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A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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Afflictions Working Glory

Editorial

Others View The Kuitert Decision

Question Box

**Some Pertinent Questions About Our
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All Around Us

Some Thoughts On Being Led By The Spirit

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Meditation

Afflictions Working Glory

Rev. M. Schipper

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

II Corinthians 4:17,18.

Difficult it would be, indeed, to find another passage in Holy Writ containing more contrasts than this one.

Note how the apostle describes the main contrast in the text, between our present affliction and the glory which is to follow. To set this contrast in sharply defined lines, he uses several other opposites: that which is light, and that which is weighty; that which is for the moment and therefore temporal, and that which is eternal; that which is seen, and that which is unseen.

And the purpose of this passage of Scripture is undoubtedly to show by way of contrast the exceeding greatness and glory of the things unseen; while at the same time it brings into focus the oft forgotten relation of the temporal to the eternal.

Would those, who find themselves under the providence of God in the midst of depressing afflictions, find comfort, they will do well to lay hold on the Word of God here in this text.

How blessed are they who can direct their lives in accordance with the true wisdom divinely designed and

set forth by way of contrasts in this text and see the proper relation between the seen and the unseen, between the now and the future!

True and solid comfort is not merely to believe that after we have suffered a while, we are going to be delivered from all suffering. When one is writhing in pain upon a bed of affliction, and I tell him he ought to keep his chin up and never lose hope, for the time is coming when all suffering will cease and every tear will be wiped away from our eyes, — that may be a pleasant thought and something to look forward to, but it will not give him the comfort he needs for the moment. When one loses a dear one, and he feels that his whole world has collapsed about him, — it may throw a ray of light into his darkness to speak of the glory of the resurrection in which we shall be united again with our loved ones; but this cannot give him the solid comfort he needs in his present loss.

True comfort consists in that consideration of the sanctified mind and heart whereby one is able to understand that the present trouble he experiences is necessary and that it works unto the attainment of the great good he expects.

This is precisely what the apostle is saying in the passage under consideration.

Afflictions work glory!

And when the apostle speaks of affliction, note carefully that he is not speaking of affliction merely in general.

There is, indeed, universal affliction. Unless one is like the proverbial ostrich which hides his head in the sand, there is no one who does not observe this truth, that the world is full of affliction. It is safe to say that the world has never seen so much affliction as is in evidence in our time. In spite of all the modern advancement in the science of medicine, and all the technology to relieve the pain and suffering, our hospitals are the grim evidences that sickness and disease are still bringing the multitudes into pain, suffering, and death. In spite of all the attempts to collar peace and impose it upon the nations of the world, our daily newspapers along with other news media loudly proclaim wars and rumors of war. In spite of all the modern technology to curb crime and its devastating effects, our government and all the police agencies fail miserably to stem the tide, so that our populace can relax and walk on our streets without fear that danger is lurking in every dark corner. Indeed, from every direction on our globe one hears the heart-rending cries of suffering and affliction. One can find no paradise of tranquility, but all the world is cast into a caldron of affliction, of suffering and death.

But the apostle, although fully aware of this universal affliction, does not have only this in mind.

Rather, he has in mind the affliction which is peculiar to the children of God. In the deep sense he is thinking of the affliction which is for Jesus' sake. This

is evident, it seems to me, from the preceding context, as well as from the rest of the epistle. And he feels deeply that he also shares in this affliction, for he informs us that he is "troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed." He was conscious of "always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus," — and he continues, "we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." And in the verse immediately preceding our text, he mentions the "outward man which perishes" as well as "the inward man which is renewed day by day." In the eleventh chapter of this epistle at great length the apostle mentions the sufferings he had to endure as the apostle of Jesus Christ. He was beaten many times with rods, stoned, and ship-wrecked. He endured the perils of his journeys on land and sea, maltreated by his own countrymen, and false brethren. He suffered pain, hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness. And besides all this, he was weighted down with the care of all the churches.

Yet, though the afflictions are chiefly those related to his connection with Christ, there is no reason, we believe, to limit the afflictions of the children of God. When the apostle speaks of "our affliction," this undoubtedly includes all the suffering of this present time. Besides the affliction that is imposed on us for Jesus' sake, there is also the affliction common to all mankind. The children of God are not immune to vicissitudes of life directed to them in the providence of God. They also often lie upon beds of pain. They experience also the ravages of disease. Their loved ones are torn from their side. Their sons also die on the battlefields of the world, or, as we say, by accident are they brought to an early grave here at home. In his letter to the Romans (8:18, 28), the apostle writes of the same truth as stated in our text: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us . . . And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose." Also here, it is plain, the sufferings are all the afflictions of this present time, not only those we experience for Jesus' sake.

But notice now what appraisal the Word of God makes of these afflictions!

They are light, and for the moment!

Is not the apostle beside himself when he speaks thus concerning the affliction of the children of God? Is he not altogether too superficial in his judgment of them? Is it so, perhaps, that the apostle did not know what it means to sit long weary hours in a funeral parlor listening to the many friends and relatives reminding you of your awful loss? Did he not know what it means when the war department sends you a

little telegram: "We are sorry to inform you that your son or husband was killed in action"? Didn't the apostle have any understanding of the heart-rending experience of having a precious husband or wife or child torn from your side? Was he completely oblivious of the gnawing pain of cancer that eats away your flesh, and destroys your brain, so that all that is left is a vegetable, a dwarfed stack of flesh and bones?

O, make no mistake about it! It is not so that he did not know how to appraise the sufferings of this present time. He knew full well how that the suffering of God's people is not for a moment, but often for weeks, months, and even years. He knew also of the bitterness and the disappointments of life, and the pains of death; and that these are not light by any stretch of the imagination. The fact that the apostle in his own case could enumerate in detail all the afflictions he endured, proves beyond doubt that he knew they were not light and momentary experiences with him.

But when he compared the affliction with the glory that awaits the children of God, then the affliction loses its weight, becoming exceeding light; and when he compared the *eternal* weight of glory with the affliction of this *present* time, then affliction is only momentary. And when he understood how that glory cannot be attained in any other way than through affliction, and that the affliction is absolutely necessary to the attainment of that glory, — then, of course, the affliction as it appears in the scale with glory, becomes exceeding light.

Our affliction, which is light, worketh for us!

It works a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory!

Eternal glory! That is, the future, heavenly glory, the glory of the new Jerusalem! The heavenly city which is gloriously perfect. There is no night there. No suffering and death! The streets of it are paved with pure gold. Into it nothing shall enter that is of the lie!

But there is much more!

As beautiful as heaven is and shall be, it is empty and meaningless unless in the very center of it is the presence of the great and glorious God!

Glory, in the Scriptures, is always the effulgence, the radiation of perfection! God is the all-glorious God, the radiation of Whose perfections are reflected throughout the heavenly city!

It is the glory which the Lord Jesus merited for Himself and all His own, as reward for having first so deeply humbled Himself in the way of perfect obedience on the cross. Of this glory He was given a foretaste prior to His death, on the mount of transfiguration. Into that glory the resurrected Lord entered when He ascended to the Father's right hand. And that glory He now prepares for all His saints. So great is this glory that the apostle in another place declared: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither

have entered into the heart of man, the things God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit."

Here he speaks of the exceeding and eternal weight of glory!

It is exceeding great!

Unto that glory the affliction works! That means that affliction has an end purpose, all, of course, under the direction and according to the plan or counsel of God.

This is precisely what is so difficult for us, who are in affliction, to comprehend. We often take God into judgment, criticizing His way with us. We ask: Why did this have to happen to me? Rebelliously we often complain that the way of the Lord is not right. I am thinking of that saint of the Old Testament, Asaph by name, who stood in rebellion against God when he saw the wicked prosper, while he experienced suffering every day. When he went into the house of God, he discovered two things: on the one hand, he observed that the prosperity of the wicked was working for their condemnation; while his own affliction was working glory; and all this under the providence and according to the counsel of God. But when he did not understand this, he was terribly rebellious.

What we must discover, if we are to find any comfort in the midst of our afflictions, is that which happened to Christ; that is, His experience must become ours. We all know that Christ Jesus could never have attained to the crown of glory if He had not first gone the way of the cross. And the affliction He endured under the providence and according to the counsel of God were absolutely necessary to the attainment of the glory He received. The same is true for every child of God. Though it is true that our affliction is nothing, when it is compared to His affliction endured in our stead, and it must be said that His affliction was unique; there is, nevertheless, a comparison in this sense, that, as His affliction worked for glory, so our affliction works for the glory He now prepares and gives unto all His own.

While we look not on the things which are seen!

But at the things which are not seen!

That is when our affliction works glory!

O, to be sure, from a purely objective point of view, afflictions always work glory, because the counseling purpose of God cannot be frustrated. The rule which God has set cannot be changed.

Yet, from our subjective point of view, that is, from the point of view of our experience, it is also true that you and I can never truly experience the wonder of this truth, if all that we see is the things that are seen. These are the things which are the objects of our physical perception. That means, if all that we see in the midst of our affliction is the suffering, the loss, the anxiety that our loss brings us; then subjectively

speaking, we cannot experience the truth that our affliction works glory.

On the other hand, if while we are in the midst of affliction, we look at the unseen, then our affliction works glory.

Looking at the unseen!

Marvelous grace!

The unseen is, of course, the things of God's heavenly kingdom, the glory of His presence, the house of His covenant, the reserved inheritance of His saints, the new heavens and earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

To see these unseen things is, of course, possible only through the grace of faith. And to see them means also to set your heart on them, to hope for them with your whole being.

Then, affliction works glory!

How blessed then are they who can look past the seen things that contribute to all your present affliction, and with longing hearts keep your eye of faith on the unseen! They experience the solid comfort they need! In the midst of their tears, they can and will rejoice!

More than conquerors they are!

For even what they often suppose is their enemy is become their servant!

And their affliction is the divinely appointed means to bring them to everlasting glory!

Amen!

Editorial

Others View The Kuitert Decision

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

While on this side of the Atlantic the religious press has thus far been strangely silent about the significant and far-reaching decision of the *Gereformeerde Kerken* (by the Synod of Dordrecht-Lunteren) in the Kuitert matter, the same has certainly not been true in the Netherlands. In *De Reformatie* (Dec. 16, 1972) in the *Press Review* department, the Rev. F. de Vries writes about some of the Dutch reactions to that decision under the heading, "The Pacification of Lunteren?"

What is reported in this article is rather enlightening; and therefore we will pass on to our readers some of this information in condensed form.

First of all, the Rev. de Vries disagrees with an evaluation by a certain G. Alb. van Dongen in *Hervormd Nederland*. The latter had termed the decision a pacification between Kuitert and the *Verontrusten* (Concerned). He had even characterized the decision as a time bomb under Kuitert. He predicted that at future synods there will be more protests against Kuitert by the *Verontrusten*, and that these will lead to the exploding of that time bomb. de Vries believes nothing of this. He points out that the Synod has relegated the questions involved in Kuitert's views to the realm of theological science, has declared them to be matters on which there can be no ecclesiastical declaration, that in effect the churches have been silenced by Synod's decision. Hence, de Vries is of the opinion not that there is a time bomb under Kuitert, but that there is a time bomb under the

Gereformeerde Kerken, and that, in fact, this time bomb has already begun to explode, marking the destruction of the Reformed, Scriptural character of those churches. There was no pacification at Lunteren, but a capitulation of the entire synod to the new theology.

We, of course, agree, as the reader will remember from our earlier editorial.

Of greater significance, however, are the attitudes assumed by various leaders in the *Gereformeerde Kerken* themselves. The article referred to calls attention to some of these. Mention is made of the Rev. P. van Til, one of the *Verontrusten*. He had fought long at synod for the maintenance of the historicity of the fall. But he was satisfied with synod's decision — in fact, he voted for it; and he was of the opinion that the threatening danger of a schism in the GKN was removed, presumably not at the expense of the truth but on the basis that the conflicting parties actually had "found one another" in synod's decision. Also Prof. Dr. Herman Ridderbos justifies the synod's decision. He characterizes the decision as "an honorable conclusion that in this tension-full relation between truth and unity she (synod) could make no further progress." He considers it advisable that at least on an ecclesiastical level the discussions on this matter be ended for the time being. Apparently he is content to leave these matters to theology and the theologians, but to let the church keep silence. In other words, the

theologians (including Kuitert) may go their merry way; these are not matters which concern the church and her Reformed confession.

Most surprising of all to the Rev. de Vries (but not to us who are acquainted with the history in Australia and New Zealand) is the attitude of Prof. Dr. Klaas Runia, who declares in *Centraal Weekblad* that he is "very happy with this clear, evangelical declaration." How such an evaluation is possible in the light of the fact that Runia himself recognizes that one of the questions at stake was that of the historicity of the fall, and in light of the fact that the synod exactly did not maintain that historicity of the fall, is a question which the Rev. de Vries raises, but does not answer. To me, the answer is obvious: Runia does not consider the historicity of the fall to be an essential element of that which is "evangelical," i.e., of the gospel. This is the only conclusion one can reach.

For the Rev. de Vries also refers to Dr. Kuitert's evaluation of Synod's decision. He quotes from an interview with Kuitert which appeared in *VU-magazine* (Free University magazine). In this interview Kuitert expresses himself in his usual forthright and bold manner. He very definitely does not feel chastened by Synod's decision whatsoever. Nor does he feel limited by it. In response to one question, he points out that it was without any doubt the express purpose of the Synod to "create room," that is, room for his views as well as for the views of his opponents. He very boldly points out that anyone who denies this speaks contrary to better knowledge. And he furnishes grounds for what he says. He points out that before the decision was adopted, there had been another proposal, a concept-declaration "which was full of things of which a child could understand that for him and for many

others at synod they would continue the old course," and would be unacceptable to him. He goes on to point out, too, that it was not his idea to bind everyone else to his views, but that he only wanted synod to create room for everyone to think about these matters as he pleased. And that, according to Kuitert, is what synod did. For at the synod that unacceptable concept-declaration was withdrawn, with the express statement that they did not want that. Moreover, Kuitert points out that the synod purposely used ambiguous language in order to create room for various views. Kuitert even points out that Synod refused to use the word *gebeurtenis* (event) with respect to the fall. Further, Kuitert points out that he plainly declared to the Synod at least ten times that Adam and Eve never existed as historical persons, and then confronted them with the question whether he might be in or might not be in the *Gereformeerde Kerken*.

It is evident, therefore, that Kuitert conceded nothing, that he retracted nothing — in fact, that he very boldly and forthrightly maintained, even on the floor of synod, all that he taught concerning Adam and Eve and concerning the fall. But synod did not penalize him. In fact, Synod rejected a proposal which would have shut out Kuitert's views; and it deliberately took a decision which created room for Kuitert's views alongside the views of others.

The new theology won the day at the Dutch synod. It now has an open field. There is, in principle, complete liberty of doctrine in the GKN.

De Reformatie is correct on this score: a time bomb under the Reformed and Scriptural character of the GKN has already begun to explode!

Question Box

Some Pertinent Questions About Our Reformed Position

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

From a Canadian reader I received the following letter which contains some questions which touch directly on our Reformed position and witness. I shall quote the entire letter, both because it furnishes background for the questions and because of its significant observations; and in this issue I will make a

beginning with answering the questions. Here is the letter:

Dear Editor:

For some time now I have been a reader of your paper, the *Standard Bearer*. Let me say that I like your

paper very much for its exposition of sound, Reformed, Biblical truth. As a member of the Christian Reformed Church I must say that our church “stood” for the same truths at one time, but not any more; and I know from the *Standard Bearer* that you are well aware of this.

Since our church has begun to debate the infallibility of the Word of God, it has gone down very fast; and according to human reckoning it has gone past a point of no return. This all is so very sad. How did our Christian Reformed Church and also the *Gereformeerde Kerken* in Holland bask in the sunshine of God’s favor, and how much light did He give us from His Word!

In spite of all the heresy going on in our church, I still believe that our creeds do represent an explanation of Bible truths in their present form. Especially the doctrine of the sovereignty of our God “who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will” (Eph. 1:11) is so very dear to us who are still truly Reformed by the grace of God. Is it not so that a sinner “dead in trespasses and sins” needs a sovereign God to pull him out of his misery from beginning to end?

Since I began reading the *Standard Bearer*, I have also read “Therefore Have I Spoken” and “*Door U Alleen, Twaalf Leerredenen*” door Ds. H. Hoeksema. It has all been very refreshing, and I thank my God that in His grace He has given us this, that we may once again steer a straight course through all the “tossing waves” of our present “leadership” (?) in our Christian Reformed Churches.

But there remain a few questions. This is not meant as criticism, not at all. I only like some clarity on a few points, two to be exact.

Number one is: the common grace question. According to one of your contributors – I think the Rev. G. Van Baren – all our present troubles in the Christian Reformed Church are because of our views on common grace. But there are so many churches which never heard of common grace, and they are going the same way as our churches. How do we have to see this?

I am well aware that at the present time the A.A.C.S. is playing havoc with what Dr. A. Kuyper called “common grace”; and especially when they preach their so-called “cultural mandate.” I have written something about these things which I will send you; I do not think for a moment that what I wrote is the final word in this matter, but I felt something had to be done; and since very little was forthcoming, I put in some of my “farmer latin” in the hope that the Lord may open the eyes of some.

In view of I Tim. 4:10, can we not say that there is common grace, or a favor from God for all men, believer and unbeliever alike?

In the second place, when we speak of predestination, must we go as far as to say that the

Lord from eternity has *loved* His own – with this I can agree – but also that the Lord *hated* those who are rejected, from eternity? I know that the Bible says: “Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.”

On the other hand, is it not so that the atoning work of our Lord and Savior is “sufficient” for all men? See Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 15, Answer 37; Canons of Dordt, II, 3; and I Tim. 2:6, where we read, “Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.”

These things are deep, and we seem to be on the verge of going beyond the Lord’s revealed will, and our finite minds will not be able to grasp and reconcile as a rational whole (what is for us rational) the Lord’s absolute sovereignty in electing sinners to salvation, and our responsibility on the other hand; and therefore we must tread very carefully here, and with the greatest reverence, or so it seems to me.

Yours sincerely,

P.S. To my consternation I see that I have asked you three questions instead of two; I hope this will not deter you from answering all three.

Reply

Let me begin with your postscript. There is no need for consternation. I will gladly try to answer your questions – and ten more besides, if they are of this calibre and if they arise out of a sincere concern about the truth of God’s Word and our Reformed confessions. But you will have to be a little patient; I cannot very well answer all these questions in one issue.

In the second place, let me not forget to thank you for your kind words about our magazine and our other publications. Nowadays responses like this are coming to us rather frequently and often from altogether unexpected sources. This is encouraging, not only to us who write, but also to those who sponsor and publish our literature. Would to God that we could reach many more of His people who have a heart for the Reformed faith and who are concerned about modern trends in the Reformed community. This is an important part of our aim in sending forth our Reformed testimony through the printed page. I am convinced that there are many more of such “concerned” people of God in many places. Our problem is how to reach them. And if you, my questioner, or our other readers, can help us with this problem, by all means do so!

But now let me make a beginning with these questions.

How can we say that the present trends to apostasy in the Christian Reformed Church (and I may add: in the *Gereformeerde Kerken*) are due to “common grace” when many other churches “which never heard of common grace” are going the same way?

This is a perceptive question, and well worth consideration. For the present issue, I will limit myself

to a few observations about this.

First of all, of course, the mere fact that there may be other reasons and occasions for apostasy in other denominations does not affect the fact that in the Christian Reformed Church (and the *Gereformeerde Kerken*) “common grace” has been at the root of the problems. Each denomination has its own history, its own course of development, and its own specific reasons and occasions for development in a certain direction. But that “common grace” has played a key role will be evident to anyone who has an eye for the history of doctrine and the history of the church. I do not recall at the moment to what article of Rev. Van Baren my questioner refers; perhaps it was the articles on the Father Groppi incident? But that makes no real difference; I agree with this evaluation and want to underscore it. First of all, there have been instances in which direct appeal was made to the doctrine of common grace as justification for some stand. Think, for example, of the Film Arts decision and of the devastating results of that decision for the Christian life. Today they even plead for the introduction of all the corruptions of the movie industry (even to films involving nudity) on the campus of Calvin College. And to what did the Film Arts decision appeal? Common grace’s restraint of sin. Or, to mention one more development, think of the involvement of the First Point of 1924 in the Dekker Case. My questioner himself makes mention of the A.A.C.S. And I think that organization itself would claim that they emphasize much more Kuyper’s idea of the antithesis than Kuyper’s common grace. And yet, the more I study what the A.A.C.S. produces and the more I study the Dooyeweerdian philosophy, the more convinced I become that the root of the problem is common grace. Nevertheless, let no one think that the maladies of common grace are limited to the A.A.C.S.-ers. Here is a thought to ponder: perhaps no one in the Christian Reformed Church can successfully combat the A.A.C.S. exactly because they all stand on the basis of common grace. Secondly, I would remind you that prophecies are being fulfilled. How often – if you go through their earlier writings – men like the late Revs. Herman Hoeksema and G.M. Ophoff (and, originally, the Rev. Henry Danhoff) predicted and warned that the common grace theory would have devastating results with respect to the antithetical walk of the Christian. And how often they warned that the consequence of the “well-meant offer” theory would be that some day someone would teach general atonement (as Prof. Harold Dekker did). Is it not striking, and does it not speak loudly to us, that these predictions are being fulfilled today? Thirdly, I would point you to the fact that also in the Netherlands the ideas of “*medemenselijkheid*” (co-humanity), horizontalism, social involvement, an anonymous “word of promise,” and a “latent kingdom of God”

among the non-church people in the world, – all these are the outgrowth and the development of common grace. Even the latest and most miserable decision in the Kuitert affair still made reference to the so-called good of the natural man. Is this not striking?

In the second place, I think investigation will show that “common grace” is not nearly so uncommon in other denominations as is sometimes imagined. We know, for example, that already at the time of the Synod of Dordrecht the Arminians held to common grace; in fact, the only time our confessions refer to common grace, it is put in the mouth of the Arminians. Besides, you will find many churches where the idea of common grace has long been present as a matter of traditional doctrine which no one exalted to confessional status or even to tremendously prominent status. It did not become a controversial issue. This does not mean, of course, that the idea did not bear fruits; it did so indeed, but in a more gradual and unnoticed manner. And the same is true of (related) Arminian ideas: they have often been present and borne their fruits without being matters of much controversy. This is true, for example, of many Presbyterian groups. This accounts in part also for the fact that the drift in doctrine and life in many of the other churches has been considerably more gradual.

In the third place, I believe that the explanation of the apparent difference to which you refer in your question lies in part in viewing these things in the light of broader trends and underlying principles of doctrine. If you look for a common denominator in all the drift in doctrine and life of our present age, then I would suggest that this is at least one common factor in all of it: a favorable, or optimistic, view of the fallen world and of the natural man. In other words, a denial of total depravity. This, you know, is the philosophy at the basis of the world’s welfare state. But it is also at the basis of social gospelism. Man and the world are good. Yes, there are problems. And there are some bad trends and bad habits. But the main problem is his environment. Clean up the slums. Get rid of the ghetto districts. Exorcize the devil of racial segregation. Put him on his feet financially. Give him an education. Get involved in social improvement. And you can build a good world of good men, and even bring in the kingdom of God! Church and world, light and darkness, believer and unbeliever, Christ and Belial can even cooperate. Out in the world there are even men (who do not articulate this in terms of the Christian faith) who are even interested in and working for the same kingdom of heaven for which we strive. And there is even an anonymous word of promise from God (whatever that may mean?) – some kind of favorable word and operation of God – which goes out to that world of men outside the church. Yes, believe it or not, this is the new theology! Do you not see that at the basis of all this is the old Pelagian notion of a good

man? And principally, this is also the man of common grace. Sin is restrained in him by the Holy Spirit. He is able to do good. He is the object of God's favor. (Along with that, God also well-meaningly offers him salvation, desires to save him — even though He has predestinated him to destruction, mind you!) You see, this is the principle. It is the age-old conflict: God? or man? Now different churches may have arrived at the wrong view of man in different ways and through different courses of development. But the underlying principle is the same. And, of course, when you see all this development in terms of God-or-man, then you can readily understand, too, that the more loudly the church begins to say "MAN" the more the age-old Reformed doctrines of sovereign grace and predestination and the antithesis are silenced.

But there is another aspect to all this. Why has the

decline been so terrifyingly rapid, both here and in the Netherlands? For after all, the over-all decline has taken place in approximately the last fifty years — roughly, since the end of World War I. And indeed, in the past decade or two the decline has been even more rapid! In fact, when one looks back over the past ten to fifteen years, the pace of the decline is simply frightening! Can we say anything about the reasons for this? I think we can. But this and some answers to the other questions must wait for the next issue.

I hope you will excuse me for the length of this little excursion into the history of doctrine. But the question raised is a pertinent one, the subject is close to my heart; and I did want to furnish a thorough reply. Till next time: think about it!

Contending for the Faith

The Doctrine of Atonement (Reformation Period)

THE SYNOD OF DORDT
THE CANONS

Rev. H. Veldman

In our preceding article we were calling attention to Article VI of the Rejection of Errors of Head II of the Canons. It may not be amiss to quote this article once more:

Who use the difference between meriting and appropriating, to the end that they may instill into the minds of the imprudent and inexperienced this teaching that God, as far as He is concerned, has been minded of applying to all equally the benefits gained by the death of Christ; but that, while some obtain the pardon of sins and eternal life, and others do not, this difference depends on their own free will, which joins itself to the grace that is offered without exception, and that it is not dependent on the special gift of mercy, which powerfully works in them, that they rather than others should appropriate unto themselves this grace. For these, while they feign that they present this distinction, in a sound sense, seek to instill into the people the destructive poison of the Pelagian errors.

In our last article we were calling attention to those designated by our fathers as imprudent and inexperienced. And the people of God must not be imprudent, incautious and inexperienced. This warning is all the more urgent because the Arminians are very clever and subtle. They feign to be reformed. They do

all within their power to leave the impression that they are doctrinally sound. And we concluded our last article by calling attention to the Three Points of 1924. These statements of 1924 are characterized by the same thing: the attempt to deceive the imprudent and inexperienced.

What is the error of the Arminians as exposed and set forth by our Reformed fathers in this sixth article of the Rejection of Errors of Head II of our Canons. We must notice that the Arminians speak of a difference between meriting and appropriating or applying. The fathers do not deny that there is a distinction between meriting and applying. That this distinction exists is obvious. It is certainly true that Christ merited for His people all the blessings of salvation when He died for them upon the cross of Calvary. And the God of our salvation applies all these gifts of salvation to His elect by the irresistible power of His grace and Spirit. We may, therefore, certainly distinguish between meriting and applying. The Arminian, however, did not merely distinguish between them, but he separated them. The meriting, we understand, was of God and by Christ. He could not very well deny that. In fact, he would maintain that God so loved the world that He gave His only

begotten Son. This was a work in which the Lord was engaged, all by Himself. The work of meriting is exclusively the Lord's. He could hardly deny that. After all, Christ was all alone when He suffered and died for His people — even His own disciples forsook Him and fled. However, when the Arminian speaks of "meriting," he is deceiving the imprudent and inexperienced. You see, really, he does not believe in this meriting at all. Christ, as far as the Arminian conception of the atonement is concerned, did not merit salvation when He suffered and died. Had He really merited salvation when He died upon the cross, then it would surely follow that all those for whom He merited this salvation would surely be saved. But this the Arminian did not believe, could not believe. We understand, he believed that Christ died for all men, head for head. This means that He also died for those who perish. Then it cannot be true that Christ merited salvation for them. According to Art. II of this Rejection of Errors, it was not the intention of the death of Christ that He should confirm the new covenant of grace through His blood, but only that He should acquire for the Father the mere right to establish with man such a covenant as He might please, whether of grace or of works. And according to Art. III, Christ by His satisfaction merited neither salvation itself for anyone, nor faith whereby this satisfaction of Christ unto salvation is effectually appropriated; but *that* He merited for the Father only the authority or the perfect will to deal again with man, and to prescribe new conditions as He might desire, obedience to which, however, depended on the free will of man, so that it therefore might have come to pass that either none or all should fulfil these conditions. So, when the Arminian or Remonstrant speaks of this meriting on the part of Christ, he is deceiving the simple, the incautious and inexperienced.

And, of course, he makes separation between this "meriting" and applying. God wills to bestow all the blessings of Christ upon all who hear the gospel. Grace, then, is offered to all by God without distinction. But whether anyone also actually receives grace, that depends upon man's own free will. This will of the sinner must join itself to the grace that is offered to all without distinction. This, according to the fathers, is the destructive poison of the Pelagian errors. This simply means that everything, in the final analysis, depends upon the free will of the sinner. What if God did all He could! What if Christ suffered and died upon the cross of Calvary! Neither God nor His Christ determines the salvation of a single sinner. Presently God has His gospel preached. In that preaching of the gospel salvation is offered to all without distinction. And man's salvation is dependent upon his acceptance of this offer. Everything revolves about the free will of the sinner. However, the Reformed presentation is that

the meriting as well as the application is all a matter of God's grace.

We would conclude our discussion of this article by calling attention to one more matter. This Arminian heresy can creep into the church in more than one way. The Remonstrant can instill into the minds of the people of God this Pelagian error by proclaiming it openly and boldly. But there is also another way by which the church of God is exposed to this pernicious heresy. And this other way can be terribly effective. We refer to the danger to which the church of God is exposed when the Arminian errors are silenced in the preaching and teaching in the church of God. The undersigned is convinced that this was the case at the time of the split in our churches in 1953. More and more, in those days, the emphasis was not laid upon the fundamental truths of the Word of God. Did we not hear in those days that man's responsibility must not be denied but proclaimed and emphasized? Did not people complain because of the emphasis upon God's decree of election? Divine election, the heart of the church, was more and more relegated to the background. Less and less the emphasis was laid upon the strictly divine and unilateral character of the promises of God which are Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus. O, it is true that errors were not necessarily proclaimed. What, however, happens when the emphasis is no longer laid upon the fundamental truths of the Word of God? This, that the church of God, particularly the young people and the children, are weaned away from these fundamental truths, become less and less accustomed to them. What a danger this is! People complain, then, because the preaching of the Word is too distinctive. They complain that all they hear is election. Of course, this charge is not true. It is simply not true that all they hear is election. They say that all that is necessary is that the preacher present the truth positively. He should not busy himself with calling attention to the various errors and corruptions of the truth. He must be positive, not distinctive. I pray that we may never cater to these sentiments. They are so dangerous! The result will be that the church of God will be lulled to sleep as far as the heretical departures from the Word of God are concerned. They will no longer be able to discern these devastating errors and corruptions. Their senses will be dulled! How important that our churches remain distinctive, not only in all our preaching and teaching, but also in all our societies! We can never be too vigilant. Besides, this is our calling. This is exactly what we have promised. We promised this as according to our Church Order, as stated in Art. 55, and we quote: "To ward off false doctrines and errors that multiply exceedingly through heretical writings, the ministers and elders shall use the means of teaching, or refutation, or warning, and of admonition, as well in

the ministry of the Word as in Christian teaching and family-visiting.” And then there is the liturgy of our churches. Think of the questions which are answered by our young people when they make public confession of their faith before the face of God and in the midst of the church! Or, think of the questions which are answered by our parents when they present their children for baptism! Do they not declare before the face of God and in the midst of the church that they will maintain the doctrine as taught in this Christian church and fight every heresy repugnant thereto? Or, what about our forms for the installation of ministers and elders and deacons? Do we not read in these forms that the church of God is likened to a sheepfold and that every effort must be put forth to keep the wolves out of the sheepfold? A wolf is a very dangerous animal. A wolf in sheep’s clothing is a doubly dangerous animal. The Saviour calls them ravenous wolves, desperately hungry wolves, desperately dangerous animals who are driven by the desire to devour the flock of God. And these ravenous animals are surely dangerous within the fold! In our installation forms the church of God is warned to watch over the church of God as the sheepfold of Christ and to put forth every effort to keep these devouring wolves out of the sheepfold. Remember, these heretical teachers are very clever and subtle! They feign themselves to be sound in doctrine, do all within their power to deceive the simple and imprudent and inexperienced. But, they are enemies of

the truth and of the church of God! And we do well to keep this ever in mind. The price we pay for not being vigilant is too great! We cannot afford to expose the sheep and the lambs to these heretical preachers and teachers. And, finally, does not the Word of God come to us with the same urgent warning? Are we not warned, in Matt. 7:15: “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves?” Do we not read of them that they prophesy in the name of the Lord, cast out devils in His name, perform many wonderful works in the name of Christ? Yet, the Saviour declares in this same passage of Matt. 7:21-23 that He will declare unto them in the day of days that He never knew them and that they are workers of iniquity. Does not the apostle Paul warn his spiritual son, Timothy, to preach the word, as in II Tim. 4:2, to be instant in season and out of season, to reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine? Does not the same apostle, in Eph. 4:14-15, exhort the church of God at Ephesus and the church of God throughout the ages: “That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive?” So, let us not only be positive, but also distinctive, never failing to warn the church of God against these winds of heresy and always alerting the people of God to their danger. That is our calling, also and particularly as Protestant Reformed Churches in our present day and age.

Taking Heed To The Doctrine

The Importance of the Preaching of God’s Word (2)

Rev. David Engelsma

Through the preaching, Christ saves the Church. The Reformation itself is one great instance of this in history. The Scriptures teach this in many places. For example, in Romans 1:15, 16, Paul says that he is ready to preach the Gospel everywhere, for he is not ashamed of the gospel. For it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. In I Corinthians 1:21, Paul says that it has pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save those that believe. Through the preaching, Christ saves the Church in several respects. First, by the preaching the elect of God are called powerfully by Christ, so that they are converted, repent, and believe. This is the teaching of Romans 10. It takes preaching in order to work faith.

That faith in turn leads to a calling upon God so that a man is saved. Secondly, by the preaching we are justified, that is, through the preaching we have our sins forgiven and we receive that righteousness which alone will give us a standing before God. Many know that the formula that expresses the very heart of the message of the Reformation is the word: “The just shall live by faith alone,” or “Justification by faith alone.” What is not so widely known is that the Reformation insisted that this justification by faith takes place through the preaching of the gospel. The Church forgives sins. The Church opens to men the Kingdom of Heaven, not by some power that the Church has, not by some arbitrary pronouncement of a

priest, but by preaching the gospel. The gospel justifies men, and the gospel opens the Kingdom of Heaven to men when they believe. This is Romans 1:17. In the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, "The just shall live by faith." Therefore, we have peace and comfort from the preaching. Apart from the preaching no man can have peace and no man does have peace. In the third place, by the preaching the people of God are sanctified, that is, by the preaching we are made holy, so that we shun evil works and perform good works. Christ Himself taught this in John 17, where He said in his prayer: "Sanctify them by thy truth: thy word is truth." This particular aspect of the work of the preaching includes the preserving of God's people even to the end. This is what the Lord emphasized in John 10, where he said that our following Him and our never perishing are due to our hearing His voice. He keeps us by His Word. All of this makes clear that the importance of the preaching is that it is essential for salvation. The Christian and the Church cannot live without the preaching of the Word.

Yet, the importance of the preaching of the Word is still greater. Through the preaching of the Word God is glorified. It was this consideration that impelled the Reformers and that drove those people that embraced the Reformation to continue faithful to the principles of the Reformation in the face of great opposition. The Reformation was a struggle. It involved the Protestant Christians in bitter suffering. It led to martyrdom. It was fraught with disappointments. There were times when the strongest wearied and when the most courageous cried out on the brink of despair, "Is it worth the cost, O, Lord?" Then they were motivated to continue, not only because of the pastoral love that they had for the sheep of God, who must be fed by the Word at all cost, but also because of their conviction that God must be glorified by the preaching. This above all drove the Reformers and the children of the Reformation to persevere. So necessary did Luther see the preaching to be in regard to the glory of God that he declared that although the preaching of the gospel would turn the whole world into an armed camp and cause the world to become a sea of blood, the gospel must be preached. God is praised by the gospel inasmuch as His glory is the ultimate goal of the salvation of the Church, which salvation is accomplished by preaching. God is praised by the preaching inasmuch as the message of the preaching is the greatness and the glory of God. The preaching proclaims the name of God, that name concerning which every Christian prays in the Lord's Prayer: "Hallowed be Thy Name." Not only is the message that is preached *from* God, but it is also *about* God.

Now, this message of the preaching, *what* is preached, is vital. Not only is it essential that there be

preaching, but it is also essential that the *Word of God* be preached, that the *truth* be preached. Christ does not speak in any and all preaching. The Church is not saved by any and all preaching. God is not honored by every address that claims to be preaching. So far is this from being true that the Scriptures warn us of a preaching that is not the voice of the shepherd, but the voice of wolves; of a preaching that does not gather and save the Church, but that scatters and destroys the Church; of a preaching that does not praise God, but that demeans and dishonors God. It does this even though it is found in the Church and even though it alleges to be preaching. It hardly demands to be proved that this is the case. The Scriptures are replete with warnings against false doctrine and false preaching. In Galatians 1, Paul speaks of another gospel that is no gospel and that must be repudiated. In I Timothy 2, he warns of words that are spoken in the Church that are like a canker and that overthrow the faith of some men, and he even names two heretical preachers, Hymeneus and Philetus, and names the false doctrine that they preach, a denial of the resurrection of the dead. In Acts 20, in his farewell address to the elders of the church at Ephesus, Paul warns of wolves that shall arise even out of their own number who shall speak perverse things and shall draw away men to be their disciples instead of being the disciples of Jesus Christ.

The Reformation opposed the form of the existing Church because of the fact that that Church preached another gospel than the apostolic Gospel. The Church at that time preached false doctrine. This was the cause of the Reformation. Our doctrinally indifferent and ignorant age cannot understand this. Our age does not understand that men would dare all — for doctrine. Our age does not understand that men would risk plunging the entire civilized world into turmoil — for doctrine. It does not understand that men would turn their backs on the imposing institute of a church that had existed for hundreds of years and that was vested with the pomp and authority of centuries — for doctrine. Our age does not understand that men would, in the words of Luther's famous hymn, "Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also" — for doctrine. Today, for many, many even who are nominally children of the Reformation, nothing is less important than doctrine. The most wicked heresies can flourish in the Church, and it leaves them untouched: denial of the infallible inspiration of the Bible; a message of the dependency of salvation upon men that would have made even that old hawker of indulgences, Tetzel, blush with embarrassment denial of the literal resurrection of Christ; the denial of a literal heaven and hell; and many, many more. This shows how far the Protestant churches by this time have fallen away from Christ and have departed from the truth of the Scriptures, the truth that they once knew and

confessed. But the Reformation took place because of false doctrine, and it was concerned centrally with sound doctrine. It was not mainly a matter of the abominable practices of the Roman Church at that time. These practices abounded and they were atrocious: the scandalous lives of the Popes and the other ecclesiastical leaders, the superstitious worship of relics, and many more evil practices. But as Calvin once wrote to Cardinal Sadolet: "there are many examples of cruelty, avarice, intemperance, arrogance, insolence, lust, and all sorts of wickedness, which are openly manifested by men of your order, but none of those things would have driven us to the attempt which we made under a much stronger necessity." What was that much stronger necessity that drove the Reformers to Reformation? Calvin continues: "That necessity was that the light of divine truth had been extinguished, the word of God buried!" The superficial view that prevails today that the Reformation took place only because of certain extreme abuses in the practice of the Roman Church is wrong. That superficial view fosters close co-operation with Rome, which is really impossible, and it is also leading many to an eventual return to the Roman Church. On the contrary, the Reformation was concerned with the truth of the gospel. The false teaching of the Roman Church in summary was this: man can and man must save himself. Salvation takes place by man's own works and effort. The error against which Luther battled already in the ninety-five theses was really the same error that Paul condemns in the entire epistle to the Galatians, the error that says that man can and man must do something, in addition to the work of Christ, to obtain the forgiveness of sins and a righteousness which is able to stand before God. That error was put into expression in the evil of indulgences in which men could buy forgiveness of sins for themselves and for their departed loved ones for money, but that gross evil was only the expression of a fundamental error in doctrine, the error of teaching that a man's salvation depends upon what he himself does, upon his choosing Christ by his own free will, and upon his own good works, which merit righteousness.

Over against this, the Reformation restored the true message of the preaching. What must be preached? The Scriptures must be preached. The Bible and the Bible alone must be the content of the preaching. The Scriptures are in their totality the Word of God to us. Besides them there is no Word of God, only words of men. The preaching is shut up to the Word of God and that means to the Scriptures. The Scriptures are the Word of God because they are inspired or, as II Timothy 3:16 literally states, "breathed forth of God." Because they are the inspired Word of God, the Scriptures are our only authority. This was denied by Rome, who placed the authority of the Church alongside the authority of the Scriptures, and this was

also denied by the anabaptists of that time, who disparaged and downgraded the Scriptures and exalted the Spirit and a certain inner revelation of the Spirit. But the Reformation insisted that the Scriptures are the only authority in the Church. Because it is the inspired Word of God, it is reliable in all its parts. It is trustworthy in everything that it teaches. Because it is the inspired word of God, Scripture determines the message of the preaching. The preaching may only explain and apply the Bible. This does not mean that it is sufficient to sit at home and read the Bible, for the Bible must be *preached*. Now, the message of the Bible and, therefore, the content of the preaching is this: God's gracious salvation of His people through Jesus Christ crucified and risen from the dead. What must be preached? The gospel of grace! There are certain basic elements of this gospel of grace to which I briefly direct your attention. First of all, an element of this message is that man, every man, is lost and ruined in sin. The preaching of the gospel exposes and condemns man as the sinner. Such is our ruin that we are totally depraved. We possess no good and no ability for good. We are inclined to all evil by nature, dead in trespasses and sins, as Paul says in Ephesians 2:1. We are lacking in a free will, an ability to choose salvation. We are, therefore, totally unable to save ourselves or to co-operate in God's salvation of us. Our plight by nature is still worse. We are exposed to God's wrath so that unless we are delivered by Christ we shall certainly perish in eternal hell. The second element of the gospel is the truth that the Holy Spirit raises the elect of God from their spiritual death by the power of almighty grace and gives us faith in our hearts, as we learn from Ephesians 2:8: By grace are ye saved through faith and even that faith is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. Thirdly, an element of the gospel is the truth of justification by faith alone, that is, the forgiveness of sins and righteousness with God only by believing in Jesus Christ. This is the very cornerstone of the gospel which is preached. We sinners need pardon, we need our guilt removed, we need a righteousness that will enable us to stand before the Holy God. Forgiveness and righteousness are in Jesus Christ. They become ours only through faith in him. By faith, the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us by God. Fourthly, the message of the gospel is the perfect satisfaction that Christ made for His people on Calvary's cross. That is the basis for the justification that we receive in the gospel. The message of the gospel is Christ and Him crucified. Christ by his suffering and death paid in full the debt that they owed to God in whose place He died. Because of His death, our punishment was completely borne away and none of it remains for us to suffer. Fifthly, an element of the gospel is the truth of eternal, sovereign, unconditional predestination. This is part of the message of the preaching. This is the fountain of all of

salvation! We are born again, we believe, we have the pardon of sins, Christ satisfied for our sins, because God eternally chose us in love. So Paul teaches in II Timothy 1:9: "God hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." What magnifies this grace is that God did not choose all, but reprobated some no worse than we are. In one word, the message of the gospel is grace! Therefore, the preaching is good news, gospel; therefore, it comforts despairing sinners; therefore, it glorifies God the Saviour; therefore, it also certainly causes the believers to be zealous for good works, to confess the truth, to suffer for Christ's sake, to understand their responsibilities, to obey God's law, to love and forgive each other — in gratitude for so great a salvation and so

marvelous a grace. This gospel, friends, never becomes outdated; it is never replaced by a new message for "modern men." This is a particularly silly and dangerous presumption of our age. We "modern men" think that we need a new gospel. That is the same as saying that we need a new Christ or that we need a new salvation. The Reformation would have been horrified to have been told that they were inventing a new message. The Reformation insisted that it only restored the old message of the apostles and the ancient Church. The need of us "modern men" is the need of the old gospel that is never new. We need to hear that we are sinners, unable to save ourselves; we need to hear of the great grace of God in Jesus Christ, the Redeemer; we need to hear our calling to live before His face in gratitude.

(to be concluded)

The Strength of Youth

Divorce and Remarriage (5)

Rev. J. Kortering

In our study of the Biblical teaching of divorce and remarriage, we have considered what God intended with marriage from the very beginning. We now consider what we can learn from the Old Testament period. This knowledge is important to this subject for two reasons.

First, it seems that during the Old Testament period, a great deal of leniency was manifested toward the sanctity of marriage. This was evident in two ways: the practice of polygamy and concubinage and the putting away of a wife that didn't please. Both of these practices would seem to contradict God's purpose of marriage as divinely instituted.

Secondly, the Jews of Jesus' day looked back at this "leniency" and used it to justify their own practice of divorce, see Matt. 19. If it was "all right" to have more than one wife or divorce one that didn't please a man in Old Testament times, why is this not allowed in the church today? We must consider these important questions as they relate to our understanding the Biblical teaching of divorce and remarriage.

GOD, THE HUSBAND OF ISRAEL

Basic to anything the Old Testament may have to say to us concerning marriage is the spiritual truth that God emphasized for His people during this time: viz., He was their husband and they were His wife. In principle, this was revealed to the patriarchs through

the practice of eating in connection with the making of a covenant, see Gen. 15. It was a sign of friendship, not only, but the intimate friendship of the home.

When Israel became a nation, this truth was brought forth to them more forcefully. The prophets spoke of this. God said, "For I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies," Hosea. 2:19. God informed Israel, "For thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called," Isa. 54:5. Because of this, should Israel fall into sin, they would make themselves guilty of spiritual adultery, "They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted? but thou has played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the Lord," Jeremiah 3:1.

This spiritual covenant of marriage was the prevailing influence on the life of Israel. This separated them from the other nations. It impressed upon Israel the spiritual direction of their whole life; they were consecrated unto Jehovah and their life had to show it. Jehovah was their husband!

PRINCIPLES FOR MARRIAGE IN ISRAEL

One practical application of this may be seen in the

influence this had on marriage. In trying to understand the attitude of the people of God toward marriage in Old Testament times, one encounters so much emphasis by commentators upon their having more than one wife and the practice of divorce that one gets the impression that this was so common that the average Israelite must have had a very low idea of marriage and love, that he could get rid of his wife if she so much as raised her voice against him. This however, is hardly the picture.

God specifically designated *His* relationship with Israel as a marital relationship to emphasize for them the sanctity of marriage. Surely, there were other relationships which described God's dealings with Israel, e.g. He was their King, He was their Father. Among such lofty concepts, God also emphasized He was their *husband*. This certainly impressed upon Israel the importance of the marriage relationship. Their earthly marriage was to reflect this divine marriage.

There is plenty of evidence in the Old Testament that this happened. Consider how Abraham sought a wife for Isaac, not from the daughters of the land, but from his own seed, Gen. 24. He wanted Isaac to "marry in the Lord." Similarly, Samson's parents were concerned when he asked them to arrange his marriage with a Philistine, "Then his father and his mother said unto him, Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines?" Judges 14:3. Then it is added as an explanation that they didn't understand that the Lord intended this as occasion to attack the Philistines. Certainly, the laws of God given at Sinai emphasized God's will to guard the sanctity of marriage. Think of the explicit laws for sexual purity of Lev. 18-20. Adultery was forbidden, Lev. 18:20, and even the death penalty was fixed upon the violator, Deut. 22:25,26, Lev. 20:10. God even prescribed a test for determining guilt, to satisfy the jealous husband, Numbers 5:18ff. Add to this the fact that the prophet exhorted Israel to "separate yourselves from the people of the land, and from the strange wives," Ezra 10:11.

In the daily life of Israel, effort was made to conform their marriages according to the lofty standards God had set forth in His marriage to them.

MOSES SUFFERED

When the Pharisees came to Christ and tried to get Him to take sides in their dispute over the proper grounds for divorce, Christ said, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, suffered you to put away your wives, but from the beginning it was not so," Matt. 19:8. How could Moses "suffer" this? This has a direct bearing upon our question, why could Israel practice polygamy and we can't?

The clue to this idea of "suffer" may be found in Gal. 4:3,9, "Even so we, when we were children, were

in bondage under the elements of the world; But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?"

The point that Paul is making in helping the Galatians to understand the role of the law as it applied to Israel, and how that had bearing on the whole life of Israel, is this: Israel was a child. After the creation, man fell into sin. The inner workings of grace had their beginning in Israel during the Old Testament times. Spiritually, they were children, they had a great deal of growing up to do. God gave the law of types and ceremonies to assist them as object lessons for children. As children, they also had much "hardness of heart," Matt. 19:8. They acted childish and consequently brought themselves into bondage, Gal. 4:3. In their spiritual childishness, they often looked at the other nations and wanted to be like them, I Sam. 8:5. They wanted to have the pleasures of sin as the heathen enjoyed, as at Sinai, Exodus 32. This also applied to their attitude toward marriage.

When does the change to maturity come? According to Gal. 4:9, it comes with the presence of the Holy Spirit of Christ to liberate us from the law of bondage and elevate us into the liberty wherewith Christ sets us free. The people of God today are more spiritually mature, not because they are inherently better, but because Christ has given His Spirit to the church, and His presence makes the difference. This maturity will become perfect when we finally arise beyond the present life into the perfect glory of God in heavenly splendor.

Keeping this in mind, we are able to evaluate the Old Testament times. God "suffered" with His people much like parents have to "suffer" with their slowly maturing children. There are certain things which are forbidden, some things are tolerated, and parents need the sanctified wisdom to distinguish which is which. God practiced this wisdom with Israel.

Take polygamy and concubinage. God forbade adultery in every form. Yet, we do not expressly read that God forbade his saints in certain instances to take more than one wife, e.g. Jacob. This does not mean that God approved and blessed it; He suffered it. In most instances the practical consequence of this sin brought much heartache and pain in the lives of the patriarchs. God let them learn the hard way of experience. He was dealing with them as children.

We must apply this same thing to Deut. 24:1-4. In trying to understand this passage (look it up) we consider the following:

First, God did not instruct a man who was married and had a wife in whom he did not continue to find favor (because he had found some uncleanness in her) to put her away and give her a writing of divorcement.

Calvin correctly points out, "Some interpreters do not read these verses continuously, but suppose the sense to be complete at the end of the first, wherein the husband testified that he divorces his wife for no offense, but because her beauty does not satisfy his lust. If however, we give more close attention, we shall see that it is only one provision of the law, viz., that when a man had divorced his wife, it is not lawful for him to marry her again if she have married another. The reason of the law is, that by prostituting his wife, he would be, as far as in him lay, acting like a procurer. In this view, it is said that she was defiled, because he had contaminated her body, for the liberty which he gave her could not abolish the first institution of God, but rather, as Christ teaches, gave cause for adultery (Matt. 5:31, Matt. 19:9). Thus the Israelites were reminded that although they divorced their wives with impunity, still this license was by no means excused before God," Commentary on Deut. 28. What the law forbade was the remarriage of a couple once divorced.

Secondly, Moses suffered this divorce. Here, too, we must not imagine that Moses suffered more than God did. That is not the idea of Christ in Matt. 19:8. God suffered this practice in Israel and therefore Moses suffered it. The law simply recognized a thing that was practiced in a limited way in Israel; only God placed this restraint upon it, that if a husband thus put his wife away, he might not imagine that he could ever have her back again if she remarried. This was forbidden in the law of Deut. 24. The priests were also forbidden to marry such a divorced person, a clear indication of God's rejection of such a thing, Lev. 21:7. The Levites were to be examples of holiness, and therefore they could have nothing to do with such a "putting away."

INSTRUCTION FOR THE GROWN UP CHURCH

Viewing the events in Israel from this point of view,

we certainly must not look at them and envy them in their polygamy or divorce. This is exactly the opposite point of view of Christ in the New Testament. Christ answered the Pharisees who had come to Him asking Him for what grounds they might put away their wives, whether for adultery alone or every cause. His answer was that they might not put their wives away for any cause, Matt. 19:6. This answer surprised them and they asked what about Moses and the law of the Old Testament. Jesus referred them to the beginning and said, from the beginning it was not so. How could He say that? Because He was instructing the grown up church. He was about to redeem them from the curse of the law and pour out the Holy Spirit upon them. No wonder the disciples reacted and said, who then would want to get married if divorce is only for adultery and remarriage is out? Jesus said, "For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb; and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men, and there be eunuchs which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it let him receive it," Matt. 19:11,12.

God created marriage as an institution within which He reveals Himself as the covenant God. Sin affected this, and during the Old Testament times, God suffered with His infant church, bearing with their hardness of heart. Now, this is different and the church today has the privilege to live within the sanctity of marriage in the highest possible way, even as God intended with creation. In Christ, we are renewed in the image of God and by our marriage to Him, possess power to do that which by nature is impossible, live holily within marriage and never forsake the marriage partner, so long as both shall live. This is not bondage; it is freedom. We will examine this next time D.V.

The Day of Shadows

Every....Only....Continually

Rev. John A. Heys

Men strive for mastery. But God IS King.

When men strive, one must always be defeated. Both in a conflict cannot win. And even when they fight to a standstill, or there is a tie, a draw, then there still is failure. The man who attacked did not attain to his goal; and the man attacked failed to destroy his adversary. But God *is* King, and He does not strive

either to be king, or to maintain Himself as king. Nor is He caused any distress to any degree.

God has enemies. He has those who hate Him and fight against Him. He has those who say that He is dead, and who want Him dead. But God does not strive as men strive. He does not have enemies as men have enemies, and God, as the Almighty, is never hurt by

those who attack Him. His enemies have no strength apart from him. In Him they live and move and have all their being. And though, according to His own sovereign, eternal counsel, men do deeds which displease Him, they never hurt or embarrass Him, or even for a moment frustrate Him. They give Him not the slightest moment of worry. That is why Paul in his epistle to the Philippians can speak of the peace of God that passeth all understanding. For God constantly not only has perfect peace in Himself, as a triune God, but He has perfect peace of mind in regard to all that which takes place in the world. He planned it all. And as the Almighty He is constantly executing that plan without frustration or delay, without being forced to change that plan, or to be one split second behind in the execution of the smallest detail in that plan.

All this we had better bear in mind when we read in Genesis 6:3 and 5, "And the Lord said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh; yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years. And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

There are three elements in particular that we should note here. The Spirit of God is said to be striving with man. God declares that His Spirit will not always do so, and at the end of one hundred twenty years He will bring an end to man's days. The evil of man is pictured as being so great that *every* imagination of the thoughts of his heart are *only* evil *continually*. Thus, to state it differently, we have the three elements of the Spirit striving, the Spirit ceasing to strive, and a thoroughly corrupt man with whom that Spirit has been striving and with whom that striving will at a set time come to an end.

Two interesting questions arise. What did the Spirit strive to do? Was He for one hundred twenty years striving to convert the world before the flood, and did He succeed only in having the mastery over eight souls? Or was He by a certain "common grace" seeking only in "the individual and in the community" and that "without renewing the heart" to restrain "the unimpeded breaking out of sin, by which human life in society remains possible?" The other question is, "Did God find, *after* the Spirit had been striving for some time, that NOW every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart were only evil continually? It was not so the moment that Adam fell, and depravity is total in the sense that it is carried down to every human being, but it is not absolute in that there is still by that "common grace" and by striving of the Spirit some glimmerings of *natural* light that enable man to do some *spiritual* good?" For make no mistake about it, when you speak of "civil *righteousness*," you are speaking of that which is spiritually good, that which is right in *God's sight and judgment*. It is that which He

says is right according to His law. It is then a deed which contains in it love towards God. For the whole law is summed up in one word: that we love God. Anything less than this God does not call righteousness. He does say of Jehu that he did *well*, for he did all that which God commanded him to do to the house of Ahab. And in that sense it can also be said that the devil did well in that he did nothing more to Job than that which God said he might do to him. But at once Scripture declares in the very next verse that "Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart: for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, which made Israel to sin." II Kings 10:30,31.

It ought to be evident to anyone who will approach the matter with an open mind that if Genesis 6:3 means that the Spirit strove to convert men, He failed miserably. And we have to go back and rewrite our first few lines, and confess that God can be defeated. O, He gains a little bit. It is not an utter disaster and complete rout. He manages to convert one man and his family. But the vast majority have frustrated Him and made it necessary for Him now to drop the bomb of the flood to save His face and to escape unspeakable shame, both before these men and the fallen as well as righteous angel world, who likewise witness the up-to-that moment defeat.

It ought also, then, to be evident that if the Spirit were striving only by a "common grace" to restrain "the unimpeded breaking out of sin" so that "human life in society remains possible," this "common grace" was a total failure, and today likewise reveals itself wholly inadequate to stem the rising tide of crime, even in our streets, and of lawlessness and disorder. There seems to be something about that "common grace" that, although it seems to work for a while, it suffers severe defeat at the polls of man's choosing. It failed at the time of the flood. It is failing today; and bigger and bigger sections of our cities become dangerous even in broad daylight. It cannot cope with the growing drug addiction. It has failed to stem the desire to kill the helpless infant before it is born, while with crocodile tears men cry of the thousands of women and children killed in the path of war. That, too, shows that *every* imagination of the thoughts of man's heart, as he is by nature, is *only* evil *continually*. Killing by war is brutal, that heart of man says, but killing the defenseless babe, before it has seen the light of day, is one of the advancements of our civilization whereby we are improving our society.

The other truth is that Scripture makes very clear here that the doctrine of total depravity is a doctrine of absolute depravity. And after all, to try to distinguish between a total and an absolute depravity is quibbling with words, and against this Paul warns Timothy when he says, "Strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers." II

Timothy 2:14. There is nothing relative in this *every . . . only . . . continually* of Genesis 6:5. Men subvert their hearers when they try to teach a total depravity which simply means that every man is depraved, but every man is not completely corrupt. It is not, we insist, a case of every apple being spotted, but of every apple being thoroughly corrupt. Read it once! Every imagination of the thoughts of the heart — that gets down to the heart of the matter, does it not? — is only evil and that continually. And not every man, but every imagination of the thought of his heart is evil. Not most of these imaginations of his heart are evil, but every one. His heart is only evil. The Hebrew word is an adverb of limitation and restriction. There is nothing relative in it. The “every” is so all-inclusive that it excludes no imagination of the thought of man’s heart. The “only” is restrictive declaring that you will not find any imagination in that heart that is anything but evil. It declares that a righteous imagination of the thoughts of the heart cannot be found therein, its actions are restricted only to those of imagination of its thoughts that are evil. The “continually” indicates that this is a constant process. Not for certain periods of time, not at certain moments are the imaginations of the thoughts of man’s heart evil so that only these are found therein, but always, at any given moment you will find in the natural heart every imagination to be evil, and to be nothing but evil.

This is not something the Spirit found *after* striving with man. This is what happened to man the moment he fell in Adam. We come into this world that way. And as history unfolds, man receives more and more opportunity to develop in sin, driven by his evil nature and the leadership of Satan. Every imagination is evil, and his heart never beats even once with the desire to love and serve God. But even as a poisonous plant that — as the poison ivy, for example — can only make life miserable for man by its touch, can grow from a small plant which does not reach above your shoe line to one so big that you are sure to be touched and to be poisoned when once again you walk that same way, so evil men with evil natures not only grow themselves in their own personal sins, but coming in contact with other sinners, develop in their combined efforts to defy God and to seek to rob Him of His glory. There comes a time, then, when the measure of iniquity is full, and God comes to destroy, not because He has to come with something stronger to maintain Himself over against an enemy growing more and more powerful, and becoming more of a threat to God himself, but because they have reached the point He decreed, to come to the line which He has drawn as to where and when He will show them that all along He is King.

The Spirit strove through the preaching of Noah. And He strove not in the sense of seeking either to

convert that world that in one hundred twenty years would be destroyed by the flood, nor to restrain their sin in order to make life possible for these wicked, whose lives God is going to take away after those one hundred twenty years. Had either been the aim of that striving, the world would, to the last man, have been converted, and it would not have been said that “every imagination of the thoughts of man’s heart was only evil continually.” There would instead of a flood have been the most wonderful reformation this world ever saw.

The Spirit testified to these ungodly through Noah, and before that through Enoch. He opposed their wickedness by the preaching of the Word. There was no unsuccessful attempt to convert them, or to restrain them from further development in sin, but it was to leave a witness concerning Himself that He is God. Over against the ungodly speeches which they ungodly spoke, He spoke to them of His sovereignty and their calling to serve and love Him.

And the “always” in “My Spirit shall not always strive” simply means that God is going to bring an end to *this* witness by the preaching which His Spirit gave Enoch and Noah to proclaim, and instead He is going to witness in a different way. He is not going to cease striving in the sense of bringing an end to the testimony that He is God and must be obeyed. He is going to do it in a different way, not by words but by the work of the flood. And thus, instead of being an act of God’s grace to these ungodly, it is an act of wrath when God strives by His Spirit with man. And the evidence is that His new way of striving, namely, with that terrible flood, reveals His attitude also in the striving by the Word. It was His declaration of His righteous indignation and unchangeable intention to destroy the wicked.

In this He succeeded, for He destroyed every last one of those who would seek no refuge in Christ and His cross, would have nothing to do with the ark and the building of it. Nor do we read that either Enoch or Noah urged these ungodly to come into the ark. The Spirit strove with a preaching of judgment upon the evil doers.



All Around Us

Some Thoughts On Being Led By The Spirit

Prof. H. Hanko

There are a number of similar expressions which are appearing with increased frequency in the religious press. Sadly enough, they are, as often as not, found on the lips of conservatives; i.e., those who are generally reckoned with the conservative side of religion as ever against liberals. These expressions sound rather pious and leave a good impression in the minds of many as to the orthodoxy of the one who uses them. They are, I have noticed, having a considerable effect also upon people in general, for I have heard the expression (or some form of it) from the lips of various people on more than one occasion. Yet it is all a matter of no little concern.

The expressions to which I refer go something like this: "I am waiting for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in this matter." "I am ready to follow the leadership of the Spirit." "The Spirit has laid upon my heart to . . ."

"The Spirit must show us the way in this matter." "Let us pray for the direction of the Spirit." You must have heard or read such expressions. Or similar ones. All have this in common: they speak of living and making decisions by means of the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

This sounds very pious and seems to give indication of a strong spiritual life.

In a recent Church paper, another aspect of this whole matter was discussed. The author of an article was speaking of "sins against the Holy Spirit." He claimed that there were two ways in which one could sin against the Spirit. One such way was to claim that social activism is really the work of the Spirit. One sins, then, when one ascribes certain works to the Spirit (such as the Viet Cong offensive in Viet Nam, the efforts of blacks to gain equal rights, women's liberation movements, etc.) which are not the fruit of the Spirit at all. But there is another way to sin against the Spirit. This is to *deny* the presence of the Spirit in movements where the Spirit is obviously working. When one denies that the Jesus Movement, Explo 72, Billy Graham crusades, Pentecostalism, etc. are not the works of the Spirit, when one sins against the Spirit also — in the same way that the liberal sins against the Spirit when he claims for the Spirit work which the Spirit never does.

Generally speaking, when one talks about being guided by the Spirit or being led by the Spirit or waiting for the Spirit to show the way, he is speaking

of a particular problem which he faces. I have, for example, read this expression in connection with people who are trying to make up their minds whether or not they should leave a denomination which is obviously going the way to false doctrine. They stay in their denomination, but speak of waiting for the Spirit to show them what they ought to do. I have heard the same expression used repeatedly in connection with a great deal of present-day liturgical renewal. We must, so it is said, give the Spirit free rein in our worship services. We must liberate the Spirit, for the Church has too long shackled the Spirit in stereotyped forms of worship. Again, the expression is used sometimes in support of Evangelism Thrust Programs in various churches where people are urged to alter radically the whole political structure of the Church so as to give the Spirit more room to operate. Only then will the gospel be made effective and have a liberating influence on the communities about us. We are then reminded that the Spirit is like the wind "which bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth." John 3:8.

This sort of thing troubles me greatly. And there are, it seems to me, insuperable problems with it all. I may, e.g., think and claim that the Spirit tells me to remain in an apostatizing denomination for a while yet. But my brother who belongs to the same congregation and is as determined to maintain the truth as I am, informs me that the Spirit tells him the time has come to leave and seek the pure preaching of the Word. Who has the Spirit? Dare I tell him that he is mistaking the leadership of the Spirit for some devilish influences of one sort or another? And what if he tells me that I am not being led by the Spirit in my decision to stay, but am doing so out of ulterior motives? Who is to know? Who can tell?

Nor will it do simply to make the whole matter a question of conscience; for every man's conscience will say something different. And one is reduced to concluding that it is impossible to tell how or where the Spirit works, and impossible to know if the Spirit is working at all. Even if the Spirit operates as the wind, does this mean then that we can never decide with any certainty where the Spirit is to be found? It all seems to me to lead into the morass of spiritual and theological subjectivism and a kind of moral

agnosticism so that, with respect to central questions of our calling, we have no way of determining with certainty what the Spirit has to say and where He is leading.

This is, if carried out to its extreme, a hopeless situation.

There is an answer to all of this. That answer is a principle which has been cherished by Churches of the Reformation ever since the beginnings of the 17th century when the Reformers set forth their views on this matter. And that answer is simply this: the Scriptures are the only rule for faith *and* life. We have given to us of God the objective standard of the Scriptures. That is God's Word to us which covers all our life and calling. It is something which every one can understand. It is a rule and canon for us in our life. It is given as a lamp unto our feet and a light upon our path. It always shows the way.

Indeed, the Spirit operates in the hearts of God's people in such a way that He leads them and guides them. Paul even speaks in Rom. 8:14 of the fact that "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." But it is a firm truth which must be maintained and defended, that there is never any guidance of the Spirit apart from that Word. The Spirit always and only works in connection with that Word — never apart from it. There is direction given by the Spirit in the hearts and lives of the people of God indeed. But this can never be a testimony of the Spirit divorced from the objective testimony of the Scriptures. When the work of the Spirit is isolated in this way from the Scriptures, there is no work of the Spirit at all; and man falls prey to his own personal desires, wild imaginations and deceptive heart. The Spirit works in connection with the preaching of the Word above all. He renews, enlightens, restores, and applies that Word. But, when a believer subjects himself to the Scriptures and bows humbly before the Word of God, then, even in his personal life, he may expect that the Spirit will speak to him directing him in his life's pathway and calling, but always by pointing him to specific teachings of the Scriptures. There is no inner light, no subjective revelation, no personal insight which the Spirit gives which is apart from those Scriptures. They are a firm rock to which our life must be moored. When the Spirit tells us what the Scriptures say, then, and then only, do we know that we are on safe ground.

When someone claims, therefore, to remain in an apostatizing denomination which cannot be recalled to the ways of truth and righteousness; when he knows that a faithful witness to the truth can be carried on only by way of separation, then he may be sure that the Spirit does not tell him to remain for a while. And he must not talk about waiting for the direction of the Spirit in this matter.

When a man is intent on liberating the Spirit (it seems strange to me how a man who is committed to faith in the sovereign work of the Spirit can speak of "liberating" the Spirit) by means of liturgical renewal and alterations in ecclesiastical structures for the sake of various evangelistic programs such as Explo 72 or Key '73, then he had better first go to the Word of God and bow before it and discover for himself what Scripture requires concerning the institutional structure of the Church and concerning principles of the worship of God and concerning evangelistic programs. If he so fervently wants the leading of the Spirit, the Spirit will soon enough show him that this sort of thing is contrary to God's Word, and that the Spirit will never work in such ways. In fact, if he persists, he is not liberating the Spirit or following the Spirit, but defying the Spirit and going his own boastful and proud way in the face of what the Spirit has said in God's Word. We must, John tells us in his first epistle, try the spirits to see whether they be of God. There are many spirits around today which are called the Holy Spirit. The Word of God will tell. It will tell to any one who will listen. It will tell to anyone who is enlightened by the Spirit. Paul speaks precisely of all this in I Corinthians 2:10-16, a passage which is precisely in the context of his preaching the Word of God to the Corinthians. He writes: "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we may know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ."

I am, of course, aware of the fact that there are specific problems of life which are not specifically revealed to us in Scripture. I refer, e.g., to the fact that a young man may, in his High School years, believe that he is called to be a minister of the gospel. He will probably talk the matter over with his parents and his pastor; and they will, if they are Godly people, tell him that he must seek to know the will of God in this matter. He may, I presume, be urged to follow the guidance of the Spirit to seek a resolution of his problem. He will very quickly assure us all that there is no specific passage in Scripture which has his name in it and which objectively points out that he is called to

the ministry. And there are more problems like this in life. What then? Do we not have a case here where, in specific matters, the guidance of the Spirit is apart from the objective testimony of the Word of God?

No, even this will never do. In the first place, the whole decision is made within the context of the Scriptures which speak of the fact that men of God within the Church are called by God to be ambassadors of Christ in preaching the Word. And this is important and must not be underestimated. In the second place, such a young man must make his decision prayerfully and carefully seeking to know the will of God by an objective consideration of many different circumstances. The Lord must give him the gifts and talents to do this work. The Lord must give him a love for the ministry and a desire to study. The Lord must open the way for him to go to school for many years. These things and many more are objective evidences of the Lord's will. But even then, when everything else is said and done, no man is called to the ministry until he has finally received such an objective call from the Church of Christ itself. He must answer, when he is ordained, that he believes he is called by Christ's Church and therefore by Christ Himself.

And so it is in all of life.

The history of the Church of Christ is a history replete with examples of efforts made on the part of wicked men to drag the Church and believers away from the objective standard of the Word of God. Every heresy is an attempt to do this. Every perversion of

doctrine and life has this as its evil source. But if one abandons the objective standard of the Word of God (and history shows how true this is), one has really only two alternatives. The one is to set up the standard of reason as the final arbiter of matters of life. This is rationalism; and the evidence is clear that the Church has had her share of rationalists over the centuries. The other alternative is to set up the feelings, the emotions, inner convictions as a standard of the truth and of life. This has been historically pietism or mysticism, or, as it can properly be called in our day, Neo-Pentecostalism. Those are the only two real alternatives there are. Forsaking the Scriptures, one must fall back on reason or inner light. But both are essentially the same — at least in this respect, that they make man himself the final judge of truth and right — whether it be man's mind or man's inner feelings. And both are subjectivism. And both are hopeless.

There are many who would vehemently disavow any tendencies towards Neo-Pentecostalism in their lives. Yet they repeatedly speak of the guidance of the Spirit as divorced from the Scriptures, and become, to the confusion of all, Pentecostals in fact. They may not speak in tongues; and they may not believe in faith healing. But when they divorce themselves from God's Word, they fall into the same deadly trap.

Let us, then, be led by the Spirit; for we are the sons of God. But let us be very, very sure that we know and understand that the leadership of the Spirit comes through the shining light of the Scriptures, the Word of God.

Studies in Election

Its Proclamation

Rev. Robt. C. Harbach

How often, when it is pointed out that predestination is so deeply imbedded in Scripture, you meet with, not a denial of this fact, but an appeal to the "foreknowledge" -of-God argument. The argument, of course, is that God has foreknowledge or foresight of who will repent of their sins and believe in the Lord as Savior. He then chooses those He so foresees to salvation. This is actually a remnant of Roman Catholic doctrine, with its idea of human merit. Grace is not free, election is not sovereign, but bound by the decision of man. This is the humanistic teaching that in God's prevision there is something good to be seen in man. But, actually, what God does

foresee in man is nothing good. No man could be chosen for a good God sees in him simply because there is no good in him to be seen. He is by nature dead in sins, and in his flesh there is no good thing. Besides, God's purpose is not based on His foreknowledge, but just the reverse, as a comparison of Romans 8, verse 28 with verse 29 will show, God's foreknowledge is founded on His purpose. God foreknows only what He has foreordained. There is nothing else to foreknow. God cannot foreknow without foreordaining. His foreknowledge takes in only what He has decreed shall come to pass. Foreknowledge is therefore based upon the eternal

counsel of God, that is, the order of Scripture has it, first, His counsel, then foreknowledge. "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23). Nor can anyone show from Scripture that God chooses a man on foreknowledge of his repentance, faith, or any other good in him. Foreknowledge is always of *persons*, never of works or qualities. Scripture says, "*whom* He did foreknow," not *what* He did foreknow. But even so, we have not yet come to the real meaning of the term foreknowledge as it is found and used in Scripture. The meaning is always that of love, in the sense of, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee" (Jer. 31:3). That the word *know*, in this connection, means from all eternity a divine *love* is proved plainly by comparison of, "the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, 'The Lord *knoweth* them that are His'" (II Tim. 2:19) with "then will I profess unto them, 'I never *knew* you'" (Matt. 7:23). The Lord is omniscient; He "*knoweth* all things" (John 21:17) and everybody. But He doesn't love everybody. (Compare Prov. 8:17a with Psalm 5:5-6).

Equally as often you will hear the appeal to "whosoever will may come." True; but how does the *dead* sinner, a "whosoever won't" by nature, become a "whosoever will?" Where does he get the willingness to respond to such a gracious call? The natural man is an unwilling being. He will not come to the Lord (John 5:40), nor can he (6:44), until he is made willing to come (Ps. 110:3). Then, in that manner, all the elect surely shall come to Christ (John 6:37), by the power of irresistible grace ("Tis grace has brought me safe thus far, And grace will lead me home!"), and this grace is sufficient (II Cor. 12:9) without any help from man. Grace makes a member of Christ what he is, not his co-operation or "decision" (I Cor. 15:10). Grace is everything; and only where grace is everything is there a gospel at all.

It was so with the children of Israel at the Red Sea. They were in a desperate plight. The sea was against them. So was the land; they were both at its end and at wit's end. The world-dominating nation of the time was against them. There was no place to go, no place to hide. What, under such circumstances, would be "good news" to them? That God made *provision* for their salvation? made *possible* their salvation? No, hardly that. They needed more than that to have *good* news. They needed the announcement and promise, which was anon given them (Ex. 14:13, 14), that God had made *certain* their deliverance! Grace not only provides and proclaims salvation; it also produces it. It does so in such a way that the Dagon of free will falls flat on its face, that the deliverance may be of God alone. Crammed up against the Red Sea as they were, Israel saw in those insurmountable waters the

drowning of all human helps and hopes. They learned in that never-to-be-forgotten experience that grace is "to him that worketh not," for it is God who worketh to will and to do of His good pleasure (Rom. 4:5; Phil. 2:13).

There can be no place for "the praise of the glory of His grace" if sovereign, unconditional election be not preached. For then too much is made of man. He is upheld as having before God some good or some ability in him. This is held despite the fact that Arminians maintain that they also believe the total depravity of man. They do, indeed, even rather widely, profess the doctrine. Yet they contradict it with their constant harping on man's ability to do good. In their theological text books there may be found a rather lengthy chapter where total depravity is avowed and proved from Scripture. But then the very next chapter may be on the Free Moral Agency of Man, where total depravity is denied in the insistence that man is free to will both right and wrong. To speak, then, of "total depravity" is to use theological terminology, which, like the vocabulary of the parrot, is not understood; nor is it believed in its gravest implications. The natural man is no more free unto good than a worm is to fly.

One blessed effect of the preaching of the doctrine of election is that it teaches us to "have no confidence in the flesh" (Phil. 3:3), but to abase the pride of man. Where one denies or neglects the doctrine of election, there is one who, to some degree, rests on the power of man. That one who thinks that one may be saved without election surely must believe there is something of man in the effecting of salvation. Such a person must believe that he does contribute something of his own to his salvation, in spite of the strongest denials to the contrary. He who supposes he has in the power of his will but the smallest contribution to make to his salvation is a Mr. Carnal Security. To that extent he trusts in himself and is not yet really humbled before God. Then the thing formed says to the Former, "I made myself to differ."

Modern day mass evangelism boasts of its crusades for souls, and of its converts on an average of three thousand souls a campaign, somewhat better than Peter and Pentecost! The converts of such campaigns are supposed to have been converted to Christ and Christianity, and that by a "decision" made to accept Christ as Savior. Now if a "convert" will honestly examine himself, searching for the marks of God's elect, he may find his conversion a counterfeit, since it is based on nothing more than his "deciding for Christ." If he cannot find his conversion resting on that work of grace which we call regeneration, but rather supposes that his regeneration stems from his conversion, then no matter how strongly he denies it, he has some confidence in the flesh. If he feels he had the right to become a son of God because he "accepted Christ" and believed on His name (a misunderstanding

of John 1:12, 13), and not first because he was predestinated to the adoption of sons (Eph. 1:5), and then was born, not of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man, but of God, he still attributes something of man to the matter of his salvation. If that is the way he was saved, his conversion came by enticing words of man's wisdom, and his faith stands in the wisdom of men, not in the power of God. Then he has merely a natural faith, sufficient to trust only in a human object, and lacks the supernatural gift of saving faith to trust in the supernatural Christ. Such a "convert," slanted away from the truth of election as he was under the ministry of "decisionism" and "only-believism," has not only been robbed of the heart of the gospel, but has from the outset been prejudiced against the truth of salvation by grace only. He doesn't want a salvation, including his faith and his believing, which is a matter of Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus. He wants a "yes, but" salvation — "Yes, but I put my trust in Him" As to the truth of, "*what* hast thou that thou didst not receive?" (I Cor. 4:7), he has not yet "arrived"!

The true convert to Christ wants his faith to be "the faith of God's elect" (Tit. 1:1). He wants evidence in himself that he is wheat distinguished from chaff. It was John Gill who wrote, "There are some persons who are styled *the elect of God*; these are not all men;

some are vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, ungodly men, foreordained to condemnation, and given up to believe a lie, that they might be damned...but these are some of both Jews and Gentiles, some of every kindred, tongue, people and nation; these were chosen in Christ from eternity, and are the peculiar objects of the affection and care of God, whom He calls, justifies and glorifies: and there is a special *faith* that belongs to these, which is a spiritual looking to Christ, a going to Him, a laying hold and leaning on Him, and trusting in Him for salvation; and this faith is peculiar to the elect of God; all men have it not, and those that have it, have it through the free gift of God; nor is it given to any but the chosen ones." In days to come, it will be evident that much modern mass evangelism regards as gold, silver and precious stones is nothing but wood, hay and stubble. Salvation is not something separate from the knowledge of the truth (I Tim. 2:4). Truth is that we were chosen to salvation (II Thes. 2:13) and to know our election (I Thes. 1:4). The truth of election covers the whole of Scripture as the cedars of Lebanon cover the wooded mountain with an enormous forest. To fail to see, or refuse to see, the truth of election is then to fail to see the forest for the trees.

(To be concluded)

Book Review

The Philistines And The Old Testament

THE PHILISTINES AND THE OLD TESTAMENT, by Edward E. Hindson; Baker Book House, 1972; 184 pp., \$3.95 (paper). Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko.

This interesting and valuable book is part of "Baker Studies in Biblical Archaeology." It is divided into four sections: 1) Historical Background, 2) Philistine Religion and Practices, 3) The Philistines and Archaeology, 4) The Philistines in the Bible. While there is considerable technical material in Sections 2 and 3, Sections 1 and 4 are extremely interesting and valuable. The book would be of considerable aid to understand the Philistines for anyone who is teaching Bible either in the Christian Schools or in Catechism classes. The value of the book is also enhanced by a large number of illustrations and maps and by an extensive bibliography.

The Hope Protestant Reformed School of Redlands, California, has need of a Principal (Grades 5 thru 9) and a teacher (grades 1 thru 4) for the school term 1973-74. All interested Protestant Reformed teachers should address inquiries to:

Mr. E.B. Gritters, Secretary
934 College Avenue
Redlands, California 92373

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies' and Men's Societies of the South Holland Protestant Reformed Church express their sympathy to Mrs. P.S. Poortinga and family in the death of

MR. PETER S. POORTINGA

Our prayer is that the bereaved families may continue to experience the all-sufficient grace of our Covenant God, Who has promised to be a husband to the widows and a father to the orphans; and that this experience may serve to energize us all in a more zealous and consecrated service in the battle of faith.

Rev. R. Decker, President
Mrs. J. Holleman, Secretary of Ladies' Soc.
Mr. J. Lenting, Secretary of Men's Society

News From Our Churches

I received a contribution for this column, the other day, from a friend who signed himself "You know who." He was right, of course, since the authorship of the following item is unmistakable.

He reports that he has received "response to the request for a name (or names) of potential subscribers in the state of Rhode Island.

"From a subscriber in Maine, the following was received:

'The Standard Bearer is the best magazine available to a Christian reader, and I am happy to recommend it to others. Therefore, I request that a free three months subscription be sent to . . . Also, please extend my own subscription for another year. I am enclosing a check for ten dollars, of which the extra amount will help toward the free subscription.'

"We thank the reader in Maine for his interesting letter and for his regard for *The Standard Bearer*.

"Now let's go to Nevada!

"Any reader of *The Standard Bearer*, submitting the name and address of a person residing in the State of Nevada, is assured that a three months free subscription will be sent to the resident of that state."

I've had occasion to see some correspondence from Rev. Heys, who, as you know, is currently assisting in our mission endeavors on the island of Jamaica. The intent of Rev. Heys, in this letter, was not at all to define the work that is being carried on there. It was a friendly, not a business-type letter. But it's often, I think, the homely little illustrations and anecdotes from a letter of that kind, which give one a feel for conditions over there. So . . . I'll quote a couple of paragraphs, and hope that Rev. Heys, who was not writing with publication in mind, will not object.

"We are somewhat settled now, and I did want to write before, but it takes time to get one's feet on the ground after flying to this island with its frustrations and different life. Although we have driven some 500 or more miles on the left side of the road already since arriving on the 8th of January, it still is hard to get used to left-hand *thinking*. You have to keep on the left side of the road not only, but to look into your rear view mirror you have to look to the left, the steering wheel being on the right side of the front seat. After about 700,000 miles of looking to the right in

the States, it is hard to teach an old dog new tricks.

"The work has kept us busy, and we can only marvel at what Rev. and Mrs. Lubbers have done here, and what they ENDURED. You would have to come and live with them for less than a week and you would be amazed at what their lot is. Even now when we share the burden and have each other to consult, the problems and many facets of the work simply overwhelm one. The work is certainly being concentrated, and the field is being saturated as never before, and results are bound to show one way or another.

"We cannot really complain about the weather. From the time we came it has varied between 80-87 with a humidity of between 55-70 percent. We have had some cold, torrential rains and strong winds. In fact one Sunday we stayed home and had services between the four of us at Rev. Lubbers' home because of the rain and wind. It was not safe to travel along the sea coast because of the waves dashing on the shore and the swollen streams rushing down the mountain sides creating landslides and threatening to wash you out to sea. But today is a beautiful day, and a somewhat cool morning. What the afternoon brings in heat depends on what breezes come off the sea."

In a January bulletin from Isabel, we find the following:

"Societies will hold their meetings in the basement again; this time in greatly different surroundings. The drab cement walls and hard concrete floor have been covered with beautiful wood paneling and bright Cowboy Orange carpeting. Opportunity is now taken to thank those men who labored hard and long to accomplish this task. This is another manifestation of how the saints can labor in and for the house of our God."

And from a February bulletin of Southwest we learn that the consistory there has "granted Rev. Veldman permission to labor in Florida for a period of six weeks." He planned to leave for Florida on February 20, and, on arrival, concentrate his efforts in the Bradenton area. We'll be interested in learning of the fruits of that mission.

D.D.