen — this, indeed, was even a greater wonder, if wonders may be compared. Yet so it was, and so it is still — Whom having never seen, ye love; and in whom ye believe with joy unspeakable.

Wonderful faith!

For it is a love, and a faith, that is rooted in Christ Jesus in Whom is all our salvation!

When the apostle speaks of the salvation of the soul, he does not mean to neglect the salvation of the body. Rather, he is calling attention to that part of us which first experiences the salvation of the Lord. Surely, he was mindful of the salvation of the body in the glorious resurrection of the last day. He understood that the whole man must be saved. When God created man in the beginning, He made him of the dust of the earth and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. The whole man, therefore, is a living soul. When man fell, however, he died. He died, first of all, spiritually; then physically. And he is saved precisely in the same way he is lost. Salvation comes first of all to the inner man, and then to the whole man. And the good work which God begins in us He finishes it unto the end, until the whole man is saved, soul and body, and in that order.

All that salvation is in Christ Jesus!

Never apart from Him are we saved!

He is the fountain out of which we must drink. He is the heavenly manna which we must eat. He is the Saviour Who must save His people from their sins. He is both the sacrifice for our sins, and the Priest Who brings the atoning sacrifice. He is the one Who is "made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:" so that if we are to glory, we can glory only in the Lord. In Him was all the

grace, spoken of by the prophets of old, that should come unto us. As all those who were in Adam died, so all who are in Christ are made alive, and become partakers of that salvation He has prepared for them.

And as wonderful as that salvation objectively is which He has obtained for us, just as wonderful is the subjective experience of that salvation which He imparts to us. It is especially this aspect of the wonder-work of grace that the apostle emphasizes in the text.

Wonderful is the believing and receiving of that salvation! Though now we see Him not, yet we love Him; and though we do not see Him, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of joy. Receiving the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls. Now, according to the capacity of our faith, which is His grace of salvation in us, we rejoice with joy unspeakable. How great that joy shall be when the end of our faith shall be realized in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ! When we shall see Him Whom our soul loveth! How unspeakably great shall that salvation appear when we shall experience it both in soul and body in the day of His coming!

Most desirable salvation!

Concerning it the prophets have enquired and searched diligently. They searched out and exhaustively enquired, and then prophesied of the grace that should come unto us.

Which thing even the angels desire to look into! Those ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who are the heirs of salvation! They also have a sincere interest in that salvation which God had prepared in His counsel, and was to realize in time for all His elect. These are the elect angels, who remained standing when in the dawn of history Satan and many others with him, through the schism wrought by his fall in the angel world, brought disruption in the order of heaven. Eagerly they peered into the work of God all through the ages to realize His saving work when the Son of man was made a little lower than the angels but crowned with glory and honour, far above all principality and power, when He would bring reconciliation and peace not only on earth, but also in heaven. And being appointed servants of all the elect that must come to final and heavenly glory, they are vitally interested in all the divine workings of saving grace.

What the apostle says about the prophets of old and the angels of heaven is meant to inspire us.

What the Spirit of Christ, which was in the prophets, revealed to them concerning the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow, was with a view to us. This cannot mean that the revelation they received had no significance for them and for those to whom they uttered their prophesies. For their hope of salvation was also tied in with the sufferings of the Christ and the glory which followed. But it is also true that they without us could not be made perfect. Nor could they be saved without us. It is in this sense, undoubtedly,

that the apostle says, "of which salvation . . . that should come unto you;" and again, "unto whom it was revealed that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you," etc.

If they who were vitally connected to the revelation of the plan of salvation, and the working out of that plan were interested, how much more this should be true of us in whom the plan is to be completed and finished in its final glory!

What is your interest, beloved reader, in that salvation?

The original readers of this epistle were undoubtedly greatly interested. How else could you explain the fact that they loved Him Whom they had not seen, and believing in Him rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory? Surely, all this is true only of those who have experienced that salvation with the tasting knowledge of faith.

A glorious experience!

Which is to be found under the preaching of the gospel in the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven!

In the Holy Ghost as the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ!

That is, in the sphere where the Holy Ghost dwells is the experience of salvation only possible.

That Spirit was operative in the prophets, for the text clearly states that the Spirit of Christ in them testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. That Spirit came also on the church in the upper room on the day of Pentecost, and therefore on the apostles who had to preach the gospel of salvation. That Spirit continues to dwell in the church, and accompanies the preaching of the gospel

also now. Without that Spirit there is no preaching, no faith, no salvation — nothing. In the sphere of that Spirit of Christ as He dwells in the church of the new dispensation, the gospel of our salvation is preached unto us. What the prophets sought after and enquired into and testified beforehand concerning the salvation that was to come, the preaching of the gospel now declares is yours through faith.

Thus believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory!

Now we rejoice in hope!

Only by faith we rejoice, and only by faith do we have the hope of that final joy that shall be revealed to us in the day of Christ, when He shall be manifested.

Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet believe!

The apostle evidently ties in the word which he is privileged to declare in the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven with that personal experience he had when eight days after the Lord's resurrection He was in conference with Thomas who would not believe until he had seen in His hands the print of the nails, and put his finger into the print of the nails, and thrust his hand into His side. He heard the Lord say unto Thomas (who having now seen Him declared: "My Lord and my God"), "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

That blessed gospel Peter is now privileged to declare unto his contemporaries, and unto us.

Blessed gospel which is preached unto us!

Blessed Holy Spirit which has come down from heaven to give us those eyes of faith which enable us to see the unseen, and to believe in Him Whom we do not see!

## Editorial

# Doctrinal Tensions "Down Under" (2) As To Dr. K. Runia on Reprobation

*Prof. H. C. Hoeksema*

In the January 15 issue we promised to begin a discussion of the doctrinal tensions "down under" which have given rise to controversy in the Reformed Churches of New Zealand and, to an extent, The Reformed Churches of Australia. We noted that these tensions center around the teachings of Prof. Dr. Klaas Runia in particular, and that a number of brethren have organized themselves into a Reformed and Presbyterian Fellowship of Australasia. This Fellowship has made known by means of their publication, *The Reformed Guardian*, their objections to the views of Dr.

Runia and their intention to stand for the defense of the Reformed faith.

One of the points on which Dr. Runia has been criticized, also in an Appeal to the Board of Directors of the Reformed Theological College in Geelong, Australia, was that of the doctrine of reprobation. To the said Appeal the Board of Directors gave a written answer; but the Reformed and Presbyterian Fellowship is not satisfied with, but rather critical of, that answer. Moreover, as we noted last time, the Fellowship still maintains that Dr. Runia is in the wrong. This is plain

from the Fellowship's resolution, quoted in the last issue. In that resolution they make mention of the fact that Dr. Runia "objects to certain statements in the confessions of the Reformed Churches of Australia without presenting gravamina (i.e., doctrine of reprobation, and the sabbath)."

It will be enlightening on this point of the controversy, first of all to quote the Answer of the Board of Directors to the Appellants against Prof. Runia's teachings. In this answer they state that they have examined the charges brought against Dr. Runia carefully; and they reply to each of the charges individually. On this matter of the doctrine of reprobation, the Board answers as follows:

2. *Crisis In The Reformed Churches.* In his contribution to this volume Prof. Runia extensively discusses modern criticisms of the Canons, eg. those of Barth, Woelderink, the Pastoral Letter of the Hervormde Kerk, and some Reformed theologians — Berkouwer and Polman in the Netherlands, Boer and Pietersma in U.S.A. Careful reading of Prof. Runia's evaluations of these criticisms shows that he accepts the doctrine of eternal reprobation as clearly taught in Scripture and fully subscribes to the basic intention of the Canons to uphold and defend the doctrine of free grace. It is with the formulation of the doctrine that Dr. Runia finds the difficulty. He points out how logic has been a determinative factor in giving expression to this doctrine. He questions the adequacy of the Scripture texts cited by the Fathers of Dort in support of the doctrine. Is it casting 'aspersions on the confessions' when an honest effort is made to examine the grounds on which the doctrine is based? Is it not the hallmark of Reformed scholarship that appeal should be made to the Scriptures? There appears to be an inconsistency in the pattern of thinking which lies behind the formulation of the doctrine of reprobation in the Canons. Dr. Runia comments, "The only correct startingpoint for all our thinking about election and rejection, I believe, lies in the Gospel itself. We are very happy to note that the Synod of Dordt has seen this too (1, 1-5). Unfortunately it has not adhered to this one startingpoint. In 1, 6 it has added another line of thought, namely, one that starts from the counsel of God." Is it not permissible to discuss the formulation in a document drawn up by man?

Prof. Runia is also accused of "declaring that even such questioning of the confessions does not require the presentation of a 'grievance' to the ecclesiastical courts." Actually Dr. Runia does not declare any such thing. It is Prof. Berkouwer who states that there is no need to lodge a gravamen against the Canons when critical of its 'framework'. (p. 171).

In reply to the above, *The Reformed Guardian* has stated the following:

2. **CRISIS IN THE REFORMED CHURCHES.** Under this section the Board has sought to tell us that Prof. Runia is only discussing "the formulation in a document drawn up by men." But is this so? On page

167 of the book **CRISIS IN THE REFORMED CHURCHES**, in which Prof. Runia wrote the section entitled, "Recent Reformed Criticisms of the Canons," Prof. Runia refers to the document on election adopted and published on behalf of the Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church, and states, "The real criticism of this letter is that the idea of 'causality' (should be: 'causality', HCH) is found in the teaching of the Canons. This idea as it is applied to rejection, is the reason that the final responsibility of the sinner is obscured and God, somehow, seems to become the final 'cause of man's perdition.' *Again we feel inclined to agree with this criticism.*" On page 166 of the same book we read, "Woelderink utterly rejects the idea of an eternal decree of reprobation. *At this point the Canons have gone beyond the limits of Scripture.*" This latter underlined statement is Prof. Runia's, is it not? We readily acknowledge that Prof. Runia is quoting Prof. Berkouwer when he writes, "Such questioning of the confessions does not require the presentation of a 'grievance' to the ecclesiastical courts", BUT what is so disturbing is that Prof. Runia seems to have similar problems with the Canons, and **HE DOES NOT SUBMIT SUCH A 'GRIEVANCE' TO THE ECCLESIASTICAL COURTS!**

It is evident from this "Answer to the Appellants" that the Board of Directors finds no fault with Dr. Runia's position on reprobation. And it is evident from *The Reformed Guardian's* comments on their Answer that they are by no means satisfied and that they continue to assert that Dr. Runia indeed does have objections to the Reformed and confessional doctrine of reprobation, though he has not filed a gravamen.

Before we proceed with a discussion of this particular question, we must make mention of the fact that the Fellowship and its members have been severely criticized for dealing with these matters in public. It has been claimed that they ought to deal privately with Dr. Runia about these questions; and it has been claimed that they ought not to write in public and publicly to criticize and accuse Dr. Runia; and it has been claimed that they ought not to stir up the churches in this manner. It has even been claimed that *The Reformed Guardian* and its writers are guilty of transgressing the ninth commandment by its attacks upon Runia's positions.

With respect to this aspect of the matter, I call your attention to the fact, in the first place, that the Theological College in Geelong is not a church-controlled institution, so that neither the church in Australia nor the church in New Zealand has any direct control over Dr. Runia in his position as professor of theology. In the second place, as far as the church in Australia is concerned, Dr. Runia's own consistory (session), of course, would have oversight of his doctrine and walk. In the third place, as far as the churches in New Zealand are concerned, and in particular as far as Dr. Runia's opponents in the churches in New Zealand are concerned, they have no way of directly controlling

Dr. Runia as to his doctrinal positions. In the fourth place, while it is true that the churches in New Zealand could officially approach the Board of Directors of Geelong, this does not preclude an appeal to the Directors of the Theological College such as has been sent to these directors by individual members of the churches. In the fifth place, we must bear in mind that what Dr. Runia has said about various doctrinal points at stake in this controversy he has said in *public*, in the columns of *Trowel and Sword*, in the *Calvin Theological Journal*, in *Christianity Today*, in *The Banner*, and in the book *Crisis in the Reformed Churches*. Moreover, the letters-to-the-editor department in *Trowel and Sword*, I am informed, was closed to those who were critical of what Dr. Runia wrote. Now it strikes me as a very strange and unjust argument to claim that when Dr. Runia writes in public, those who disagree with him and with his highly questionable positions must do so in private, or are guilty of transgressing the ninth commandment if they oppose Runia in public. This I cannot understand: that one man may take position in public about matters which concern the public heritage of all the churches, and that another man, or men, may not take an opposite and critical position about these same matters likewise in public. Let those who deem Runia's opponents guilty of transgressing the ninth commandment demonstrate that their accusations — accusations which they have pressed on the official level as well as in *The Reformed Guardian* — are false. This, of course, will require a treatment of the *issues*. Finally, in this connection, I would encourage the Fellowship not to be deterred in their criticism by this charge. It is a charge which has often been used as a kind of "red herring" in doctrinal controversy, with the purpose in view of obscuring the real, doctrinal issue. These issues are public. They concern the Reformed heritage. They are the proper concern of the churches. And the Fellowship certainly does the churches a favor by calling attention to and reflecting upon these issues. Meanwhile, of course, it may be expected that these issues will also be pressed in the ecclesiastical courts, so that the matter may in due course be brought to a head and may be resolved. This, I have been informed, Runia's opponents fully intend to do. This is of great importance. Sound doctrinal discipline must be insisted upon; failure in this regard can only be detrimental, as has been demonstrated in other Reformed churches in recent times, and can only result in allowing the cancer of false doctrine to spread in the churches.

Before we get into the material of this issue, I must call attention also to the manner in which the Answer to the Appellants apparently belittles our confessions. I do not agree with the entire presentation of Dr. Runia's position in the Answer quoted above; but with this we shall deal presently. I refer now to the question which this Answer raises at the end of the first para-

graph which we quoted, "Is it not permissible to discuss the formulation in a document drawn up by man?" I believe that Dr. Runia does more than merely "discuss" the formulation. I also believe that if Runia may discuss, his opponents are equally entitled to "discuss." But this is not my point now. I refer especially now to the expression, "a document drawn up by man."

An expression of this kind certainly belittles our confessions, and thereby belittles the seriousness of the issue involved here. If it is the intention of a statement like this to emphasize that our creeds are *subordinate* standards, then this is certainly true. Our creeds are subordinate standards in the sense that they have no authority of their own, but are dependent upon the Scriptures for their authority. If it is the intention of a statement of this kind to emphasize that the formulations of our creeds are human and fallible and not *per se* about criticism, we say again: this is certainly true. The creeds are not infallible; they do not and they may not be allowed to bind one in the same manner as Scripture, but are rather binding only in so far as they express the truth of Holy Scripture itself. Nevertheless, it is not *accurate* to call any of our creeds merely "a document drawn up by man." The fact of the matter is that the creeds are drawn up by the *church*, and that, too, — as we believe — under the guidance of the Holy Spirit Who has been given to the church to lead her into all truth. Moreover, in our Reformed churches we are all bound to these creeds as they are the official expression of what Reformed churches believe to be the truth of Holy Scripture. In that sense the creeds are indeed *more* than "a document drawn up by man." They have *authority* in the Reformed churches, an authority which may not be ignored and which may not be contravened and contradicted, an authority which binds every officebearer and every member. There is but a single way in which the creeds may be criticized: the way of official "grievance," or gravamen, demonstrating that what the confessions say is not according to Holy Scripture. And it would seem to me that instead of minimizing the importance of the Canons of Dordt and their "formulation," the Board of Directors of Geelong would have done well to acknowledge this authority and the seriousness even of "discussing" the formulation of any of our confessions. It is by no means the same to discuss a confession or to discuss the document of a theologian or of a group of theologians, or even of a synodical committee or of a synod itself. This we emphasize even apart from the fact the Dr. Runia does much more than "discuss." The fact of the matter is that he *criticizes* the Canons, and that, too, not in a minor matter of formulation, but on a very fundamental point. It is plain to this writer that Dr. Runia does not agree with the Reformed doctrine of reprobation.

\* \* \* \* \*

To the substance of this issue of the Reformed doctrine of reprobation we now turn.

The criticism of Dr. Runia's position on this score concern his contribution to the book, *Crisis In The Reformed Churches*, published by the Reformed Fellowship. This is a book of essays in commemoration of the Synod of Dordrecht, 1618-'19. It was published in 1968, the 350th anniversary of the Great Synod, under the editorship of Dr. P. Y. De Jong. Various theologians of the Reformed tradition contribute essays on aspects of the Synod and its work, essays which vary rather widely in quality and accuracy. My general impression of the book is that it is not true to its title, that is, it does not adequately convey the impression of the great crisis which actually was reached at the Synod of Dordrecht and in the Arminian controversy. But this is not the point now. In this work Dr. K. Runia also contributes a chapter, entitled, "Recent Reformed Criticisms of the Canons." As might be expected, the chapter is not merely informative; but in it, at various points and especially at the end, Dr. Runia evaluates these criticisms and thereby necessarily gives expression to his own views. It is with these opinions concerning the criticisms of the Canons that Dr. Runia's critics find fault, claiming that Dr. Runia has objections to the Reformed doctrine of reprobation as it is set forth in the Canons and that he has publicized these objections but has failed to follow the orderly Reformed way of gravamen.

It is over against this charge of Dr. Runia's critics that the Board of Directors of the Reformed Theological College in Geelong defends Runia in its "Answer to the Appellants."

We may distinguish the following points in the Board's defense of Dr. Runia:

1. The Board maintains that "careful reading of Dr. Runia's evaluations of these criticisms shows that he accepts the doctrine of eternal reprobation as clearly taught in Scripture and fully subscribes to the basic intention of the Canons to uphold and defend the doctrine of free grace." This point raises the following questions for us: a) Is it true that Dr. Runia fully accepts the doctrine of reprobation as clearly taught in Scripture AND *as set forth in the Canons of Dordrecht*? This, after all, is the question, the basic question. Does Dr. Runia agree with the doctrine of eternal reprobation *as set forth in the Canons*? Does he agree that the Canons set forth the doctrine of eternal reprobation as it is clearly taught in Scripture? b) Or does the Board here intentionally avoid the issue when it speaks merely of the doctrine of reprobation *as clearly taught in Scripture*? And does the Board avoid the issue when it states that Dr. Runia "fully subscribes to the *basic intention* (emphasis mine, HCH) of the Canons to uphold and defend the *doctrine of free grace* (emphasis mine, HCH)? Understand well; I do not ask these questions maliciously and I am not as-

cribing malicious intent to this statement of the board. I am merely calling attention to the fact that this statement of the Board is *beside the point*.

2. The Board maintains that it is with the *formulation* of the doctrine that Dr. Runia finds difficulty. It is a bit difficult to determine just how much the Board includes under this point. I suppose we are to assume that all the rest of their defense is included. They mention that Runia "points out how logic has been a determinative factor in giving expression to this doctrine." They mention, too, that Runia questions the adequacy of the Scripture texts cited by the fathers of Dordt in support of the doctrine. And they mention that according to Runia, "there appears to be an inconsistency in the pattern of thinking which lies behind the formulation of the doctrine of reprobation in the Canons." Apparently all of these matters belong under this subject of "formulation" in the Board's thinking. But this raises the following questions: a) While in the abstract it is possible to have difficulty with the *formulation* of a doctrine without necessarily disagreeing with the doctrine formulated, is it true that Dr. Runia has difficulty *merely with the formulation and not with the doctrine set forth*? b) Is it true that Runia merely makes an honest effort to examine the grounds on which the doctrine is based, or does he indeed "cast aspersions on the confessions" by criticizing these grounds or the alleged lack of grounds? Is it true that Runia merely makes an appeal to Scripture, which is certainly the "hallmark of Reformed scholarship," or does he criticize the Canons as being contrary to Scripture or as setting forth a line of thought which is not Scriptural? c) Is it true that Runia merely *discusses* the formulation of the Canons, or is it true that he is *critical* of the formulation? And is it not true that Dr. Runia's criticisms are based upon an alleged disjunction between the "Gospel" and the "counsel of God" — a disjunction which he discovers to exist, in his opinion, also in the Canons?

3. Finally, the Board absolves Runia of any guilt with respect to the charge that Runia maintains that one can be critical of the "framework" of the confessions without lodging a gravamen against them. This matter also we shall have to examine.

A brief review of Runia's chapter in *Crisis In The Reformed Churches* is in order at this point.

Dr. Runia states that he is not concerned in this chapter with criticisms of the Canons by theologians from other traditions, especially from Arminian and liberal backgrounds, but that he is confining himself to criticisms coming from theologians belonging to the Reformed tradition. We will overlook the fact that Runia somewhat apologetically includes Karl Barth among the latter. Certainly, one has to stretch the concept "the Reformed tradition" not a little in order to include Barth in it.

But it is Barth's criticism of the Canons with which

Runia deals first. Runia's presentation of Barth's criticism centers around Barth's allegation that the Canons contain the idea of a *decretum absolutum* (absolute decree) and that they do not speak of election "in Christ." Over against Barth, it must be conceded, Dr. Runia defends the Canons on this point, albeit in a somewhat "lefthanded" manner. He contends correctly that in I, 7 the Canons do indeed speak of election in Christ. Yet even here Runia cannot defend the Canons without tempering and even spoiling his defense. For after he has maintained that the Canons do teach election in Christ, he adds the following paragraph, which is not only critical, but which in connection with his later evaluation of the criticisms of others also raises grave doubts:

Yet it cannot be denied that in the *Canons* this central aspect of the Biblical doctrine of election does not receive the emphasis it deserves. Because I, 7 is preceded by an article that speaks of a general double decree of election and reprobation, in which the 'in Christ' aspect is altogether missing, the conclusion that there is a *decretum absolutum* behind the election-in-Christ could be drawn, and I am afraid that, unintentionally, the *Canons* thus have given occasion to later deterministic misunderstandings, which especially since the 18th century have plagued and still are plaguing large sections of the Reformed community. I am also sure that, if the *Canons* were to be rewritten in our day, the central affirmation of our election in Christ should be brought out more clearly and more unequivocally.

Here it is plain already that Dr. Runia has difficulty with Canons I, 6 – a difficulty which arises again and again in this chapter. This says nothing yet as to what Runia understands by "later deterministic misunderstandings" – an expression which, in the light of the fact that the true Reformed position on predestination has been frequently characterized as determinism (also by Runia's mentor, Dr. Berkouwer) raises grave suspicions in one's soul.

Aside from this, we must point out that Dr. Runia certainly does not appear in this part of his chapter as a champion of the Canons, especially when we consider that Karl Barth, whose criticisms he is evaluating here, was anything but Reformed as far as the doctrine of predestination is concerned. But let us pass this by. It may be conceded that in this section of the chapter Runia does not evince *overtly* any disloyalty to the Canons.

The next section of Runia's essay is devoted to the view of Dr. J. G. Woelderink, a theologian of the Dutch Reformed Church (Hervormde Kerk). Concerning Woelderink's criticism, Dr. Runia writes as follows:

What is Woelderink's view of the *Canons*? It is a combination of deep appreciation and of fundamental criticism. Fully agreeing with the teaching that our salvation is due to God's electing love, he at

the same time sees two contrasting lines in the *Canons*. The first five articles of Ch. 1 take their starting-point in the Gospel. But in art. 6 they switch over to a second line of thought, which takes its starting-point in the decree. That this is the major point of criticism appears from the fact that time and again he returns to this main point. To him this is the basic error of all Calvinist parties at Dort, both the Supralapsarians and the Infralapsarians. Because of their emphasis on the decree they were necessarily thinking in terms of causality, and consequently "election and rejection were no longer channels through which the stream of God's virtues broke forth, but they became springs which produced salvation and perdition." It was no longer sufficient to ascribe faith to God's grace, and unbelief to man's sinful heart. No, God too had his share in unbelief, in as far as he had decreed "to leave the non-elect in His just judgment to their own wickedness and obduracy" (I, 6). The natural result of this 'causal' way of thinking was that in I, 12 all emphasis is placed on man's inner spiritual life, where he can observe "the infallible fruits of election."

Dr. Runia then goes on to point out that "Woelderink's own solution is to see election primarily and essentially as *an act of God in time*." Runia further states that Woelderink "does not deny that we are allowed to proceed from election as God's act in time to God's election from eternity." And then Runia further describes Woelderink's view of reprobation:

Rejection, too, is seen as an act of God in the history of the world and in the concrete lives of sinful people. In the case of rejection, however, we are *not* allowed to go back to an eternal decision of God "before the foundation of the world". Woelderink utterly rejects the idea of an eternal decree of reprobation. At this point the *Canons* have gone beyond the limits of Scripture. It is not surprising, therefore, that they do not give any Scripture proof for this aspect of their teaching.

And now the question is: what does Runia think of Woelderink? In the first place, we ask you to keep in mind Runia's description of Woelderink's view, especially in the first part of the first quotation about Woelderink above. For at the end of his essay Runia makes virtually the same statements. In the second place, we quote Runia's evaluation of Woelderink's criticisms in part: "There are undoubtedly elements of truth in Woelderink's criticisms of the *Canons*. We too believe that there are traces of 'causal' thinking." At this point Runia goes on to criticize Woelderink for "historicizing" and "actualizing" election. But in this same connection we would point out: 1. That here already Runia betrays his criticism of what he calls the "causal thinking" of the *Canons*. Bear this in mind. It will occur again. And it is crucial. 2. It is significant that while Runia criticizes Woelderink for historicizing and actualizing election, he does *not* criticize him for historicizing and actualizing reprobation. This is re-

lated, remember, to the fact that Runia is critical of the so-called “causal thinking” of the Canons. But Runia’s silence on this score, I believe, speaks volumes.

In the next section of his essay Dr. Runia summarizes and evaluates a *Pastoral Letter* which was published on behalf of the Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church (Hervormde Kerk). This letter takes virtually the same position as Dr. Woelderink takes. We will quote two pertinent paragraphs of Runia’s description of this letter. After describing its position on election, Runia writes:

Rejection too is an act of God in history. But in this case we may not infer an eternal decree of rejection. Although such a conclusion may seem to be natural and valid, Scripture itself never employs this logic. Texts that have often been quoted in support of such an eternal decree of rejection (such as Prov. 16:4; Matt. 13:10-13; 22:14; Acts 13:48; Romans 9:11-23; Peter 2:8; Jude 4; Revel. 17:8) do not really teach this.

After all this it is not surprising that the *Letter* contains a number of criticisms of the *Canons*. In fact, not only the *Canons*, but the *Belgic Confession* as well is criticized, especially Art. 16, which speaks of God’s “leaving others in the fall and perdition wherein they have involved themselves.” The *Canons*, 1, 6, however, go beyond this and, in spite of what has been said in 1, 5, suggest “that human guilt is not the last word about the ground of rejection.” Other points of criticism are that Word and Spirit are not always kept inseparably together, that the certainty of election is too much sought in pious man himself, that the election of the individual believer is one-

sidedly stressed, and that the Scripture proof given is very weak.

Concerning the above, Runia gives the following evaluation: “These last points, however, are only minor criticisms. The real criticism of this *Letter* is that the idea of ‘causality’ is found in the teaching of the *Canons*. This idea, especially as it is applied to rejection, is the reason that the final responsibility of the sinner is obscured and God, somehow, seems to become the final ‘cause’ of man’s perdition. *Again we feel inclined to agree with this criticism.*” (emphasis mine, HCH)

Notice the significant inclination of Dr. Runia to agree with this criticism of the *Canons’* doctrine of reprobation and also the doctrine of reprobation as found in the *Belgic Confession*. This is a constantly recurring refrain in Dr. Runia’s essay. He has no use for this causal way of thinking. Whenever he speaks of it, he speaks of it in a negative way. Even when he criticizes this *Pastoral Letter* and seems to express some agreement with the *Canons*, he does so in such a way that he continues to reject this idea of causality, as in the following statement: “At this point the *Canons*, in spite of their ‘causal’ way of thinking, (emphasis mine, HCH), are closer to the fulness of the Biblical message than this *Letter*.”

At this point in his essay Dr. Runia takes up recent criticisms of the *Canons* by theologians of the Gereformeerde Kerken. But since a full treatment of this part of Dr. Runia’s essay would require too much space, we will postpone our discussion of this section until the next issue.

## Question Box

# About Instruction in Protestant Reformed Doctrine

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

## Question

“Dear Professor Hoeksema:

“I am a student at Illiana Christian High School in Lansing, Illinois. I have a problem which disturbs me to a great extent, and it’s this: ‘Why is not doctrine taught in our Christian day schools?’ Or to rephrase the question, ‘Why do we not learn why we are Protestant Reformed essentially until after we are in the eighth grade or ninth grade or older, because it is when we get to high school that we really can use this knowledge?’ See, we go to a Christian Reformed High School, and we have confrontations every day; and they ask us why we are separated from them. Now when some of us cannot answer clearly, or even not at all, it’s a shame. I don’t blame this on either church,

school, or home. I think, however, because we have Old and New Testament History taught in catechism through the seventh grade, that it would, for those of us who have this problem of confronting Christian Reformed students, as we have here in South Holland, be wise, say, in the 8th to 9th grades to have for at least 6-9 weeks instruction on ‘Why Protestant Reformed?’ This would be very helpful for when we go to Illiana. So my question is essentially: why don’t we have any doctrine taught in our Christian day schools? Must we leave it all up to the church?

Yours very sincerely in Christ,  
N.”

## Reply

First of all, I want to state that I am very happy

about this letter for more than one reason.

In the first place, I am happy because it shows an interest in our *Standard Bearer* on the part of a high school student. This is a good sign! And I sincerely hope that there are more of our Protestant Reformed high school students who have such an interest in *The Standard Bearer*, and who will also turn to *The Standard Bearer* with their questions and problems. I say this, not because *The Standard Bearer* is in any way in competition with *Beacon Lights*, but because I heartily believe that our young people certainly should include *The Standard Bearer* regularly in their reading. *The Standard Bearer* contains much that is beneficial and that ought to be of interest to our Protestant Reformed young people; and it is certainly within the bounds of their reading capacity. It may be true that you have to put on your "thinking-cap" to read and digest *The Standard Bearer*. But this is good! You had better don that "thinking-cap" and reap the benefits. For there is nothing more important than that covenant youth be thoroughly instructed and equipped to be distinctively Protestant Reformed.

In the second place, I am happy about this letter because it evinces an interest and a concern exactly about being distinctively Protestant Reformed, in knowing what being Protestant Reformed is all about, and in being able to explain and to defend that Protestant Reformed position. This, too, is good! It is a healthy and encouraging sign when this is the concern of a covenant young man or young woman. This is especially true in our day, when the tendency to minimize differences, or to ignore them, or to think that they are the concern only of older folk, and when the temptation to be a little more "liberal" and a little more loose, and a little less distinctive and strict, and to justify a less distinctive position by asking the question, "What's wrong with it?" rather than, "What is right with it?" – when, I say, this tendency and this temptation are very strong. I love to hear that our young people are genuinely concerned to know why they are Protestant Reformed!

Hence, I am also happy to make a few suggestions in answer to the problem posed in the above letter.

My suggestions are the following:

1) It is not the business of our Christian day schools to teach doctrine *as such*. This is not to say that Protestant Reformed doctrine has no place in our Christian schools. It has a place, indeed. But that place is this, that the principles of Reformed doctrine – and to me, this means Protestant Reformed doctrine – underly and undergird all the instruction in the various subjects which are taught in our Christian day schools. This means that there is no such thing as a "secular" subject. Instruction in doctrine as such, however, is the business of the pulpit and of the catechism room, and of the home. I may add, in this connection, that Young People's Society is also an auxilliary means and

opportunity for the study of doctrine.

2) I believe that instruction in Church History has a legitimate place in the curriculum of the school, particularly in junior and in senior high school. And I believe that in 8th and/or 9th grade it could be very beneficial to begin this instruction in Church History. Especially would I recommend this for those junior high students who do not have the advantage of attending a Protestant Reformed High School after graduation from 9th grade. I can see great benefit in a course in Church History which would concentrate on the history of the Reformed churches, going back to Reformation times, and which would lead up to and teach our Protestant Reformed Church history. There is ample source material for such a course; and particularly would I recommend the book, *The History of the Protestant Reformed Churches*, which covers our early history, from our origin up to about 1935. Naturally, such a course of study would involve one to an extent in the doctrinal issues which led to our origin. But the emphasis would be upon the history. In fact, I believe that as the third and fourth generations of our Protestant Reformed Churches grow up and take their place in the churches, there is a grave danger that a generation will arise that is not acquainted with that history, i.e., is not acquainted with the wonderful works of God in our Protestant Reformed past. And if that ever should be the case, it would be highly detrimental, if not fatal, for our Protestant Reformed cause!

3) I would not underestimate the proper place of the home and of personal reading and study in this regard. I have in mind in this connection questions and discussions which may arise in the course of family worship, and questions which may arise concerning our Protestant Reformed position which children and young people may bring to their parents, for example, in connection with something mentioned in Sunday's sermons or which has been written. And I have in mind the ample supply of Protestant Reformed writings which are available, and much of which any student of high school age who is of average intelligence can certainly begin to read. I am referring not only to books and pamphlets and brochures which have to do specifically with the Three Points of 1924. These, too! By all means! But remember that our position is not merely a negative, anti-common grace position. It is also a positively Reformed position. And there is a wealth of material available in this regard. For example, any high schooler can read with much benefit a book like *Behold, He Cometh*. Bear in mind that in a book of this kind there is a positive and consistently Reformed line presented which is directly based upon and related to the Scriptures. There is a wealth of instruction here. The same is true, by the way, of the volumes on the Heidelberg Catechism which are currently being republished under the title, *The Triple*

*Knowledge.* There is a wealth of material here which our young people can use for their personal and private enrichment, as well as for their preparation for catechism; and this material is entirely within the grasp of a high school student's intelligence. You may have to put on your "thinking-cap," I say once more. You may have to expend some effort. But what you can obtain without expending any effort is not worth obtaining!

4) In the fourth place, I do not believe that it is entirely accurate to say that until the seventh grade your instruction is limited to Bible history. It is true, of course, that through the study of Old and New Testament History for Seniors in our catechism system, the instruction is oriented around Bible history. And there is sound reason for this. We must not merely know doctrine; and we certainly must not know doctrine divorced from the Scriptures. But we must be trained to understand that the Reformed position is indeed the truth of Holy Scripture; and we must be well-versed in Scripture above all. Now it is precisely the purpose of our Old and New Testament History for Seniors in catechism to give instruction in Bible history with the emphasis upon the *meaning* and the *significance* of that history, so that at the same time the instruction of these courses forms a transition to direct doctrinal instruction. As one example, let me refer to the book of Rev. J. A. Heys; a catechumen who receives that instruction will be pretty thoroughly instructed at the same time in the *antithetical line* of sin and grace, of the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman, as this line runs through the history of the old dispensation. Now that is Reformed!

Furthermore, under our system of catechetical train-

ing, when our young people become 13 and 14 years old (eighth and ninth graders), they receive instruction in *The Heidelberg Catechism for Junior Catechumens*. In this course, there is offered instruction not merely in the positive Reformed line of the truth, following the order of our Catechism; but at the end of the aforementioned book there are two special lessons which are of great importance. Lesson 29 is about the Protestant Reformed Churches and their origin; and Lesson 30 is about our Reformed Standards. If this book is taught, and if these lessons are taught – and I personally, when I used to teach catechism, more than once took time out to give a few extra weeks attention to these lessons – then our young people will certainly have been instructed in the rudiments of "Why Protestant Reformed?" before they get to high school.

6) Finally, I would strongly advise – and I would expect – that our Protestant Reformed covenant youth pay increasingly careful and discerning attention, as they grow up, to the instruction of the preaching of the Word – preaching of the Word which I would expect will be not only positive but also antithetical, warning against the errors of false doctrine and emphasizing our specific Protestant Reformed position.

In the light of all the above, I can see no reason why a high school student cannot be well equipped and instructed to face confrontations outside our churches when the occasion arises.

Provided, I say again, that the student is interested and is willing to put on his "thinking-cap."

Once again, young friend, thanks for your letter. And, call again!

## All Around Us

### Wishes For A New Year Sensitivity Training

Prof. H. Hanko

#### WISHES FOR A NEW YEAR

The *Grand Rapids Press* has recently taken up the practice of sending out its reporters shortly before a holiday season to quiz the people on the street on some question related to the holiday. The results of such an informal poll are then published in the *Press*. This past New Year's Day the *Press* asked a number of people: "What would you like most to see happen in 1971?"

The answers are very interesting – especially from a spiritual point of view, and give a rather good idea of the attitude of people towards life in general.

According to the *Press* almost all the people quizzed hoped "that the war in Vietnam would end, that more love and understanding would exist between all peoples, and that the economy would march upward rather than downward."

But when pressed for more specific answers people revealed their innate selfishness and concern for their own personal well-being. Some expressed the hope for a decrease in crime; many wanted settlements in the tensions of the world – particularly in the Middle East and Southeast Asia; but quite a large number expressed fervent wishes for "a bright educational future" and

the hope of better-paying jobs. Others wished for better health for themselves or their families, for a decrease in welfare payments — if they were not themselves recipients, for less interference from the police in drug use. And yet others spoke of happiness for all people in the world, understanding of every man in his plight and love to abound among all nations.

Apparently these people have never learned what it means to pray, “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” although, no doubt, the majority of them are acquainted with the Lord’s prayer. Each man is more concerned with his own personal well-being and is so completely wrapped up in his own problems in life that his desires for the new year are totally occupied with making his life more pleasant than it has been. And if, perchance, their desires for a new year are broadened beyond their own lives, their concern is for things that are directly opposed to the will of God. While it certainly is not true that the Lord reveals to us the details of our life in the future, He does make known in His Word what the future will bring in its broad outlines. He makes known to us what His purpose is in the history of this world and how He will realize that purpose in the events of history through the sovereign rule of Jesus Christ.

The child of God who is a pilgrim and a stranger in the earth and who looks for the city which hath foundations is content when he lives in the assurance that God’s will is being done and that all things are serving the realization of the kingdom of Christ. He is content with this even when events in history or in his own personal life are not personally pleasing to him and, indeed, give him a minimum of comfort in the struggles of his earthly pathway.

The answers of the world are utterly worldly and carnal. The Christian can desire nothing so much for 1971 and the years following while the Lord tarries than that God’s will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

### SENSITIVITY TRAINING

It would not ordinarily be of interest to discuss a subject such as this in the columns of the *Standard Bearer* if it were not for the fact that some form of sensitivity training is making its way into religious circles. Apparently at least some aspects of this procedure, increasingly common in the world, have found their way into religious services in some very liberal churches not only, but also into the religious services of the so-called underground church. Further, it has recently come to my attention that some form of sensitivity training is also used as therapy in the treatment of mental disease in various Christian Mental Hospitals.

Sensitivity training covers a broad range of methods of group therapy. The object is to enable people better to adjust to reality by means of drastic changes in the personality through the use of personal encounter. While the whole business is somewhat vague and ill-

defined, the general idea is this. Small groups of people get together to talk. The discussions are not on any particular subject, nor are they channelled in any way. Rather, any person talks about anything he desires. And in his talk he is encouraged as much as the others can encourage him to talk about all his problems, to expose in his conversation all that lies within his heart and soul, to bare his emotions, “hang-ups”, fears, doubts, troubles, hatreds, and whatever else he is reluctant to discuss with others.

In some groups a person is even encouraged to work out his frustrations and problems by actions, whatever actions may be required to accomplish this. He is told that kicking, screaming, tantrums, shouting, cursing, or whatever are good for him and will enable him to give release to pressures which make him a person unable to cope with or adjust to the society in which he is called to live. Such release of tension will, it is reasoned, rid him of forms of behavior harmful to himself and his fellowman and make him over into a person much more emotionally and psychologically stable. The group then becomes a microcosmos, a miniature world. And, since in real life the poisons of hostility and hatred when suppressed give rise to neuroses, if one will only work them out in group sessions, then he will drain the poisons from his neurotic mind.

Furthermore, it is argued that one of the chief problems besetting modern man is his inability to communicate. Because he finds it impossible to talk in any meaningful way with his fellow man and even with those closest to him, he isolates himself from humanity and from those who are closest to him and, living on a psychological island, he becomes spiritually and psychologically unbalanced. Hence, sensitivity training is intended to break down the barriers of communication and enable him to live in a psychologically healthy way with others. To assist in this struggle to learn communication, those who participate in sensitivity training are encouraged not only to speak whatever they want, but are also encouraged to touch one another since touching aids in communication. In far-out groups this sort of thing has resulted in all sorts of sexual eroticism.

There are grave dangers in this sort of practice — dangers totally detrimental to spiritual health. And it is to be abhorred that such practices have found their way into the Church and into the healing of the mentally ill.

In the first place, the whole idea of sensitivity training is based upon the supposition that man is nothing more than a body and a bundle of emotions. It is fundamentally a denial of the fact that God created man body and soul. As one of the proponents of this type of therapy has crassly stated: “You don’t *have* a body — you *are* a body.” It is especially this presupposition which undergirds so much of mental treatment even in Christian hospitals. The whole approach

to the treatment of mental illness is a materialistic approach which looks upon man as a bundle of electrical energy or chemical reactions — or both. Any type of treatment which denies that man possesses a soul is bound to have debilitating effects upon the person.

In the second place, it simply is not true that releasing one's tensions by speaking or acting out whatever is in one's mind and soul is therapy which drains the person of the poisons which have accumulated there. Precisely the opposite is true. Hostility, aggressiveness, anger, jealousy, hatred — all these things are sins, sins against God and man. These sins have to be fought and conquered not by making them overt sins through expressing them; but by fighting against them with pleas for God's grace on the battlefield of one's own sinful flesh. They are evils to be banished from one's life, temptations to be resisted, sinful passions to be overcome. To attempt to drain such potentially harmful passions from the person by expressing them in overt action is not a cure but an aggravation of the sin. This sort of thing makes the sin worse and the evil which infects the heart more difficult to conquer.

In the third place, it is true that confession is good for the soul. But, although this is axiomatic, the whole matter of confession must be put into the context of and be defined by Scripture. And Scripture makes it quite clear that confession must be to God above all else, from Whom forgiveness comes. It is, of course, extremely difficult to confess one's sins to God. Indeed, it is spiritually impossible except by grace. And this difficulty is not only due to pride, but is also due to our inability to see ourselves as we truly are. It is rooted in our spiritual blindness when it comes to seeing clearly our own sins. We have 20/20 vision when it comes to seeing the sins of others, but are strangely blind when it comes to seeing our own. We may need help for this — help from someone we can trust; help from our minister and pastor. But even here ultimately the help must come from God. We can know our sins only when we see ourselves in the light of God's Word, in the blazing light of the holiness of Him Who sits enthroned in the heavens. And we must learn to pray for the light that comes from above that we may see and know our sins as they truly are.

All of this does not mean that there is no room for confessing our sins to one another. James specifically urges this upon the saints. Cf. James 5:16. And he specifically prescribes this as the way to be healed. But this does not mean that Scripture calls us or even that it is healthy for us to bare our hearts completely be-

fore our fellow saints. There is, I am sure, an inner sanctum in the depths of the heart of every man which is, in a sense, holy ground; in which no man is allowed to tread. This inner sanctum is known only to God and to the one individual to whom it belongs. To allow others to force their way in often does more damage than good and leaves scars that are never healed. Only once again, we must be sure that we know this inner sanctum and that God knows. It must have been this to which the Psalmist referred when he earnestly prayed: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any evil way in me." Ps. 139:23, 24a.

Finally, it is true that communication is essential for the spiritual and psychological well-being of man. God created him that way. It is not good for man to be alone. And it is surely possible for man to build such a wall about himself that he is, in a very real sense, isolated from all those about him, living on an island, even though he sees his fellow men every day.

But sensitivity training is not the solution to the problem. It is probably true that even people of God do not communicate very much. It is probably true that many, many griefs, problems and troubles could be avoided if only people would talk to each other. And it is true that at the heart of communication lies a willingness on the part of people to listen intently and selflessly to others' troubles and to do so in eager longing to bear the burdens of others. But all this, too, Scripture puts in the context of the communion of the Saints. And only there will it come to its true and rich expression. The solution to the problem does not lie in group sessions where everyone is encouraged to work out his "hang-ups" and to touch his neighbor. The solution to the problem is, on the one hand, to recognize that the unity of the saints is a unity of Christ through the Spirit; therefore a unity of faith and hope and love. And, on the other hand, to live out of that principle of love which is so utterly self-denying because it is a reflection (dim indeed, but very real) of God's love for His own, manifested in the cross. And to live out of a self-denying love means to have one's life absorbed by and dedicated to the bearing of the burdens of those saints of God whom God has placed upon our pathway in life. But to do so for God's sake; out of love for Him.

There is no question about it that we have a lot to learn in this respect. But the lessons do not come from sensitivity training; but from the Word of God and humble obedience to it.

You don't get fresh water by whitewashing the pump.

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

# A Father-Teenager Conversation

*Rev. C. Hanko*

A Conversation Between Father and a Teen-ager At the Occasion of His First Date

"So you are going out tonight? This does not take me entirely by surprise. I thought there was something in the wind when you so willingly took your shower, put on your new blue jeans, and even slicked your hair. This is quite a momentous occasion, and I say this in all seriousness."

"But Dad, it's only my first date. All the kids do it sooner or later. Besides, she's a nice girl."

"That isn't what I mean. I have no objection to your going out on a date now that you are sixteen years old. And I am glad that she is a nice girl. What's her name?"

"Oh? You met her at school? Then she does come from a Christian home? She herself is a serious-minded girl?"

"But Dad, this is only my first date. You talk as if I am already getting serious about her."

"Evidently you are serious enough to have given her more than a passing glance. You have asked her for a date. Is she neat about herself? Is she a good student? After a while, if you are invited to her home, you will be looking around, maybe even unconsciously, to see whether her mother is as neat in her housekeeping as yours is. You will be sampling the cooking to see whether her mother is teaching her the fine arts of cooking. These are all fringe benefits, I know; but you need not ignore them."

"You say that she is very popular at school. Fine, but does she date a lot of different boys? Are you just one of the many that she goes out with? Don't frown at me like that. To you that may not seem very important. To me it is an earmark. Think of it this way: if you were buying an automobile, wouldn't you prefer a brand new one that has never been driven by anyone else? Of course, finances might compel you to look for a demonstrator or even a second hand car, when it comes to automobiles. But you still would prefer a new one, now, wouldn't you? I remember my first car had only three miles on it when it was delivered to us. How proud I was of that brand new look and smell. It was altogether *mine*. Now, if I were looking for a girl friend, who just might become my future wife, I certainly would not want a demonstrator, would you? Much less a second hand one. Imagine after you were married having this fellow and that one talking to your wife about the good times they had together. Don't you think that would make you a bit jealous? Besides,

seeds of distrust are so readily sown in the human mind, and distrust can be very disastrous in the home and in the family."

"But Dad, we are not getting married. We are not even thinking of going steady. This is my first real date with her."

"Tell me, what do you know about her? You have seen her at school. You, no doubt, have watched her out of the corner of your eye in class and between periods. You must have talked to her. What is she like? Is she careful about the language she uses? With what kind of girls does she associate? Is she respectful to her teachers, polite and mannerly? Or is she loud, assertive? Does she talk back to her teachers? Is she rude to her classmates? Is she proud or haughty?"

"But Dad . . ."

"Yes, this is your first date; I have not forgotten that. Yet it appears to me that this is a good time to consider these things. You still have your eyes open. You are still able to use your senses. You have not yet been swept away to cloud nine."

"Son, believe it or not, I've seen a lot of dating in my lifetime. I know that sounds old foggyish and all that. Let that be. Far too many young folks are swept off their feet by a cute face, an attractive figure, or maybe a good basketball player, or even by a sports model coupe. They thought it was only a passing whim. It was not for them to get serious. But then suddenly it happened. Starry-eyed they talk about being 'in love.' With a long sigh they beg their parents to believe that this is the real thing. Their 'love' for each other will remove every barrier of religion, every fault and every bad habit. When once they are married, all their problems will melt away like ice before the noon-day sun. But by that time reason has flown out of the window, common sense has disappeared. A foolish heart and a strong passion have gained control of them. When they awaken from their dream, it will simply be too late. Do you wonder that there are so many unhappy marriages and so many divorces?"

"Now while you still have a clear mind, be sure to ask yourself whether you would care to spend the rest of your life with a person like that. Also ask yourself whether you will still find her appealing when she sits across from you at the breakfast table in her housecoat with her hair pinned up and slippers on her feet."

"Yes, and while you are searching your mind, ask yourself whether this is the kind of wife that you

would be able to confide in after marriage. Would your hearts still beat as one when you faced life's trials together? Would she be able to stand by you and help you to fulfill your life task? Would she be the kind of mother that you would want for your children? Would you like to see her reflected in your children? Would you entrust your precious treasures to her?"

"O children! Who's talking about a family?"

"Please do not grow impatient with me, because I am not finished yet. Yes, I know that you have to go. There will be opportunity to talk again. All right. Fine. Please keep the communication channels open between us, so that we can have our talks together. No one is as interested in your welfare as your mother and I.

"But now for the real question. What are you going to do on your date? Just ride and talk a bit after the game? Fine. We'll be looking for you to be home no later than midnight. That will give you plenty of time to have your little chat."

"What does one talk about on his first date, Dad?"

"Well, a lot of little things, I suppose; school, your studies, your likes and dislikes about music, and a dozen other things. But in the meantime, be sure that

you find out how she feels about her church, her catechism, and the like. It is absolutely essential that you agree on one fundamental thing: Your faith in God. Nothing, absolutely nothing is as fundamental as that!

"Your happiness, her happiness, the happiness of your possible future family depends on one thing; and that is that you see eye to eye on the truth of Scripture, so that you can go through life in perfect spiritual harmony. Marriage is a legal contract, as far as the law is concerned. And marriage is also a physical union between two persons for life. But real marriage is a spiritual bond that is holy, because it is the picture of Christ and His church. I would like to talk to you about that again some time.

"And now, son, just one more thing before you go. Pray about this, won't you? Do me this little favor. Read Genesis 24 and take note how God brought to Isaac the woman of God's choice. He does, you know. He brings, as by His own hand, to every man his own wife. And when God points out to you the right one in His mercy, happy you'll be. And only then.

"Goodbye. Have fun."

## *Contending for the Faith*

# **The Doctrine of Atonement**

*THIRD PERIOD – 730-1517 A.D.*

*ANSELM*

*Rev. H. Veldman*

We now continue with our quotations from Anselm's book, "Cur Deum Homo," following the guidelines as set forth by Philip Schaff in his History of the Christian Church, vol. V, 604 f.f.

Anselm taught that God cannot allow His original purpose to be thwarted. Sin must be forgiven, but how? Man owes subjection to God's will. Sin is denying to God the honor due Him. Satisfaction must be rendered to justice before there can be forgiveness. Bare restitution, however, is not a sufficient satisfaction. For his "contumely," man must give back more than he has taken. He must compensate God's honor. Just as he who has inflicted a wound must not only heal the wound, but pay damages to satisfy the demands of violated honor.

In his "Cur Deum Homo" Anselm certainly teaches that it would not be proper for the Lord to put away sins by compassion alone, without payment of debt. This book was written in the form of a dialogue. We read on page 203:

Anselm. Let us return and consider whether it were

proper for God to put away sins by compassion alone, without any payment of the honor taken from Him.

Boso. I do not see why it is not proper.

Anselm. To remit sin in this manner is nothing else than not to punish; and since it is not right to cancel sin without compensation or punishment; if it be not punished, then is it passed by undischarged.

Boso. What you say is reasonable.

Anselm. It is not fitting for God to pass over anything in His kingdom undischarged.

Boso. If I wish to oppose this, I fear to sin.

Anselm. It is, therefore, not proper for God thus to pass over sin unpunished.

From this quotation it surely is obvious that Anselm did not believe it proper for the Lord to put away sins by compassion alone. God does not pass over anything in His kingdom undischarged.

However, Anselm also taught that bare restitution is not sufficient satisfaction, Man must give more than he has taken. This he teaches in the following, pages 202-203:

This is the debt (that a rational creature must be subject to the will of God, H.V.) which man and angel owe to God, and no one who pays this debt commits sin; but every one who does not pay it sins. This is justice, or uprightness of will, which makes a being just or upright in heart, that is, in will; and this is the sole and complete debt of honor which we owe to God, and which God requires of us. For it is such a will only, when it can be exercised, that does works pleasing to God; and when this will cannot be exercised, it is pleasing of itself alone, since without it no work is acceptable. He who does not render this honor which is due to God, robs God of His own and dishonors Him; and this is sin. Moreover, so long as he does not restore what he has taken away, he remains in fault; and it will not merely suffice to restore what has been taken away, but, considering the contempt offered, he ought to restore more than he took away. For as one who imperils another's safety does not enough by merely restoring his safety, without making some compensation for the anguish incurred; so he who violates another's honor does not enough by merely rendering honor again, but must, according to the extent of the injury done, make restoration in some way satisfactory to the person whom he has dishonored. We must also observe that when any one pays what he has unjustly taken away, he ought to give something which could not have been demanded of him, had he not stolen what belonged to another. So then, every one who sins ought to pay back the honor of which he has robbed God; and this is the satisfaction which every sinner owes to God.

And Philip Schaff also remarks that, according to Anselm, he who has inflicted a wound must not only heal the wound, but pay damages to satisfy the demands of violated honor.

Moreover, according to this great schoolman, all sin must either receive punishment or be covered by satisfaction. Can man make this satisfaction? No. Were it possible for him to lead a perfectly holy life, from the moment he became conscious of his debt, he would be simply doing his duty for that period. The debt of the past would remain unsettled. But sin having struck at the roots of man's being, he is not able to lead a perfect life. This truth Anselm sets forth in the following quotation from his book, "Cur Deum Homo:"

Anselm. Tell me, then what payment you make God for your sin?

Boso. Repentance, a broken and contrite heart, self-denial, various bodily sufferings, pity in giving and forgiving, and obedience.

Anselm. What do you give to God in all these?

Boso. Do I not honor God, when, for His love and fear, in heartfelt contrition I give up worldly joy, and despise, amid abstinence and toils, the delights and ease of this life, and submit obediently to Him, freely bestowing my possessions in giving to and releasing others?

Anselm. When you render anything to God which you owe him, irrespective of your past sin, you should not reckon this as the debt which you owe for

sin. But you owe God every one of those things which you have mentioned. For, in this mortal state, there should be such love and such desire of attaining the true end of your being, which is the meaning of prayer, and such grief that you have not yet reached this object, and such fear lest you fail of it, that you should find joy in nothing which does not help you or give encouragement of your success. . . . But you ought to view the gifts which you bestow as a part of your debt, since you know that what you give comes not from yourself, but from him whose servant both you are and he also to whom you give. And nature herself teaches you to do to your fellow servant, man to man, as you would be done by; and that he who will not bestow what he has ought not to receive what he has not.

The reasoning here of Anselm is clear. When we give what we ought to give or do what we ought to do, we are simply doing our duty, and when we do what we ought to do this can never be meritorious. Simply doing one's duty can never be accounted by God as the payment of sin. This is the same truth as set forth by our Lord Jesus Christ in Luke 17:10: "So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do." If a person were to commit only one sin throughout his entire life, in his earliest infancy, and then live a perfectly holy life throughout all his days and years in this world, he could never pay for that one sin he committed, because, living a perfectly holy life, he would do nothing else than that which is required of him.

Anselm also emphasized that God's justice man is not able to satisfy. Man ought, but cannot. God need not, but does. For, most foreign to God would it be to allow man, the most precious of His creatures, to perish. But as God Himself must make the satisfaction, and man ought to make it, the satisfaction must be made by one who is both God and man, that is, the God-man.

This truth Anselm sets forth in his book on pages 244-245:

Anselm. But this cannot be effected, except the price paid to God for the sin of man be something greater than all the universe besides God. (We must bear in mind that sin, committed against God, is greater than all the universe, inasmuch as God is greater than the universe, and therefore the price paid for sin must be greater than all the universe, — H.V.)

Boso. So it appears.

Anselm. Moreover, it is necessary that he who can give God anything of his own which is more valuable than all things in the possession of God, must be greater than all else but God Himself.

Boso. I cannot deny it.

Anselm. Therefore none but God can make this satisfaction.

Boso. So it appears.

Anselm. If it be necessary, therefore, as it appears, that the heavenly kingdom be made up of men, and

this cannot be effected unless the aforesaid satisfaction be made, which none but God can make and none but man ought to make, it is necessary for the God-man to make it.

Boso. Now blessed be God! We have made a great discovery with regard to our question. Go on, therefore, as you have begun. For I hope that God will assist you.

Anselm. Now must we inquire how God can become man.

Finally, according to Anselm, to make satisfaction, the God-man must give back to God something he is not under obligation to render. A life of perfect obedience he owes. Death he does owe, for death is the wages of sin, and he had no sin. By submitting to death, he acquired merit. Because this merit is infinite in value, being connected with the person of the infinite Son of God, it covers the infinite guilt of the

sinner and constitutes the satisfaction required.

On page 257 Anselm writes the following:

If we say that he will give himself to God by obedience, so as, by steadily maintaining holiness, to render himself subject to His will, this will not be giving a thing not demanded of him by God as his due. For every reasonable being owes his obedience to God.

And on page 258 he writes this:

Now, nothing can be more severe or difficult for man to do for God's honor, than to suffer death voluntarily when not bound by obligation; and man cannot give himself to God in any way more truly than by surrendering himself to death for God's honor. Therefore, he who wishes to make atonement for man's sin should be one who can die if he chooses.

## *From Holy Writ*

# Exposition of Hebrews

*Rev. G. Lubbers*

## THE ESCHATOLOGICAL MOTIF OF FELLOWSHIP OF SAINTS (Hebrews 10:25 b)

There was ample reason given for considering one another to provoke unto love and good works in the text. It was the motif of being fruitful in the Lord with the fruits of thankfulness for the great redemption wherewith we have been saved from sin and death!

However, now the writer adds one more reason, and that a very prepondering one. It is that of the reward or judgment which shall be the lot of God's people in the day of Christ. The Lord will judge His people righteously according to their works. And, therefore, it is imperative that we consider one another unto love and to good works in view of the coming of the Day. The writer says "and that so much the more." In view of this coming day, when God shall punish the wicked and reward the righteous — we ought the more to give heed unto each other unto love and good works, and not forsake the coming together under the ministry of the Word of reconciliation.

We ought to notice that the writer does not define the "Day" here by any such addition or description as "the day of the Lord," the "day of Christ," the day "of judgment." He simply writes "*the Day*." He presupposes that the readers will know what Day this is. This is the Divinely appointed Day which will be the end of the history of the world. That will be the Day when God shall judge the world through one man, Jesus Christ. (Acts 17:31) All must then appear before

the judgment seat of Christ, in the day of the resurrection, some unto the resurrection of damnation and some unto the resurrection of life. That will be the Day of the final manifestation of the perfection of the Son of Man, crowned with honor and glory. Of this Day of the Lord the Scriptures are replete, both in the Old and in the New Testament. That will be the End of the world and the Parousia of Christ with all His own!

Implied here is, that in view of this Day, the church should live in watchfulness unto prayer. This need for watchfulness is emphatically taught by Jesus in the parable of the Ten Virgins. And in all the accounts of Jesus' eschatological discourses we learn that we are to be watchful unto prayer. No one knows the hour or the day when the Lord shall return. This is withheld from us by our heavenly Father. Our Lord tells us that we must have our treasure in that day and the great blessedness which shall be ours then. It is a blessedness for all who love His appearance in glory. In that day the little flock will receive the Kingdom, and looking for that day with earnest hope and joyful expectation we need not fear. Says our Lord "Sell all that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags that wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth, for where your treasure is there will your heart be also. Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.

Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. . . ."

What a glorious and blessed prospect!

In view of that great blessedness we must not forsake the gathering together of the saints.

Fact is, that the writer speaks of the church seeing this Day drawing nigh. There is a difference of interpretation of this. Some refer this to the drawing nigh of the time of the destruction of Jerusalem. It was very evident that the earthly Jerusalem and the temple were about to be destroyed. This would spell the end of the Old Testament shadows and types forever. The temple would be destroyed, never to be rebuilt. In view of this destruction, the believing Hebrews must not look back to the Old Testament types, but press forward unto perfection in the glory to come. Others feel that this refers to the coming of the Lord in the Last Day. Personally, we believe that these two cannot be separated. The Old is removed forever to bring in the New and immovable inheritance. That will be the perfection of all God's works in the New Heaven and New Earth where righteousness shall dwell. Then shall the church enter into the perfected and finished work of God in Christ, and shall enjoy the Sabbath which remaineth for the children of God, the tabernacle of God with man!

#### THE WILFUL SIN OF APOSTASY AND ITS VENGEFUL CONSEQUENCES. (Hebrews 10:26-31)

I must confess that there was a time when I could only read this passage of Scriptures with a "certain fearful expectation of judgment!" Now I see that I was so very wrong in those days when reading this passage of Scripture, and I praise and thank the Lord forever. I was wrong in that I did not see that the writer here is not speaking of mere conscious sins of weakness of the flesh, doing that which we would not, sin taking us captive, sold under sin, as averred by the Apostle Paul in Romans 7, but that the writer is here speaking of Reprobate unbelievers, who fall away from the living God. Such was the lot of those many in the desert, who could not enter into the promised land because of their unbelief. Of these God swore in his wrath that they should not enter into His rest.

It is of the sin of wilful apostasy from the truth in Christ and from the living God in Christ that the writer is here speaking. And we would notice the following elements which the writer points out as being the component parts of this wilful sin.

1. This is a sin which can only be committed by those who have received a thorough knowledge of the truth. The "truth" here must be the reality of the Gospel of God; the salvation which God has wrought in Christ Jesus, in which it is evident that Christ is made higher than the angels at God's right hand after

He has brought about the purification of our sins. This "truth" is the reality of the heavenly gift in Christ, to be made a partaker of the Holy Ghost, the power of the coming age as this reveals itself in giving repentance from sin unto life eternal! The writer speaks of those "after they have received the knowledge of the truth." To receive the *knowledge* of the truth indicates that those who sin wilfully are such as have a thorough intellectual understanding of the Gospel and of the doctrine of salvation in Christ. They have been enlightened naturally, and have tasted with their natural understanding the good Word of God and the power of the coming age. With these apostasy is stubborn unbelief.

2. For these sin the sin of "having trodden underfoot the Son of God." This is the sin of the unbelieving Jews at the time of Jesus' crucifixion, when they say: he made himself the Son of God, and therefore He must die. They deny the Sonship of the Christ, and are not unchristian merely, but they are antichrists! The expression to "trod under foot" means to reject publicly, before God and man. Furthermore, such "count the blood of the covenant a common thing." The blood of the Son of God is denied to be a propitiation for the sins of the people. It is made as the blood of a cow or a goat. And it denied that Christ has once and for all paid for our sins on the Cross, shedding His blood to make reconciliation for the people. And they do this, even though once they acknowledged that with this blood they were set apart to the service of the living God, having their consciences purified from dead works to serve the living God. Yes, once they acknowledged that they had free access to draw nigh by this blood and the new and living way unto the living God Himself in His Sanctuary where angels cover their faces. And, finally, such are these that they have a deep attitude of despising the Spirit of grace. They sin against the Holy Ghost, and ascribe the newness of life wrought by the Spirit working grace unto evil agencies, even to Satan himself. And when this is done they are thoroughly reprobate in all their heart and thoughts.

But now they sin wilfully after having received the knowledge of the truth! And this is held before the eyes of the believers as a threat and warning. And when the Spirit thus applies this warning to the hearts of the believers and to us, then He works grace in our hearts. And to God be all the glory both for the means and the fruit. (Canons, II, IV, 17)

For such apostates there is nothing left but the vengeful wrath of the living God.

1. Negatively, the text says that there remains for such no offering for their sins. This might mean to say that whereas they reject the only offering made for sin, by the blood of the covenant (the New Testament in Christ's blood) it is vain to seek for any other. All that is left is a Jewish wall of wailing. For the law made nothing perfect, and a return

to the law and the shadows is of no avail. It is interpreted by some as meaning that the sin of such is that theirs is pure unbelief and now the once proffered salvation is forever taken from them. From them is taken even what they think to have. They are put out of the fellowship forever of the church, driven away from before the face of the Lord forever! It seems to me that both of these elements are here included.

2. What is left? Nothing else than a certain fearful expectation of judgment. This expression indicates something terrifyingly horrible. It is the constant waiting for judgment while here on earth, because of the gnawing conscience of sin. Instead of glad assurance of forgiveness and full assurance of faith, there is nothing but a waiting for judgment just as the devils in hell are in pits of darkness waiting their judgment. O, the anguish of the man who does not have a sacrifice for sins! These have this anguish because they have full knowledge of the truth. For this judgment is eternal condemnation from the presence of the Lord. It is a "certain fiery judgment which consumes the enemy." This we

must clearly see is the doom of those who sin wilfully as "covenant-breakers;" it is the lot of those who hate God. To drive this point home the writer cites the cases from the Old Testament who set the law of Moses aside, despising it and trampling it under foot. These perished without mercy. The cases here cited are those "who sinned presumptuously." These were in opposition to those who sinned ignorantly, who stumbled in many sins and came with heartfelt sorrow to confess them. These who sinned ignorantly took refuge in the blood as it pointed to the great sacrifice which would be brought by the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. Now if such who sinned wilfully died without mercy, how much more will not those die without mercy who tread under foot the blood of the eternal covenant?

For God judges His people. He makes a separation between the believers and the unbelievers, between the sheep and the goats, and He does so righteously and inerrantly. He removes the chaff from the threshing-floor and brings the wheat into the garner.

## *In His Fear*

# Masters of Mistake

*Rev. John A. Heys*

Are you aware of the fact that we never find the word mistake in the Bible?

Some of the more modern translations in their bold freedom may distort the truth of a text by using that word; but nowhere in a faithful translation of the words which Scripture uses will you find that word mistake.

We do not mean, and are not saying, that there are not actions of men recorded in Scripture that cannot be called mistakes. There are such actions recorded. Joseph was about to make the mistake of divorcing Mary upon the Biblical ground of adultery. He entertained serious thoughts of "putting her away" because he was a just (righteous) man. The angel of God in His mercy made plain to Joseph that he was mistaken. Two men travelling the road to Emmaus mistook their Companion, Who had joined them along the way, as a stranger just come into these parts that very day, for "their eyes were holden that they should not know Him." For a time they were mistaken in their judgment of this Companion.

What we are saying, however, is this, that many of the actions of men which today are called mistakes are never called that in Scripture, but instead are called by their right name: SIN!

Take a look once at what Webster has to say about

that word mistake. When used as a verb, he tells us, it means, "1. To misapprehend, misunderstand, or misconceive; 2. to substitute erroneously in thought or perception; as to mistake James for John; to err in recognizing, estimating, etc." When used as a noun, according to Webster, it means, "1. An apprehending wrongly; a misunderstanding; 2. an unintentional error." It ought to be plain then that we should be careful when we use the word, and not quickly label the deeds of men as mistakes. We ought to be willing — and in His fear we will be willing — to call a spade a spade, and the actions which Scripture calls sin is nothing short of sin.

Sin is never a mistake, is never the result of misunderstanding God's will, is never an unintentional error. Sin always is a matter of the *will* of man. Jesus taught us that every sinful deed is an act of hatred against the living God. And hatred is an act of the will, even as love is an act of the will. Jesus taught us this clearly when He told us that the whole law of God is that we love God with all our soul, mind, will and strength. Any deed void of that love of God is sin. We must not then, try to minimize sin by calling it an act of poor judgment, an unintentional error. Man always sins intentionally. He sins because he *wills* something which he may not have.

Let us go back to the beginning of the matter and observe what took place when sin entered the world. Adam and Eve did not misapprehend God's command. They did not misunderstand their calling. Even Eve, when she corrupts God's command by stating that man might not even *touch* the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and of evil, does not reveal any misunderstanding of God's command that they might not eat of it, and that to eat of it would be SIN. And even if we concede that they were tempted to see that command in a different light, and were deceived into thinking that God's command was not good, and that His threat was an empty one, they sinned because they *willed* what God had plainly told them they might not have. And they ate in hate! They did not disobey in some unintentional error. They did not mistake God's command for Satan's suggestion. They clearly saw the difference between the two. But they wanted something that they did not have. And, knowing full well that they were going contrary to God and were becoming His enemies, and rivals, and rebels, they ate. No mistake was made by them. They *were* mistaken about what their sin would bring them, and they soon found out that they had been deceived by Satan. But their deed was not an unintentional error; and it was not due to a misconception of what their calling was. And we write about this matter of Masters of Mistake because of the current use of the word that takes away the sting of sin and excuses sin as nothing more than a matter of poor judgment. Yea, murder even is currently presented as nothing more than an act of "temporary insanity." That it is due to hatred in the heart toward God and the neighbour is denied. It is due only to a mental quirk, and then one that is temporary. Without any regenerating grace of God, without any spiritual renewal, but only by a natural process, that temporary condition of insanity will leave. It all was a big mistake. But do not call it anything more! Pity that man rather than the bereaved family. Justify him rather than defend those wronged. Such is the world's philosophy today.

And although we have for our theme "Masters of Mistake," for a reason soon to be explained, we may point out here that we are first masters of ethical error. masters of *sin*. And the master stroke of it all, the master stroke then of sin, was exactly that one wherein we, created in the image of God, as His friend-servants, set out to be masters, to be our own masters and to be like God. Due to this deed of seeking the Master's place we become masters both of sin and of mistake.

But note that we did not seek that mastery and discard our role as friend-servants by a deed of "temporary insanity." We did so in an act of hatred against God. We did it in a deliberate act of rebellion, fully conscious of what we were doing. And Adam did not plead "Not guilty by reason of temporary insanity." Nor does God excuse him — or for that

matter, us — on that basis. Paul writes to the church at Rome and declares that "by the *offence* of one many be dead." He declares that, "By one man *sin* entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." All did not make a mistake in Adam. Not one in the human race is excused because of a mental quirk on Adam's part. But through a sin, through an act of hatred from the heart, this friend-servant of God caused the whole human race to receive by the natural birth a God-hating nature that produces all manner of sin, and is utterly void of the fear of God. Let us call sin what it is. And let us understand well that when we call it a mistake, we are not making a mistake, but instead we are denying the truth of God's Word.

All this does not mean that we can never speak of a mistake or of man being mistaken. It does not mean that our title cannot stand and ought to be changed to Masters of Sin. We are masters of mistake. As the saying goes, "That is why they put erasers on pencils." There are unintentional errors. We do often misunderstand each other.

Printing mistakes appear after most careful proof reading by many pairs of eyes. Children, learning to play a musical instrument, by mistake strike wrong keys and produce sounds that not only are not in the score but which clash with what is called for in the score. Who has not experienced the annoyance of being disturbed, often in the wee hours of the night, because someone mistakenly dialed his phone number? It may have been but one digit out of seven that was unintentionally dialed, but one home was filled with fright, and another home had to wait longer for the expected call that all was well.

It is the human error, the misunderstanding of a signal, the poor judgment of a man that causes more automobile collisions and plane crashes than mechanical defects. And look at what we have done with our environment! We have polluted our streams and lakes. Bodies of water that teemed with fish, and provided us with food, have now become our dead seas. Our soldiers have dropped bombs on their own troops. We have taken the wrong exit off the freeway and not only lost much time trying to get back on again, but at times also our way, and become snarled up in the traffic we tried so hard to avoid. But why go on? Mistakes, mistakes! They are all around us. We are ridiculed for them sometimes. We suffer for them so often. We chide ourselves about them and resolve to do otherwise the next time; and in our extra care make a different mistake in the opposite direction.

Sometimes they bring only a smile, and in themselves are laughable. There are times when they bring tragedy. Some years ago several infants died in the nursery of a hospital because someone mistakenly — and not intentionally — added boric acid to the babies' formula instead of another ingredient. A doctor's mis-

taken diagnosis has often led to death because the proper treatment was not begun in time.

O, we are masters of mistakes! We can make mistakes without trying. In fact, the moment that we try, it is no mistake any more. But all these lines have been written to bring this question to you: Do you find anything like this in the rest of the creation from which in folly some claim that we evolved as the highest product? Do these beasts of the field make the mistakes which we repeatedly manifest? Do the birds of the air make the mistakes that pilots with their planes make when trying to land their planes? Did they pollute our air and create our smog? Did the fish, who swim in schools and yet know nothing about "reading, writing and 'rithmetic" pollute our waters for us, or did we kill them off by our mistakes? If, indeed, we evolved from them as a higher development of what they were, how is it that we do not find them making all the mistakes that our lives produce?

By all means, let us never charge God with any mistakes. He does nothing unintentionally. He never misunderstands. The cross whereon His Son died was no mistake; nor was the choice of Judas as one of the disciples. All comes forth out of the inscrutable wisdom of God, and is executed in a way utterly void of any mistakes of any kind at any time. He IS the Master and He is working on a masterpiece.

There is, of course, a connection between our position as masters of sin and masters of mistake. Our mistakes are due to our lack of knowledge and of wis-

dom, which also produce carelessness. Because we have not the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning, the principle of wisdom, we are masters of sin. We just do not know how to serve God. And we cannot will to serve Him, as we are by our first birth. But it is also this lack of the fear of the Lord, the lack of this beginning of wisdom that makes us masters of mistake. The holy angels who retained the knowledge and wisdom wherein God created them never make any mistakes. We do that here on this earth. We do not see God in His creation. We do not understand our calling before Him with that creation. We know only that we want to seek ourselves and satisfy the lusts of our flesh.

The rebirth will not put an end to our mistakes here on this earth. It will not put an end to our sins. The new man will never be found sinning. See I John 3:9. But while in this flesh we shall still sin according to the old nature and multiply sin and mistakes. Believers still will need erasers on pencils. We will still be careless, because we will, according to the flesh, still care less about God's glory and our calling before Him than we did at creation. But the resurrection will — and for the redeemed soul, death will — loose us from all mistakes as well as from all sin. For God shall be all in all of our thinking and willing. And we shall see face to face instead of through a glass darkly. Then we shall be perfect creatures in a perfect environment who will serve our God perfectly.

For that the whole creation groans. Do you?

## Feature

# The Concern of of the Reformation For Christian Education (5)

*Rev. David Engelsma*

Who was suppose to establish and maintain these Christian Schools?

Luther's answer was: The civil authorities of each city. The very title of his earliest work on Christian Education shows this: "To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany that They Establish and Maintain Christian Schools." He called on the councilmen, or local civil government, to establish the schools. These same civil authorities also financed the schools. In his later work, "A Sermon on Keeping Children in School," Luther commends the council of Nurnberg for establishing a Christian School and remarks that he hopes the parents keep their children in that school, "since without cost to themselves their children are so

bountifully and diligently cared for, with everything provided for them." Later in this same "Sermon," Luther berates the parents for keeping their children from attending this school, although they have this education "without cost or trouble to you; for you do not now have to support either schools or pastors, as you would be bound to do according to the gospel . . . You have everything, all of it free of charge. . . ." Because some parents refused to educate their children, Luther admonished the government to compel parents to send their children to school:

But I hold that it is the duty of the temporal authority to compel its subjects to keep their children in school, especially the promising ones we mentioned above. . . .

This would seem to put Luther squarely in favor of the public school system, as found, for example, in the U.S., and in opposition to our contention that, not the State, but the parents have the calling to establish and maintain schools, that is, educate their children. Some, in fact, call Luther the father of the present public schools.

In his judgment that the civil authorities should establish the Christian Schools, Luther erred. Undoubtedly, this error has had bad consequences for Christian education, both in Europe and the U.S. Because of that error, many believers are content with government-controlled, public education that is in no sense Christian. The error made at the beginning of the Christian School movement of handing the schools over to the State carried within itself the seed of the destruction of the Christian School Movement. For, inevitably, the governments became less and less Christian, so that the schools they maintained and controlled became more and more secularized. That is, the Word of God was gradually driven out of the schools, so that the education was no longer Christian. Luther's view that the State should provide education is another expression of a basic mistake in his thought, the mistake of ascribing an illegitimate authority to the State and of encouraging the State to encroach on the sovereign domain of the home not only, but also of the Church. Not only did Luther praise the council for founding schools, but he also praised them for founding churches. Not only did the civil authorities support the school-teacher, but they also paid the pastor's salary. Not only did they regulate the school, but they also exercised authority over the internal, ecclesiastical affairs of the church. It remained for John Calvin and the Calvinistic branch of the Reformation to maintain the separation of the Church and the State and to delimit the rights and duties of the Civil Government.

After we have made this fundamental criticism, however, we should, in fairness, take note of several things that radically distinguish Luther from the supporters of present-day, government-controlled, public education. The main distinction lies in the fact that Luther demanded *Christian* Schools. He demanded them of the State, to be sure, but he demanded of the State schools that would be Christian throughout. He demanded that the Word of God not only be in the school but that it also reign there alone! Schools where the Word did not reign, he called "the great gates of hell." He would advise no one to send his son where the Word did not reign paramount. In his time, the civil authorities, in his Germany, to whom he addressed the fervent plea to establish schools, were

Christian, "Lutheran" men. He could trust them to set up Godly Schools. He did not foresee the "secular State."

In the second place, Luther did recognize and assert that the duty of educating the children belonged to the parents, not to the civil authorities. In the work, "To the Councilmen of Germany," he exhorts the councilmen, the civil government, to establish schools. The reason, he says, is that God requires the children of believing parents to be reared and trained, which includes Christian Day School education. He then imagines that the councilmen raise an objection: "Ah, you say, but all that is spoken to the parents; what business is it of councilmen and the authorities?" A good objection! What is Luther's reply? "Yes, that is true. . . ." Note that reply! Luther agrees that it is the parents' duty. Why then does he call on the State? Luther continues, ". . . but what if the parents fail to do their duty? Who then is to do it? Is it for this reason to be left undone, and the children neglected? How will the authorities and council then justify their position, that such matters are not their responsibility?" It seemed to the hard-pressed Luther that the exigencies of the times required that the principle be waived for practical realities. But he did see and assert the principle: Parents must educate their children! The same thing is implied in the quotation made before, concerning the financing of the schools. After Luther reminded the parents that they did not have "to support either schools or pastors," he adds, "as you would be bound to do according to the gospel."

Luther himself, despite his fault here, teaches us that believing parents have the duty of establishing and maintaining Christian Schools. History should have taught us by now that only then are our children assured of an education that is Christian.

One other element of Luther's thought regarding the place of the State in education deserves consideration. Luther held that the State, as State, had a stake in the good education of its citizenry. A well-educated citizenry is advantageous to any government, if indeed it is not necessary. For this reason, it belongs to the State's authority to make education compulsory. If this is the case, and I think it is, the State should take note that we maintain our own schools, and to the extent that we provide our own schools, relieve us of the taxes that provide for the schools of the other citizens. It belongs to the State's jurisdiction, and is part of the State's concern for justice, to see to it that some of its citizens do not have to pay double for education.

A spoken word and a thrown stone cannot be recalled.

## BOOK REVIEW

*WHAT'S NEW IN RELIGION?* by Kenneth Hamilton; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1968; 176 pp., \$3.95.

The author of this book is professor of Systematic Theology in the Theological Faculty of United College in Winnipeg, Manitoba. His concern in several books he has written is with the new "theologies" which have recently appeared which solemnly avow that "God is dead." This book deals especially with Bishop John Robinson, who began the current tempest, Paul Tillich, Paul van Buren, Thomas Altizer, William Hamilton, Harvey Cox, Joseph Fletcher and others. He not only discusses their "religious philosophies" but also their ethics, which has come to be known as "the new morality" or "situation ethics."

The book is a real help in an attempt to understand what these men are trying to say and can well serve as a guide through their dark and labyrinthine writings. One interested in learning about these men will do well to read the book. But there are weaknesses. For one thing, and most basic, it seems a bit too much to take these men so seriously that an entire book has to be devoted to them. They are atheists, mockers of religion and blasphemers. Ought a Christian to devote an entire volume to them? Secondly, while Bishop Robinson especially claims to be developing the views of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Hamilton claims that Bonhoeffer is being misinterpreted when these atheists appeal to him. While there may be some element of truth in this assertion, our reading of Bonhoeffer leads us to the conclusion that Hamilton is much too charitable in his analysis when he finds in Bonhoeffer one who has something positive to offer to conservative theology. Thirdly, Hamilton's critique of these men is grounded

in philosophical argument and not in Scripture. This is a mistake. While there is something correct apologetically in analyzing arguments of unbelievers and even showing where their own argumentation goes astray, the final answer to unbelievers is Scripture. Hamilton does not do this. For an answer from Scripture to these men, one must go elsewhere.

H.H.



### ANNIVERSARY ANNOUNCEMENT

On January 20, 1971, Mr. and Mrs. Jacob S. De Vries commemorated their 50th wedding anniversary. We gratefully acknowledge our Heavenly Father for all the wonderful gifts we might share in. We can only say: "O praise and bless the Lord my soul, and ever thankful be; forget not all His benefits He has bestowed on thee." (Psalm 103)

Their grateful children:

Mr. and Mrs. Wilbur Van Zante  
Mr. and Mrs. James De Vries  
Mr. and Mrs. Bernie De Vries  
Mr. and Mrs. Harold Vos  
Mr. and Mrs. Maynard De Vries  
Mr. and Mrs. Albert E. Rouw  
Mr. and Mrs. Ray De Vries  
and 30 grandchildren

Pella, Iowa

## News From Our Churches

### REPORT OF CLASSIS EAST

January 6, 1971

At Hope Church

Rev. G. Van Baren, chairman of the October Classis, led in opening devotions, and, after the credentials were received, declared Classis to be properly constituted. All the churches were represented by two delegates. Rev. R. C. Harbach, due to the absence of Rev. H. Veldman, who had been delayed in his return from a classical appointment in Doon, then presided. Rev. G. Van Baren recorded the minutes. The business at hand was routine and was carried out with dispatch. The Stated Clerk and the Classical Committee reported

on their activities. Elders J. Prince and P. Knott were appointed to serve on the Finance Committee, R. Clawson was appointed to thank the ladies of Hope Church for their excellent catering services.

Subsidy requests were presented by Holland and Kalamazoo. Elders Ondersma, Lanning, and Talsma served as a committee of pre-advice. The subsidy requests were found in order and were forwarded to Synod for approval.

Requests for classical appointments were submitted by Hope and Southwest, and from Classis West for Randolph and Oak Lawn. Rev. J. Heys, Rev. M. Schipper, and Elder R. Bloem served on the Classical Appointment Committee. It was recommended by the

committee and later approved by Classis that Classis West be requested to supply Oak Lawn, and that Rev. R. Decker be requested to serve his scheduled Hull appointment in Doon. The schedule adopted by Classis is as follows:

HOPE: Jan. 10 - M. Schipper; Jan. 31 - G. Van Baren (AM), H. Veldman (PM); Feb. 14 - G. Van Baren (AM); Feb. 28 - J. Heys; Mar. 14 - R. Harbach; Mar. 21 - G. Van Baren (AM); Apr. 4 - M. Schipper; Apr. 11 - J. Heys

SOUTHWEST: Jan. 17 - G. Van Baren (AM), H. Veldman (PM); Jan. 31 - R. Harbach; Feb. 7 - M. Schipper; Feb. 21 - H. Veldman; Mar. 7 - G. Van Baren (AM); Mar. 21 - H. Veldman; Apr. 4 - G. Van Baren (AM).

RANDOLPH: Jan. 31 - J. Heys; Feb. 21 - R. Harbach.

Rev. G. Lubbers, spending his last day on leave from his missionary labors in Jamaica, made a brief appearance at Classis and was granted an advisory vote. Upon his departure, the chairman, in the name of Classis, bade him Godspeed.

Classis voted for synodical delegates with the results as follows:

MINISTERS — PRIMI: Harbach, Schipper, Van Baren, Veldman. SECUNDI: Heys, Lubbers.

ELDERS — PRIMI: J. Kalsbeek, T. Newhof, Sr., F. Ondersma, G. Pipe. SECUNDI: J. Buiter T. Engelsma, D. Langeland, A. Talsma.

Delegates ad examina were elected as follows: Rev. J. Heys was chosen to serve a full three-year term, and Rev. G. Van Baren was chosen to serve the unexpired term of Rev. J. Kortering. Because of a shortage in manpower, Classis must function with two secundus delegates.

The questions of Article 41 of the Church Order were asked of each consistory and were answered satisfactorily.

Classis will meet next time, D.V., on April 4, 1971 at Hudsonville. Rev. Harbach expressed his thanks to the Classis for its cooperation in carrying out the day's business with dispatch.

Elder M. Haveman offered the closing prayer.

J. Huiskens, S. C.

N.B. — The address of the newly-elected Stated Clerk of Classis East is 3324 Barrett, Grandville, Michigan 49418.

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The pastor of the Loveland congregation, Rev. Engelsma, has received the call from Doon, Iowa.

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The monthly Sunday evening discussion groups of

Grand Rapids First Church are still alive. At present, a number of couples and individuals meet in various homes and discuss the sermon of that particular Sunday evening. Sermon outlines are available at the church entrance in the morning. The plan, it would seem, has obvious merits. The outlines, properly used, should enable members of the congregation to come better prepared to listen. And the fact that the sermon will be the topic for later discussion, should provide a little extra motivation for one to give his undivided and thoughtful attention to the preaching of the Word. Besides, of course, to engage in a serious discussion of the contents of the sermon is an admirable way to spend a Sunday evening. An interest in this sort of thing does not, of course, come just naturally. It takes conscious effort on the part of the individual Christian. The committee responsible for organizing these meetings, and for encouraging participation therein, deserves a word of commendation.

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We learn from Southeast's bulletin that Mr. Mark Hoeksema devoted a little time during his Christmas season recess from Seminary classes to attend a wedding — his own, it would appear. Miss Ruth Bol has been known since Dec. 22 as Mrs. Mark Hoeksema. Mark, no doubt, spent the rest of the vacation preparing for the exams which followed practically on the heels of Christmas vacation. (Note: Southeast's bulletin did not put it exactly that way.)

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For this next item we'll quote directly from the bulletin of our congregation in Hull, Iowa. It speaks well for itself.

"The most recent pamphlet on Postmillennialism is available in the bulletin rack. A hearty thanks to all who assisted in its preparation for mailing. Such a good turn-out is much appreciated. These pamphlets are being prepared by the new combined church extension committee (Hull, Doon, Edgerton). This committee will carry on this work as well as other forms of witness. It is known by the name, *The Reformed Witness Committee*. In the future, collections will be taken for this cause which is vital to our responsibility in letting the witness of the truth shine to those in our area. This committee also will be working in cooperation with the church extension committees of Pella, Loveland, and perhaps Redlands."

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One short requested announcement, yet. "The treasurer of the Loveland Consistory is now Mr. Milton Alsum, 816 W. Duffield Court, Loveland, Colorado, 80537. Telephone: 667-7842

D.D.