

# The Standard Bearer

**A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE**

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**Good Tidings Of Great Joy**

**Editorial:**

**Does The Tail Wag The Dog?**

**Pre-Adamite Man?**

**(see: The Voice of our Fathers)**

**Seminary Building--**

**Progress Report**

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## THE STANDARD BEARER

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## Meditation

## Good Tidings Of Great Joy

Rev. M. Schipper

*"And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."*

Luke 2: 10, 11.

Good tidings of great joy!

To the shepherds, and to all people!

Not to Herod, nor to Caesar were the good tidings brought. Not to the nobles and the rulers of this world was the message directed. Though such might be the first to hear, should the direction of the good tidings be determined by men. For did not the message contain the news of the birth of the King? And should not the great ones of the earth be the first to hear? Such undoubtedly would be the reasoning of the wisdom of man. But not so was the wisdom of God,

Who always reveals His wisdom in the foolish, and His power in the weak.

But to shepherds, that simple, humble folk, were the good tidings brought!

And mark well, not to all shepherds! But expressly to those who were keeping watch over their flocks by night in the hill country of Judea, near to the little town of Bethlehem, the city of David. God-fearing shepherds they were whom God selected to be the very first to hear the glad tidings of great joy. Men, who, by the grace of God, were able to receive the message.



Men, who undoubtedly were looking for the hope of Israel and the fulfillment of the promise which somehow they must have surmised was soon to be realized.

And to all people!

Again, not to all people of the world head for head! Nor even to all Israel! For in respect to the latter the saying is true: They are not all Israel that are called Israel; and at the moment when the good tidings are brought, the majority of them, being steeped in spiritual lethargy, are wholly unable to receive the message. And as far as the former is concerned, also here, as is always the case in Scripture, "all" never means each individual, but all classes of people. For, indeed, not merely to a handful of godly shepherds are the good tidings brought, but to God's people as they are to be found historically in all nations, tribes, and tongues.

Fear not!

O, indeed, there was cause for fear! Who of sinful men will not fear when he is confronted with the manifestation of the glory of heaven? Not only do the wicked fear when they are brought into proximity to the radiance of God's glory, and therefore call to the mountains to cover them; but even the sinful saints cry out: "Woe is me! for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips . . ." And do we not read in the context that the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid?

But how gracious is the address: Fear not!

Indeed, there is no need to fear when the announcement is about to be made that the very cause of fear is about to be taken away; namely, the cause of sin and guilt. And how wonderful that as many times as there are books in the Bible, so many times does this comforting expression appear on the pages of Holy Writ: Fear not! And this is one of them. The good tidings about to be expressed must assuage all fear, and cause the recipient of the message to leap for joy.

Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy!

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord!

This day! This night!

And what a day, and what a night it was!

Of all the days and nights that followed the very first at the dawn of history, there was none like this one. In fact, it is safe to say, evening and morning in their successive interchange have no significance except as they proceed to produce this day and night. Evening and morning which God created in their succession set the pace for the eras of history in which creation and fall, the development of sin as well as the development of the promise, run their course under the direction of the eternal counsel of the Almighty. And they all find their end purpose in this day and night. On this night and day all the world is astir to realize the promise of Jehovah. Unwittingly, of course, even the emperor of

Rome sends forth his decree that all the world should be enrolled for the tax. Joseph and his wife, heavy with child, wend their way over the rugged terrain of Palestine to the little town of Bethlehem. The teeming city of David, which fills up the inn and pushes as it were the saintly couple which had just arrived, to the periphery of the world and into a smelly cattle stall. The meditative shepherds musing on the promises of God while they watched their flocks by night — all worked together to realize this wonderful day and night.

Yet, how wrong would be the observation that only in these last days all was astir to usher in this day. All the days, from the very first, when God said: "Let there be light . . . and God saw the light, that it was very good: and God divided the light from the darkness; and God called the light day, and the darkness he called night; and the evening and the morning were the first day" — from that day unto this day when the angel spoke to the shepherds, God unraveled the things of His counsel, and realized in history those things which in one way or another were related to the manifestation of His Son in the flesh.

On this day is born a Saviour!

One Who is come to deliver us from the greatest possible evil, and to make us partakers of the highest possible good!

Not did He come to be a reformer, who by His example and teachings would seek to improve the conditions found in our corrupt society, to correct the relationships among men which through avarice and jealousy, greed and pride, set them at variance. Nor did He come to destroy disease, and to remove the common ills and pains that follow us from the cradle to the grave. And surely not did He come to establish an earthly kingdom in which peace and prosperity would prevail after He had brought all the kingdoms of the world into submission to His principles.

Rather, the greatest possible evil is sin and guilt, corruption and death; hatred and enmity against God, and the slavery to the power of the Devil, under which we are conceived and born. The greatest possible evil is to be subject to the eternal and righteous wrath of God.

And to be partakers of the highest possible good, is to be cleansed from sin and guilt, and to be clothed with God's righteousness. It is to be made to stand once more in the image and in the favor of God. It is to be made to taste His loving-kindness, which is better than life. It is to be made heirs of the kingdom of heaven. It is to dwell near unto God.

And such a Saviour is He, in the first place, because He is Christ the Lord!

The One Who was ordained and anointed of God from everlasting, and therefore appointed and qualified to save us. Who, as God's Friend-servant, would reveal unto us by His Word and Spirit the Father, and His



secret counsel respecting our redemption. Who, as the great High Priest would bring a sacrifice that could really cover all our sin and guilt, and atone for us; while at the same time, on the basis of His perfect sacrifice, He could intercede for us with the Father as our Advocate. Who, as our eternal King, would bring all His and our enemies into subjection and destroy them, while He establishes in our hearts the principles of His eternal and heavenly kingdom. Thus becoming our Lord, Who governs us and defends us in the preservation of that salvation which He has purchased and accomplished for us.

Such a Saviour He is, secondly, because He is born.

Not, you understand, was He born of the will of man. For then He would be like us, guilty and condemned, and therefore unable to deliver us.

Born He was by the will of God, and conceived by the Holy Spirit! Yea, He was the very Person of the Son of God, Who through the Holy Spirit was conceived in the womb and born of the virgin.

Born He was, not just anywhere in the world. But in the city of David. Which implies that He was, according to the flesh, out of David's royal seed. Not of a virgin in China or Africa was He born, but of a virgin of the royal and elect line of David, as that line finds its culmination in Mary, the last of David's house, whom our confessions call the Mother of God.

What a wonder of grace!

God manifested in the flesh!

The Saviour, which is Christ the Lord!

Don't you see then, beloved reader, how this constitutes good tidings of great joy?

Understand well, the good news is not that the messenger from heaven speaks to the shepherds and to all people, of a *possible* Saviour — a Saviour Who is willing to save you and is able to save you if you will only let Him. Such a Saviour would be no Saviour at all, Who must wait for you to act before He can save. Surely it is no good tidings of great joy at all that would inform us that God in Christ will save us if we only accept Him. The simple reason being, that there is not a shepherd, nor any of all the people that is able of himself to do this.

But here is indeed good tidings which afford us everlasting joy — that whereas we were utterly lost and undone in ourselves, God prepared and sent forth from His own bosom His Son, promised by Him from of old, and in the fulness of time conceived of the Holy Spirit, and born of the virgin Mary, a complete Saviour!

Here is the good news, that David's royal Son is, indeed, the God of your salvation!

Who saves you and me unto the uttermost!

In this we rejoice now, according to the measure we have tasted His saving grace!

In this we shall joy everlastingly, when we shall appear in body and soul, without spot or wrinkle, before Him.

In the house of His covenant!

## Editorials

# Editor's Notes

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

TO OUR CONSTERNATION we discovered that a horrible mistake was made in Rev. Harbach's department, *Studies In Election*. What happened? Rev. Harbach is a department editor who gets his copy in to the editor far in advance. To help our typesetting service we send in Rev. Harbach's copy in advance also; this gives the typesetter a running start on preparation of the *Standard Bearer*. Since these articles are all numbered, we expect our typesetting service to place them in the *Standard Bearer* in proper succession. All went well until our May 1 issue, when "Its Evidences" was printed. And then a large portion of Rev. Harbach's series was inadvertently skipped, so that in the August issue and the October 15 issue you will find a portion of "15. Its Resistance." In consultation with Rev. Harbach, I decided that the best way to remedy partially this mistake was to publish *all* of the omitted material in this issue. The reader should understand (if

he wants to get the continuity) that this material follows immediately upon that in the May 1 issue, and it precedes the material in the August and October 15 issues. Next time, after we are back on the track, we will continue where we left off in the October 15 issue. Our admonitions have gone to the typesetting service, and our apologies to Rev. Harbach.

\* \* \* \* \*

Due to lack of space, our discussion of the proposed union of RPs and OPs will have to be postponed until the next issue.

\* \* \* \* \*

THOSE INTERESTED in obtaining the *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal's* December issue, or in being placed on our permanent mailing list, should write to Prof. H. Hanko, 4665 Ju-Le-On Dr., S.W., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49504. The December issue will



contain a continuation of Prof. Hanko's discussion of *The Old and the New Man* and a contribution by Prof. Hoeksema on *Family Visitation*. We are printing 50 extra copies, and these will be mailed on a first-come-first-served basis. The *Journal* is distributed free of charge. Be sure to specify whether you wish

only this issue or wish to be placed on our mailing list.

\* \* \* \*

HAVE YOU taken advantage of the special offers in last issue's green insert? If you hurry, there is still time to do so before Christmas!

## Does The Tail Wag The Dog?

Dr. James Daane, undoubtedly following the bad example of Dr. G. C. Berkouwer, seems to think so.

I mean this, of course, figuratively. The "dog" in this case is the Canons of Dordrecht, and the "tail" is the Conclusion of the Canons.

And thereby hangs a tale.

Briefly, the tale is this. From 1934 to 1959 the Christian Reformed *Psalter Hymnal* omitted the Conclusion of the Canons. Apparently it took Dr. Daane a good many years to wake up to this fact; and when he did wake up, he failed to do the kind of elementary research that a good doctor of theology ought to do. Instead, he broke out into print in the "Voices" column of the *Banner* (September 1) on the presumption that this omission was "unauthorized" and that someone dared to "tamper thus with this Confession of our church." "After all," he writes, "this alteration of the Canons was not the result of official Synodical decision."

The Rev. John Vander Ploeg sets the record straight in the *Banner* of October 27, quoting a synodical decision to drop the Conclusion from the *Psalter Hymnal*.

Dr. Daane was evidently given opportunity to reply to Rev. Vander Ploeg in the same "Voices" column. He briefly acknowledges the information furnished by Rev. Vander Ploeg, admits that he was wrong in writing that this omission was unauthorized, and then proceeds not only to criticize the synodical decision, but also launches forth on a commentary about the Conclusion to the Canons and its significance which can best be summed up by the figure of the tail wagging the dog.

And to make matters worse, Daane perverts and presents a caricature of the Conclusion. He must do this in order to present the Conclusion (the tail) as being of such a nature and significance that it wags the dog (the body of the Canons).

And to make matters still worse, Daane's purpose is to present the Canons (in the light of his own perverted version of the Conclusion) as teaching something which is the very opposite of what they do indeed teach. It is in this sense that he makes the tail wag the dog. This is the same sleight of hand which Dr. Berkouwer tried in his study on *Divine Election*. By this crafty trick many have been deceived. I refer to

Berkouwer's and Daane's misuse of the "*non eodem modo*" ("not in the same manner") expression which is found in this Conclusion.

And I want to sound the same warning to Daane which the Synod sounded to the slanderers of the Reformed confessions and the Reformed churches. For by his misrepresentation of the Conclusion Dr. Daane in effect makes himself guilty of the very heinous sin against which the Conclusion warns. Here is the language of the Synod: "Moreover, the synod warns calumniators themselves, to consider the terrible judgment of God which awaits them, for bearing false witness against the confessions of so many Churches, for distressing the consciences of the weak; and for laboring to render suspected the society of the truly faithful."

Now what kind of tail does Dr. Daane make out this Conclusion to be?

First of all, he misrepresents the place and purpose of the Conclusion, as follows:

The first ground is the only actual ground. And it is weak. (How often many reasons are given when one good one cannot be found!) The Conclusion was eliminated by the 1934 Synod because it is a "historical apology" and hence "is not a part of the Canons as such." On the same basis one could argue that the Canon's *Rejection of Errors* is not part of the Canons as such and should also be eliminated. Moreover, the so-called "historical apology" is far more a *theological* apology, for, like the *Rejection of Errors*, it explicitly rejects specific theological positions, thereby clearly indicating how the Synod of Dort did not want its Canons to be interpreted. In its Conclusions the Synod of Dort gives us a window through which we may see its mind and intent; it throws light on its teachings in the Canons by asserting that the Synod rejects such and such misinterpretations of the Canons.

Now what is wrong here?

Let me point out the following:

1) Daane is altogether mistaken when he calls this Conclusion far more a *theological* apology than an *historical* apology. A simple reading of the first two paragraphs of the Conclusion will make it abundantly clear that the reference of the Conclusion is *historical*.

2) Daane is utterly mistaken when he exalts this Conclusion virtually to the status of the Canons'



Rejection of Errors, and suggests that one could just as well omit the Rejection of Errors as the Conclusion. The simple fact is that in the body of the Canons, both the positive part and the Rejection of Errors, the fathers engaged in all the theological apologetics that was necessary. And now, on the basis of all that they have set forth in the body of the Canons, they draw certain conclusions chiefly with respect to the false charges (calumnies) which historically the Arminian enemies had brought against the Reformed churches and the Reformed faith long before the Canons were composed.

3) Daane misrepresents the Conclusion when he states that it is virtually another Rejection of Errors which "explicitly rejects specific theological positions, thereby clearly indicating how the Synod of Dort did not want its Canons to be interpreted" (sic!). He ought to know the fathers better than that! Our fathers were not wont to call a "Rejection of Errors" a "Conclusion." Nor were they such theological nin-compoops as to finish four specific rejections of errors and then turn right around and add another one. The fact of the matter is that in the opening statement of the Conclusion the fathers call their Canons "the perspicuous, simple, and ingenuous declaration of the orthodox doctrine respecting the five articles which have been controverted in the Belgic churches; and the rejection of the errors with which they have for some time been troubled." Obviously, the fathers did not feel the need of any more doctrinal explanations and defense of the truth. They were finished with that; and they considered their work perspicuous and simple! They were perfectly willing to let the Canons speak for themselves, and did not have to say "how the Synod of Dort did not want its Canons to be interpreted."

4) Daane completely perverts the relationship between the Canons and the Conclusion when he states that "In its Conclusions the Synod of Dort gives us a window through which we may see its mind and intent; it throws light on its teachings in the Canons by asserting that the Synod rejects such and such misinterpretations of the Canons." The very opposite is true. Not the Conclusion is a window opening on the Canons; but the Canons furnish a window through which to view the slanderous charges and the makers of those slanderous charges against the Reformed doctrine. Again, a simple reading of the first paragraph of the conclusion will show that I have the language of the Conclusion plainly on my side in this statement. Pay attention carefully to this:

And this is the perspicuous, simple, and ingenuous declaration of the orthodox doctrine respecting the five articles which have been controverted in the Belgic churches; and the rejection of the errors, with which they have for some time been troubled. This doctrine the Synod judges to be drawn from the Word of God, and to be agreeable to the confessions

of the Reformed churches. Whence it *clearly appears* (Emphasis added. Note, to use Daane's term, that here is the window! But a window opening on what? Read on. HCH) — Whence it clearly appears that some whom such conduct by no means became, have violated all truth, equity, and charity, in wishing to persuade the public. (And at this point there follows a long paragraph in quotation marks which lists all the evil and slanderous charges of which some tried to persuade the public. HCH)

To anyone who can read English it must be very plain that not the Conclusion is a window on the Canons, but the Conclusion calls the Canons a window from which it "clearly appears" that all the charges of the enemies against the Reformed faith are wicked calumnies, or slanders. Daane can understand this too, if only he wants to.

In the second place, Daane is guilty of misrepresenting both the contents of the Conclusion and the teachings of Reformed theologians in the following paragraphs of his "Voices" article:

In the Conclusion to the Canons the Synod of Dort declared that anyone who interprets them as teaching that God is the author of sin, or as teaching that God elects and reprobates "in the same manner," that is, that reprobation is as *unconditional* as election, is teaching something that "the Reformed Churches not only do not acknowledge, but even detest with their whole soul."

My interest in *why* the Conclusion of the Canons was dropped in the Christian Reformed Church for a quarter of a century (until 1959) stems from the fact that a number of Reformed theologians during these twenty five years, and even after the reinstatement of the Conclusion, have projected positions upon the Reformed churches on such doctrines as divine sovereignty, the divine authorship (causality, origin) of sin, unconditional theology, a view of reprobation that is unconditional "in the same manner" as election, and a supralapsarianism, each of which falls under the judgment of the Canon's Conclusion that "the Reformed Churches not only do not acknowledge, but even detest with their whole soul."

Here are my reasons:

1) Daane persists in saying that the Conclusion declares something about how the Canons must be interpreted. As shown above, it says nothing of the kind.

2) Daane perverts a plain statement of this Conclusion, a statement of one of the slanders against the Reformed truth, and thereby he twists it to deny sovereign reprobation and to present unconditional reprobation as a false, non-Dortian doctrine. The Conclusion does not speak of the "teaching that God elects and reprobates 'in the same manner,' that is, that reprobation is as unconditional as election." Here is the statement of the Conclusion: "that in the same manner in which the election is the fountain and the cause of faith and good works, reprobation is the cause



of unbelief and impiety.” Mind you, this is a statement of one of the *calumnies*. That is, this is what the enemies *said* that Reformed churches taught. Of this the Conclusion says, in effect, that anyone who claims that we teach this is a liar! And of this and similar calumnies the Conclusion says: “which things the Reformed Churches not only do not acknowledge, but even detest with their whole soul.” Now notice: a) This says nothing whatsoever about unconditional reprobation. Daane pulls that out of his hat. b) It does not even say that reprobation is not the cause of unbelief and impiety. It could not possibly intend to say it: this would contradict the Canons proper. It says that if you charge that the Reformed churches teach that “reprobation is the cause of unbelief and impiety IN THE SAME MANNER in which election is the fountain and the cause of faith and good works,” you violate “all truth, equity, and charity.”

3) Daane is guilty of begging the question when he speaks of Reformed theologians who teach “divine authorship of sin.” I challenge him to point out “a number of Reformed theologians during these twenty-five years” who teach this.

4) He is guilty of begging the question and of contradiction of the Canons when he assumes that unconditional reprobation is a detestable doctrine.

5) Neither literally nor by implication does the Conclusion anywhere refer to supralapsarianism. Besides, Daane ought to know that there were supralapsarians who signed the Canons at the end of this Conclusion – among them Gomarus. Moreover, if Daane consulted the history of Dordt, he would

discover that the Synod was asked to condemn certain strong expressions of supralapsarians, but declined to do so.

Finally I am inquisitive as to which “Reformed theologians and churchmen” Daane has in mind. He must, it seems to me, be referring to *Christian Reformed* theologians and churchmen. For he writes of the fact that the omission of the Conclusion from the *Psalter Hymnal* has made it easier for them to project views which the Canons in the Conclusion detest. I must confess, however, that I know of no such theologians and churchmen in the CRC. One would have to search with a candle to find such a champion of the Canons of Dordt in the CRC. In 1967 no one finally dared to stand up and be counted against the Arminianism of Harold Dekker. One of the more conservative groups in the CRC, the Reformed Fellowship, published a book, *Crisis In The Reformed Churches*, in commemoration of Dordrecht’s Synod, in which the very views of Daane are championed by Klaas Runia.

Hence, I almost come to the conclusion that Daane probably might have us in mind. But that cannot be. We are not Christian Reformed. We do not use the *Psalter Hymnal*. And in all the years in which the latter did not include the Conclusion, we faithfully preserved it in our *Psalter*. So if Daane by any chance was looking for a stick with which to whip a dog, he is mistaken. Besides, his stick is nothing but a broken reed!

But let me assure him, too: we believe in the dog wagging the tail, not *vice versa*.

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## Question Box

# About The Elder Son (continued)

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

In the previous issue we began to answer a question concerning the elder son in the parable of the prodigal son. We had just begun to explain from a positive point of view the significance of this elder son. That discussion we now continue.

What, we may ask, are the characteristics of this elder son (Pharisee)?

In the first place, he is *one who never transgressed*, that is, according to his own opinion and according to his own view of the law. Whether you think, now, of the particular law with all the precepts as they were given to Israel – moral, civil, and ceremonial, plus all the traditions of the elders – or whether you think of

the law in general, it makes no difference, principally, with regard to the attitude of the elder son. That law – as the Pharisee, the ideal son of the law conceived of it – he never transgressed. That law as a mere body of precepts which had to be obeyed was kept by him meticulously. Understand: that law was a mere code, a cold code, which had to be kept. There was no heart pulsating in that law. And the Pharisee-elder son kept that cold code. He prayed so often, fasted so often, brought so many bulls and goats and lambs to the temple for sacrifice, paid the temple tax, the tithe, kept so many holy days per year, did not overtly steal, commit the act of adultery or fornication, or actually



kill someone. All in all, he was an ideal man, a cold man of the law.

Remember now, however, that this was not the law in fact and in truth, but the law *as he conceived of it*. In truth, that law had a heart; it was a warm and living law. That heart of the law was *love*! "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God . . . and thy neighbor as thyself." Did not the Lord Jesus emphasize this again and again? It was for this reason, too, that the "end of the law was Christ." He was its end not merely in the sense that He alone fulfilled all obedience to the law for us, but also in the sense that the law in Israel pointed directly to Him; the Heart of all the temple service and all the blood of the old covenant and all the sacrifices was Christ. The true child of God, who felt the heart of the law, knew all the time that he could not keep that law; and he therefore looked forward to the one sacrifice that was to come. But the Pharisee never did this. To the ideal Pharisee the law was a body of precept upon precept which had to be kept in order to get a good account, gain credit, with God.

Such a Pharisee this elder son in the parable represents: the ideal Pharisee. Actually, of course, the Pharisee as he stood before Jesus was far worse than this elder son — as might, indeed, be expected from the development of Phariseism. The actual Pharisee was a whitewashed sepulchre, and he knew it. He devoured widows' houses, and then made long prayers on the street. With all his wickedness he went to the temple, and then he thanked the Lord that there were no other good men beside him. So this elder son in the parable did not, certainly, represent the Pharisee as he actually existed.

But neither did he represent the faithful covenant child. The latter is one who knows the heart of the law and who sees that the end of the law is Christ. He is one who knows his own sin and will surely not say, "I never transgressed any of the commandments." On the contrary, he is always one who is sorry for his sins, who repents, and who is forgiven.

But the elder son represents the *ideal* of Phariseism. As it were, the Lord says to the Pharisees in His audience: "All right; I will take you at face value. I will take you at your best. I will take you, not as you actually are, but as you pretend to be: ideal sons of the law who are far above publicans and sinners. And then I will picture to you your trouble, your problem, and compare you with the real picture of these publicans and sinners who come to Me."

That this is correct is plain from the parable. Notice, first, that the elder son is in the field, *working for father*. Notice, too, that he says, "These many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I thy commandments at any time." And notice, further, that the father in the parable does not argue the point, does not deny it. In a sense — such is the point of the parable — this is what the elder son did.

And so he is the picture of one who will be righteous by his own works of the law, righteous by faithful service all his life. In the church of today he is one who will be righteous by coming to church, by paying his dues, by coming to the Lord's Supper, by reading his Bible, by saying his prayers, by never stealing or swearing or committing adultery or murdering overtly, — all as so many works of righteousness whereby he gains credit with God. And in the world he is a man full of outward morality. He is above reproach outwardly. You cannot lay a finger on him. And by all this he would claim righteousness before God! "These many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I thy commandments at any time."

What is wrong with such a man?

Fundamentally this: *he never repents!* He does not know the a-b-c of repentance.

He has a wrong conception of God, first of all. The God of Phariseism was as cold as his body of laws: there was no heart in him. He commanded and gave orders like a boss. He was like an employer. The world was his shop; the Pharisee was his employee; and eternal life was the wage. Such a God is cold and forbidding and heartless, like any "boss." (This, to me, is what makes the whole covenant of works theory unattractive, too. The relation between God and Adam in Paradise is pictured as such a cold, mechanical, heartless relation — one of contract.) But this is wrong, of course. God is not such a cold, heartless "boss" with an outward code of laws, but a living Father and covenant Friend, with a loving heart. He is the living God!

But the Pharisee's conception of himself, of course, followed from his conception of God, even as one's conception of God is always determinative. He was God's "workman." He was a slave, or, at best, a wage-earner. He had to *work*. He had to bring sacrifices, keep holy days, etc. There was no heart in him either. There was no love, no joy. He was cold as stone. Like an employee, he would look at the clock all day, to see if he had done almost enough for the Lord. And this is wrong! Properly conceived, man is friend-son in relation to God.

It follows, of course, that he also had a wrong conception of righteousness. Righteousness, for the Pharisee, was the sum-total of the number of sacrifices he brought, the days he observed, the times he prayed, etc. In other words, righteousness consisted in all outward good works. And this is dead wrong. With the Lord, Who wants love, righteousness is the sum-total of the heart-beats of a heart that never skips even once in true, covenant love!

If you understand this, you will also understand that this elder son did not know repentance and never repented. He did not repent, not, to be sure, because objectively there was no reason for him to repent! But



subjectively it was impossible for him to repent. He did not understand sin; and he did not know his own sins. And as long as a man does not know his sins, it is spiritually impossible for him to repent!

Was this elder son really different from the younger? Let us test this. What was the principle of the younger son's sin in the parable? This, that he in his mind and heart separated father's goods from father. He wanted the goods, but he did not care for father. He conceived of having joy without father's love and father's home. This is precisely the condition of every sinner by nature! But what was the attitude of the elder son? Was it basically any different? Listen to him: "Thou never gavest me a kid to make merry with my friends!" There is a world of sentiment revealed here. He felt that he never received anything from father. He felt no joy, only grumbling dissatisfaction, as long as he could not rejoice with father's *goods*. He wanted at least to separate one kid to enjoy himself with his friends, apart from father. In principle, therefore, he was exactly like the younger son when the latter left home. The only difference was in *manifestation*. The one left home with his cold heart; the other stayed on the farm with his equally cold heart.

And so it was subjectively impossible for him to come to repentance. You see, one does not repent for a *boss*. At best, he might quit. Or he might promise to do more work — and this, not as long as he thinks he has been doing a good day's work. But he does not repent. Repentance is a matter of living love. It comes when we come to ourselves. It comes when we realize that the relation between God and our lives is not one of boss and workman, but of father and son, of Friend-sovereign and friend-servant. It comes when the love of God is spread abroad in our hearts and we become more sorry than we can express because we have torn ourselves from Father's heart! And this living love the elder son did not know. He labored for a boss; hence, he could not repent.

And thus, finally, the elder son never rejoiced. Even as he did not know repentance, so he could not experience the joy of forgiveness and of glad reception by the Father.

Father maintains His Fatherhood, indeed! In the parable, the father says, "Son ..." In the deepest

sense, man cannot escape the fact that he was created a son and cannot shake the responsibility and calling to live as a son, though he has utterly lost the ability and desire to be a true son. He is, from that point of view, a cold son, a hateful son, a son in hell; but he cannot change his being. He has only changed his own spiritual attitude through his wilful fall into sin. Intentionally the father in the parable emphasizes this. He expresses what the elder son *should be*, not what he actually assumes to be. It is like Jesus' word to Judas, "Friend ..." "Thou art ever with me," the father says to him, too. This is also true of the Pharisee; but it was only a presence of proximity, not of love. "And all mine is thine." Here the Lord emphasizes that the goods cannot be separated from Father. They are His and His people's, and can be enjoyed only in His communion. They are "thine" but always and only as "mine," that is, Father's, never otherwise.

Hence, he ought to rejoice. For a son was dead as a son, and he is now living as a son. And that sonship, that son-Father relation, is the main thing. Without it, the goods are a curse and soon turn into the husks that the swine eat.

But the elder son answers like a slave! He is angry! Within is the joy of deepest love: a repenting sinner, a loving Father, and the angels singing for joy! Outside is the angry son, grumbling because he never felt the heart of father, but only the ice and the cold of a body of precepts. He cannot enter into that love and that joy. He is outside of that love and that joy with all his heart. And to his father he answers like a slave: "Thou never gavest me a kid!" He will not go in to the feast. He does not know sin. He does not know repentance. He does not know the joy of the repentant. How is it possible that he can rejoice in the repentance and the joyous reception of another?

And there the text leaves it, almost as if for us to finish it and draw the proper conclusion: if that cold slave of self-righteousness does not repent like his younger brother, he will never enter in! And we conclude: Thanks be to God for the fact that in the deep way of sin and grace — sovereign grace, grace greater than all our sins — He manifested to us the deep love of His eternal heart!

## All Around Us

# Vouchers For Private Schools

Prof. H. Hanko

The war for various forms of government aid to private and parochial schools goes on. Some battles have been lost because the courts have ruled some

programs as violations of the First Amendment of the Constitution. But, evidently, those who are interested in such government aid continue to devise new



programs which, they hope, will not be struck down by the courts.

One such program, gaining an increasing amount of favor, is the so-called "voucher system." The plan works this way. The government, whether national, state or regional, which enacts this program, will give to parents sending their children to school a voucher worth an agreed upon sum of money. This voucher will be turned in to the school as part or all of the tuition payment. The school will, in turn, be able to cash in this voucher with the government and receive its value in cash.

This is considered a very excellent plan for more than one reason. On the one hand, it will be a pleasant relief to parents to have part or all of the heavy tuition load carried by the state. On the other hand, it will avoid nasty questions such as whether such a plan is Constitutional (i.e., whether it is in violation of the principle of the separation between Church and State), and whether or not the government will interfere in the administration of the school. After all, the aid is given to parents, not to the school. How then can such a plan be declared unconstitutional? and how can the government interfere in the operation of the school? It seems easy and a way to avoid pitfalls.

This whole plan is discussed in a little magazine called *The Freeman* by a law student named John P. Cahill. He himself is a product of private school education, and is consequently concerned about the preservation of private schools in this country. In discussing this proposed method of government aid to private schools, he approaches the whole question from various viewpoints and shows that also this type of program will lead ultimately to the destruction of private schools. His arguments are worth our notice.

He points out first of all, that the program "ignores some basic principles and obvious facts." He writes:

1. The unwillingness or inability of the users to continue to pay the tuition and operating costs of the private schools is one reason that they are in need of financial assistance.

2. This inability to pay is in no small part brought about by increased taxes and inflation caused by increased government deficit spending.

3. No one can give what he does not have. If the government is going to pay the expenses of all the children in private schools in addition to those in public schools, it must find a source for the additional funds that will be needed.

4. The government has two sources for these funds: increased taxes or further inflated currency.

Not to be forgotten are the additional hundreds of highly paid bureaucrats who will be needed to administer such a program. The result will hardly be the great triumph of justice which is predicted:

\* The taxes of everyone who pays school taxes will increase.

\* Some of these taxpayers will now receive a return for their money which they did not receive in

pre-voucher days.

\* Those with children in the public schools will be forced to pay increased taxes with no increased return.

\* Those with no children in any school will pay increased taxes and continue to receive nothing in return.

How anyone could think that confusion and injustice will be anything but compounded. . .

After pointing out these things, the author turns to the matter of government interference in the administration of the schools. Does this type of program avoid that danger? The author's answer is No.

We live in an age in which government, at all levels, is anything but disinterested. The bureaus and agencies of government are peopled with men beset with the meddling urge as never before in history. Money distributed by the government has seldom had more strings attached than now. Busing to achieve racial balance in the public schools is a good example.

The voucher scheme cries out to be used as an indirect licensing system for the private schools. There are already hints in the press that certain "modifications" and "safeguards" will have to be introduced into the program if it is passed. Private schools, for instance, that maintain a racial imbalance will not be able to cash their vouchers.

There are other points upon which private, especially religious, schools might do well to meditate. Would a school be permitted to cash vouchers if that school promoted teachings contrary to the government policy, such as artificial birth prevention or abortion? Could a school with an "inadequate" sex-education program cash vouchers? Given the temper of the times, one would think that "accreditation" for participation would not come cheaply.

How could the bureaucrat think that it was other than his duty to "protect" the parent and child from the "misuse" or their new found freedom in a "below standard" school? May a school be dropped from the program because its graduates are untrained in sensitivity?

These thoughts must not be overlooked . . .

The author then turns to the subject of participation in the program up to such a time as it becomes impossible to participate without giving in to government control. He considers that withdrawal from such a program, after once being in it, is highly unlikely.

A school would have to be very wealthy indeed to survive if it were to reject its prevailing source of regular income, the government. A school which had grown dependent on the program could be dealt a mortal blow if it withdrew or was expelled from the program. How many parents would continue sending their children if the "free" tuition vouchers from the government were rendered worthless at this school, especially in the face of higher taxation to support the other private schools on the program?

Turning then to what I consider the very heart of



the matter, the author writes:

But what of the private schools themselves? Won't they die out without some sort of government assistance?

Good schools will not die out. There is more to the plight of the private school than the ability of the user to pay. *Willingness* is a major factor. When the religious school is "secularized" or the denominational or other private school loses its tradition and becomes, in essence, no different than the public school, the sacrifice that a man must make to "pay twice" for his child's education loses all reason. Why should a man who is forced to support the public school system pay again for a private school education if the product is like that of the public school?

A return to the first principles of their founders may not save private schools. But it is a first step, and a giant one, in the right direction. The voucher system is a step backward and downward into the

mire of government control of all aspects of our lives.

How true! And if we put this into the context of our own educational system, we come up with two points which surely cannot be stressed strongly enough. In the first place, we must be sure that our schools are indeed what they purport to be: Christian Schools. They must be schools which give instruction which in every respect is in harmony with the Word of God and the Reformed faith. This is the responsibility of all of us whether teachers or parents. Only then will our schools be worth maintaining.

In the second place, the key word is "willingness." The author speaks of this. Put into the context of the responsibility and *privilege* of covenant instruction of covenant children, this willingness is surely all-important. And where it is present, there will be sufficient financial means to support these schools without government assistance and the threat of government control.

## The Argument Over Abortion

Although a liberalization of abortion laws appeared on the ballot in several states and was defeated, the fight goes on. It was somewhat disconcerting to note in the general debates prior to last November's election that even the Church, when entering the debate opposed to abortion, often did not take its stand on the Word of God, but argued the issue on purely humanistic and moralistic grounds. This happens with disconcerting frequency when the Church enters the public arena and begins to debate legislation — even when the Church is, so to speak, on the "right side." However that may be, the case *for* abortion was a sad commentary on the condition of our times. This case was perhaps nowhere so eloquently stated as in a recent column in *Newsweek* written by Shana Alexander. She writes:

What the abortion fight really comes down to is whether one should yield dominion over one's body to the state — or to the church, or the medical profession, or any other institution. I oppose abortion laws for the same reason I oppose brainwashing, or the Thought Police: the state will please keep its cotton-pickin' hands as far away from me as possible, mind and body. Or in the eloquent language of Judge Jon O. Newman, who wrote the majority opinion in the latest pro-abortion victory in Connecticut, "If the right of privacy means anything, it is the right of the individual, married or single, to be free from unwarranted governmental intrusion into matters so fundamentally affecting a person as

the decision whether to bear or beget a child."

To believe this is not to deny the mystery of birth, nor the sanctity of life. To understand that a fetus is not a "person" in any constitutional sense, and cannot thus be "murdered", is not to equate the unborn with blob. There is still room for legitimate philosophical disputation. But more interesting is that open debate on these matters is, for the first time in history, making women fully aware of their own rights to a full life on equal terms with men. Not just full sexual life, but full social and professional and economic and political life.

As women realize they can change their own lot by taking political action to change the law, they will begin to move into the economic area, into protests against sex differentials in wages, salaries, benefits and opportunities for advancement — which is where the real sexual inequities exist.

The author does not want to yield dominion over her body to the state or the church or the medical profession or any other institution. But it is clear that, behind it all, there is a terrible and blatant refusal to yield one's body to the dominion of the Word of God. "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." Rom. 6:13. Where this is done, abortion is not a question for discussion, but an awful sin of murder against the Most High Majesty of God.

## Resolution on Key '73

The American Council of Christian Churches has recently passed a resolution on Key '73 which is worth quoting. It appears in *Christian News*, and reads in part:

1. Key 73 permits and encourages each participant to "DO THEIR OWN THING" in evangelism. But the Bible plainly sets forth the fact that there is only one true gospel and that all who preach any other gospel



are to be "accursed." (Galatians 1:8, 9).

2. Key 73 is encouraging the wide distribution of Bible translations and versions such as "GOOD NEWS FOR MODERN MAN," "THE LIVING NEW TESTAMENT," and the "REVISED STANDARD VERSION," each one of which contains serious changes, omissions and additions to the text of God's Holy and eternal Word.

3. Key 73 is definitely inclusive and ecumenical in character, making it ethically impossible to direct any converts into Bible-believing churches or to warn

against the many false teachers and apostate churches which are a part of Key 73. The American Council of Christian Churches gladly reaffirms its belief in the one true gospel as "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" and we call upon all believers everywhere to proclaim this good news to every creature, while at the same time repudiating and exposing the many false teachers and apostate groups which are a part of the Key 73 evangelism program.

## Studies in Election

# Its Evidences

*Rev. Robert C. Harbach*

*(Editor's note: For an explanation of the publishing of this large installment of Rev. Harbach's department, see Editor's Notes.)*

When it is proclaimed in the Gospel that Christ Jesus died on the cross to save sinners, it is not the first logical step, on the basis of that premise, for me to lay it down that He died for me in particular. That would be to confuse the order of God's salvation. The burden of the Gospel is that God sent His Son into the world, and there He was manifested to take away the sins of His people. That is, He came into a world of woe to make a way of escape out of the midst of death for them that are lost. He died for ungodly ones, perfectly satisfying divine justice for the offence of all their sins. So He made atonement, and on that ground God can and does rightly justify the sinner through faith in His blood. That is the initial thrust of the Gospel, man's involvement in sin, misery and death. When I hear that basic premise of the Gospel, I am bound to believe it, and then believing it, I am bound over to a life of obedience to the Gospel. Until I do that, believe and obey the Gospel, I am under no necessity to believe that Christ died for me in particular. When I have done and am doing that, it is then my right and privilege to enjoy the assurance that comes in that way.

Just so, it is my responsibility, as it is that of every man, to believe the doctrine of election upon hearing the preaching of the Gospel, for therein it is revealed. But my own personal election I cannot warrantably believe, nor may I believe it, except as God reveals its evidences in me. True faith is not a blind faith without evidence, and faith in and obedience to the Gospel are the twin evidences of election. Nor may a man doubt or deny his election, or assume that he is a reprobate, as long as he is not in a condition where it is impossible for the evidences of election to be produced in him. As long as he does not obey the Gospel, there is no evidence that he is reprobate as long as it is possible for him to become obedient. Then, although election must be preached, where the Gospel is to be scripturally preached, it is not the immediate duty of men to

concern themselves with whether they are elect. It is first required of them that they believe they "are all under sin," that they are lost sinners. They must first know their misery. They must first be conversant with faith, obedience and righteousness of life, before they enter upon the matter of their personal election. On this important point, both Paul and Ursinus faithfully followed the teaching of our Lord.

We may certainly conclude that where Christ's ministers faithfully and regularly hold forth the Word of life, there God's elect will be found. (Acts 18:10; II Tim. 2:10). Because the Lord does have His elect scattered throughout His world-wide vineyard, He sustains His ministers by divine providence and directs them by His Word and Spirit. He prevents them from going to areas where, either there are no elect, or if there are, the time has not come for their calling and conversion (Acts 16:6). For these reasons the Lord does not allow His servants to enter certain areas (16:7). He has them pass on to areas and places of His choice (16:18). The Lord is an unhindered and indisputable sovereign in sending the Gospel to some and not to others. On Paul's second missionary journey the Word was not sent to northern Asia Minor, Bithynia and Mysia, but, instead, it was taken to Macedonia, Thessaly and Greece.

The Lord so directs His ministers, His Word and the preaching of it that the elect come to hear, in due time, the Gospel of their salvation. Sometimes the Lord calls a minister, as He did Philip, from his beloved and busy pastorate in a thriving Samaria to go down into a desert region to take the Word of His grace to a good ground hearer. Sometimes He leads His servant out "where cross the crowded ways of life" in order to testify the Gospel of the grace of God to a rich young ruler who turns away from it at the moment, but who later repents and returns to the Lord (since he was beloved of his God, Mark 10:21; Neh. 13:26). Another



time He leads His servant to the home of a member of the Italian Band (Acts 10) with the same word of truth. Or the Lord may lead His witnesses to a prison where the jailer, to say nothing of the inmates, may have little or no opportunity to hear the Gospel. In such places the Lord has His elect. (Acts 16:34; Philemon 10). The Lord had them in mind when He said, "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice" (John 10:16). They were chosen before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4), quickened by the power of His Spirit (John 6:63), made to hear His voice (10:27; 5:25) through His servants (Rom. 10:14) and believe through grace (Acts 18:27).

Where the Lord does have a people, there He will send His servants to enlighten them and lead them in all the truth. For this reason, Christ's ministers endure all things for the elect's sake that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus. The elect are to be found where the ministers of the Gospel labor and endure. Does the reader live in such a place? Then where two's and three's are gathered together in Christ's name, there He is in the midst. Does the young "David" or "Timothy" reading these lines feel something of the glory of the ministry, and perhaps a drawing of the Lord in the direction of that highest calling? These are, admittedly, the dark days of the many antichrists which lead to the Antichrist, but they are also days in which the Lord is still calling out a people for His name, and days, too, in which it is your duty to respond and yield to the heavenly calling of the Lord.

The Lord sends the preacher where according to His counsel and providence He has elect. He will then make His Word preached to them effective and the labors expended on them fruitful. Of the Thessalonian church Paul said, "Knowing, brethren, beloved, your election of God. For our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance" (I Thess. 1:4, 5). Paul came to know the election of this church. He knew they were among God's chosen people. This ought to answer, in part, the oft repeated question whether we shall know one another in heaven. If ministers know the election of the sheep in their flocks here in this life, surely they will know their sheep in heaven. Surely, there above we shall have not less knowledge, but more perfect knowledge, than we have here below. This implies, too, that if the ministers may know the election of their people, the people themselves may know it and rejoice in it. This knowledge did not come to Paul, nor does it come to the elect, by direct revelation from heaven. The Lord does not let down in a sheet a gilt-edged, Morocco-bound copy of the Book of Life for our perusal. Nor does He reveal this knowledge by a vision in the sky, nor by the voice of angels, nor by an appearance of Christ himself before us. If anyone

claims this, "believe it not!" But Paul came to this knowledge through the fruits of election being evident in the Thessalonian Christians. They were "chosen in Him before the foundation of the world, that (to the end that)" they "should be holy and without blame before Him." Paul saw the marks of a holy life in them and traced such mercy-drops back to the great fountain of election.

"For our Gospel came . . . unto you." The Gospel must come to men, in order to their eternal salvation. But what is the Gospel? Not everything boasted as "gospel" is Gospel. The pratings of a "Great Society" movement is not the Gospel. The "social gospel" of civil-rightism is not the Gospel. The memorandums of labor union leaders are not the Gospel. The creed revisions of the modernist churches are nothing of the Gospel. The bemusing philosophy of the Arminian evangelist is not the Gospel. The patter of those who talk almost exclusively about Jesus but almost never about God is not the Gospel. You have a clear presentation of the Gospel in the Heidelberg Catechism. Briefly it is there stated that the people of God belong to their faithful Savior, Jesus Christ, from all eternity, and are brought to Him by the way of sin and misery through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, unto a sanctified life of thanksgiving. Nor is the Gospel preached by everyone who claims to preach it. It is not preached by the modern men of the one-world church ecumenical movement. It is not preached by the modern advocates of the so called "new morality," nor is it involved in the dalliances of "sensitivity training." It is not preached by the "clergy" of the Romanist church. It is not heard in the Jewish synagogue. It is not so much as in the thought of modern religious humanists and sociologists. But a man who really wants to know the truth need not fear being deceived by the myriad counterfeit gospels in the world today. For the Gospel is *semper eadem*. It never changes. Some Baptists have changed, and have departed from the Philadelphia Confession, or from whatever original Calvinistic confession they had, and so fall from the truth of predestination. They have departed from the teaching of their fathers, men like Gill, Booth, Spurgeon and Pink. Some Presbyterians have changed, so badly that they have made corrupt additions to the Westminster Confessions. Many of the Reformed churches have changed. They are now Reformed in name only. Attacks are made on the doctrines of predestination, election, reprobation, creation and infallible inspiration of Scripture. Everywhere there is heard the old Arminian language that God loves everybody, Christ died for all men, and made a "universal redemption." Imagine, the latter is conceived as being without the foundation of universal salvation! A hopeless, comfortless, impossible figment! But the Gospel remains immutable. Take a look at its beautiful, powerful and utterly biblical expression as



found in the Heidelberg Book of Comfort.

We must not only know what the Gospel is, but how it should be received, if we are to have any good from it. "For our Gospel came not unto you in word only." That is all many hearers of the Gospel receive, the mere external word of it, not the power of it. It has, of itself, a natural appeal to the intellect and an attractive force of argument. This, by itself, is the mere letter, which, by itself, killeth. But that is all many know, experimentally, of the Gospel. They attend church, pray, sing praises, partake of the sacraments, pay tithes, etc., and believe that this should make them good enough for heaven. Where they believe there is a deficiency in their account, they call in the merits of Christ to make up the difference. They put new wine (Christ's blood of atonement) into the old bottles of their self-righteousness. They attempt the sewing of new cloth (Christ's righteousness) on the filthy rags of their dead works. The Gospel has penetrated their

minds, but in word only.

"But our Gospel came . . . unto you . . . in power and in the Holy Spirit." When it comes to us in power, its first effect is not that we "anon with joy receive it," nor that we do many things, and hear it gladly (Mark 6:20), but rather that we believe the state of misery described in it is ours, namely, that we are enmity against God (Rom. 8:7), by nature the children of wrath (Eph. 2:3), under the curse of the law (Gal. 3:10) and were led captive by the devil at his will (II Tim. 2:26). When the Gospel comes to us in the power of the Holy Spirit, we have heard more than "a good sermon," which we may or may not have enjoyed. We do not think how we liked it. We think, How do I like myself, miserable, offending sinner that I am? What does God think of me? How much of His Word is evident in my conduct by a righteous life? Then we have a zeal not only for the truth of election, but also for the fruits of election!

## Its Assurance

"Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God: for our Gospel came . . . in much assurance" (1 Thess. 1:4, 5), which means not only that it is possible for us to know our election, that we may and ought to know it, but also that we may be assured of it beyond a doubt. When the Gospel comes to a man in the power of the Spirit, he doubts not the Scripture's veracity, infallibility, authenticity and authority. He becomes convinced that it, and the preached word, is "not the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God" (v. 13). For him, the clever arguments of atheists, modern scientists and sociologists are dispelled like milk-weed in the wind. He affirms, "by His Holy Spirit my Father in heaven *assures* me of eternal life." He is as much assured of his election as he is of Christ's absolute Godhead, His true humanity, His virgin birth, His atoning death, His office as prophet, priest and king, His covenant headship and His eternal reign. These things are settled in his mind once for all. His faith, positive and dogmatic, may amaze the self-complacent ignorant and amuse the supercilious intellectual. His Romish acquaintances may regard his faith with a mixture of envy and amused tolerance. They may even eye him with pity, for according to the avowed standard of Popery, all such "erring brethren" are actually cursed. Ever since the Council of Trent (1563, the year the Heidelberg Catechism was first published), the Romish church has pronounced a curse upon Ursinus, his catechism, and the Protestant and Reformed churches, in its decrees, one of which reads, "If any one shall affirm that a regenerate and justified

man is bound to believe that he is certainly in the number of the elect, let such an one be accursed." Popery puts its puerile curses against plain Scripture. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect! It is God that justifieth! Who is he that condemneth!" Does not that Scripture make it as plain as possible that the justified man is certainly in the number of the elect? If a man cannot believe that he is among the elect, neither can he believe he is among the justified. The Apostle Paul thought that a justified man is bound to believe he is in the number of the elect. He taught, "we are *bound* to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning *chosen* you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit *and belief* of the truth" (II Thess. 2:13). But since none of the curses of the Council of Trent have been lifted from the head of so much as one Protestant, let the Romanist cease his prattle about "dialogue" with the Protestant bodies. Let him know that according to his own Bible, the Gospel, which comes in power, in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance, insists upon brethren beloved from eternity knowing their election of God. (1 Thess. 1:4, 5). Let him also know that with us it is a very small matter that we should be judged of Rome, or of man's judgment (1 Cor. 4:4). But if he know not anything else, let him know at least this much, that "if any man preach any other 'gospel' unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let *him* be accursed" (Gal. 1:9)!



## Its Veneration

The one who does the choosing puts honor and value on the chosen ones. To be appointed by the president to an office is an honor; or to be granted a position by the state places dignity on the appointee. It was a special commendation that "Titus . . . was also chosen of the churches" (2 Cor. 8:19). Of higher honor is it that "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world . . . God hath chosen the weak things of the world" (1 Cor. 1:27). The highest possible honor is expressed in, "Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold, Mine Elect, My Beloved, whom I have chosen" (Isa. 42:1; Matt. 12:18). Christ is the first Elect. He is the "chief Cornerstone, elect, precious" (1 Pet. 2:6), which shows that the honor and excellency of preciousness is upon Christ because He is elect. His members are referred to thus, "His elect's sake, whom He hath chosen" (Mark 13:20). The most honored of the saints are so because of their election: "For David My servant's sake, whom I chose" (1 Kings 11:34); "Aaron whom He had chosen" (Ps. 150:26); Paul was a "chosen vessel unto Me" (Acts 9:15). "Ye are a chosen generation" (1 Pet. 2:9), i.e., "an elect race" (ASV), for "I have chosen you" (John 15:16). We could never dwell in the house of the Lord for ever except that we had been chosen of God. "Blessed is the man whom Thou chooseth and causeth to approach unto Thee, that he may dwell in Thy courts" (Ps.

65:4).

Peculiar honor is further evident in the relative fewness of the elect in any age. In the days of Noah, the elect were sheltered in "the ark . . . wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved" (1 Pet. 3:19), but "the world of the ungodly" perished. The Lord in answer to the question, "Are there few that be saved?" (Luke 13:23), answered, "Narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matt. 7:13). In contrast to the *nations* of the world, thy Lord says, "Fear not, (very) little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:30, 32). It is true of God's people generally that "Ye were the fewest of all people" (Deut. 7:7), and that was so because "many are called, but few chosen" (Matt. 20:16). This scarcity comes about not because the Lord is disappointed or defeated in His original purpose, but because it is the realization of His foreordination in eternity. "Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did He." "Whatsoever His soul desireth, even that He doeth." "He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay His hand." The total number of the elect is "a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues" (Rev. 7:9).

## Its Resistance

When the doctrine of election is scripturally and faithfully preached, it will be met with bitter protestations. It was always so in every age of the church. The natural man would rather not hear the truth of the absolute sovereignty of God, that He is the Potter, while he the clay to be formed a vessel of wrath or a vessel of mercy, as He ordains. This arouses his ire as nothing else will. When the preacher insists that man is so totally depraved in sin that he is spiritually dead, is prone to all evil and incapable of any good, and therefore can never come to salvation unless God has chosen and quickened him, that preacher is denounced in rage as a "wicked man." Maintaining of this truth has brought forth opposition from local church, bearing the name Reformed, and from standing denominational committee. Certain Bible movements single out an attack on first one part of Scripture truth, then another, until very little of fundamental Bible truth is left. One movement agrees that the five points of Calvinism are a "one hoss shay." Another contemptuously regards eternal punishment as unnecessary, and the final preservation and

perseverance of the saints as offensive. Still another finds embarrassing to modern cultural tastes the doctrine of the trinity and the doctrine of fiat creation. Preach that men are by nature like the impotent man, fallen, foul, helpless in the dust; like the prodigal son, a bankrupt pauper owing ten thousand talents with nothing to pay; like Lazarus, dead and stinking in the grave of sin and spiritual death; like the dry bones in the valley, utterly dependent on the sovereign good pleasure of God for restoration and life — preach that, and vain man, ignorant of his real misery, cannot tolerate such self-denuding, pride-abasing doctrine.

From experience you soon learn that the usual method of attack against this truth is that of misrepresentation, not that of refutation. It is not taken up and answered, but held down and perverted. It is so hated that it cannot be mentioned nor appraised in such a way as to let the doctrine as found in the Reformed and Calvinistic confessions and in the Scripture speak for itself. Instead, election is presented as though God ordained the end without ordaining the



means; as though election were not to the end that we should be holy; that it were not through sanctification, faith and unto obedience. It is made to teach that the elect may become as wicked as they please and still go to heaven, and the reprobate may have every regard for virtue and longing for heaven, but despite that can never make it to heaven. Often, denial of election takes the course of caricature of Scripture.

This is the "smear" tactic used against the doctrine of election. It is made to appear an evil monster,

threatening to the "democratic spirit," to the "brotherhood of man" and the "unity of mankind." Satan reveals his power when he is able to stir up all kinds of animosity against this truth from every quarter of the wicked world. But he demonstrates his cunning when he is able to enlist the underground and underhanded activities of professing Christians within the church to carry on his subversion for him. But none of these things should move the lover of Reformed truth.

## *The Voice of our Fathers*

# Belgic Confession, Article 14 Pre-Adamite Man?

Rev. J. Kortering

All who accept a form of progressive creationism have to deal with the problem of evolution as it applies to man. Was there a man before Adam? Was Adam the Cro-Magnon man? When did the animal become man?

These problems arise upon a *rejection* of the simple faith presented in our Belgic Confession. There we read, "We believe that God created man out of the dust of the earth, and made and formed him after his own image and likeness, good, righteous, and holy, capable in all things to will, agreeable to the will of God."

It may interest us and thereby reaffirm our faith in the creation of man, if we pause a few moments to consider how the progressive creationist deals with the pre-Adamite problem.

We will let Bernard Ramm be our spokesman. In our last article we referred to his book, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*. We noticed that he is sympathetic to the evidence of evolution and allows it to influence his view of man's origin. Concerning this he has more to say.

## FIVE PRESUPPOSITIONS

He writes concerning the origin of man on pages 315, ff.

We believe that modern science has demonstrated a great antiquity of man, relatively speaking. His antiquity of somewhere near 500,000 years is large compared to Ussher's 4004 B.C., but recent compared to the 500 million years ago when life is abundantly detected in the rocks. Evangelicals will applaud the almost universal testimony of modern anthropology to the unity of the human race, but are apt to be very chary over an antiquity of about 500,000 years for man. The answer to man's antiquity must hinge in large part on our presuppositions as to the origin of man.

Ramm continues by detailing these five

presuppositions. They are as follows.

First, "We may assert that the geologists are completely wrong and that man was created a few thousand years before Christ." He suggests that if this is our presupposition, then we will say that geologists and anthropologists are blinded by evolution and therefore not to be trusted. He, however, cannot take this position because, "We cannot write off all of modern geology and anthropology in defense of the origin of man about 4000 B.C."

Secondly, "We may assert that there is a difference between fossil man and Biblical man." We could say that fossil man was part of the original creation and that there was a long period of time between Gen. 1:1 and Gen 1:2ff., (the gap theory). By the time God got around to creating man, the fossil man was ready to become man and God did a little improving upon him. If we reject the "Gap theory," we might go in the direction of a pre-Adamite man and maintain that some of these men were alive upon the earth at the same time Adam was. Concerning this, Ramm states, "There are problems with this theory before it can be a good option. It seems too much like having our cake and eating it . . . We can have the antiquity of man, and the recency of Adam! But who is to tell where one leaves off and the other begins? Certainly, if pre-Adamism leads to the breakdown of the unity of the race we have theological problems with the imputation of sin through the fall of one man."

Thirdly, "We may believe that the Biblical account is metaphorical and we must look to science for the actual data of man's origin." To this he adds an explanation, "We may accept the Genesis account as theologically true, but believe that this inspired truth is set forth in allegorical or figurative or metaphorical or symbolical or mythical literary structure." He gives two examples of this approach, one of Emil Brunner



and the other of James Orr. His evaluation of this approach is, "Many Evangelical scholars would feel apprehensive over taking too many liberties with the interpretation of the text, but it must also be kept in mind that a crass, literalistic interpretation with its literal anthropomorphisms is also objectionable to good exegetical taste. There is nothing *a priori* in the exegesis of the passage which enables the literalist (at this point) to preempt the position of orthodoxy to themselves. The account is graphic and it is somewhat anthropomorphic and it is somewhat pictorial."

Fourth, "We may take *theistic evolution* as the solution to our problem of the origin of man." Such a view accepts the derivation of one species to another or accepts theistic evolution as the *modus operandi* of creation, or would accept evolution as long as it allows for the inclusion of some idea of creation. He states, "Those who admit the possibility of theistic evolution tack man's origin on to their general belief in theistic evolution and believe that at a certain point a prehuman became a human, and that was Mr. Adam. The details of the creation of Eve would then be considered as a graphic or metaphorical or dramatic method of indicating the unity of male and female before God. Certainly if a scholar accepts the theory of theistic evolution for man's origin he is no more bound to a literal account of Eve's origin than he is of Adam's." Here too, he refers to James Orr as the representative of this view. He quotes Orr's book, *God's Image in Man*

I have already made the admission that there is no necessary antagonism between theism and a doctrine of organic evolution as such. The species should have arisen by a method of derivation from some primeval germ (or germs) rather than by unrelated creations, is not only not inconceivable, but may even commend itself as a higher and more worthy conception of the divine working than the older hypothesis. Assume God — as many devout evolutionists do — to be immanent in the evolutionary process, and His intelligence and purpose to be expressed in it; then evolution so far from conflicting with theism may become a new and heightened form of the theistic argument.

Fifth, "Another possibility is to affirm that *man is as old as anthropologists say he is*." This approach would simply say, all right, man is 500,000 years old, we accept that. We can harmonize this with the days of Genesis being long periods of time, and thereby animal gradually evolved into man during the "sixth day." To this Ramm responds, "All these interpretations are accompanied by serious problems, and materialistic and naturalistic views about man have them as well. If there were prehumans or pre-Adamites we have no criteria as yet to identify them in any given find unless we arbitrarily assign a date to Biblical man."

What does Ramm say in conclusion to all this? Listen.

We must await more information from science and exegesis before we can propound a pointed theory of the harmony of Genesis and anthropology. The most vexing part of the problem is the connection of Genesis 3 with Genesis 4. The evident recency of the date of Genesis 4 seems to involve us with the recency of man in Genesis 3. While awaiting a solution to the problem we can remind ourselves of certain features which we tend to overlook; for anatomy, anthropology, and physiology are not the sole sources of information about man.

What are these features we tend to overlook? They are: (1) Both geology and Scripture teach that man is the latest major form to appear on the earth. Even if we grant the anthropologist's point that man has been on the earth 500,000 years, it still is recent compared to the 3 billion years of geologic history. (2) Anthropology and Scripture agree that man is the highest form of life, call it image of God or man possessing the largest brain in ratio to the weight of the body. (3) Both assert that man has much in common with animals. The Bible says that the earth brought forth the animals, and God made man from the dust. Science says that man's body is the continuation of the animals. (4) There is a divine element detectable in human nature now, which indicates a divine origin of man in the past. Psychology and philosophy bear proof of this.

His final point is as follows:

Perhaps our problem is interpretative. Maybe our trouble is that we are trying to apply modern methods of historiography to a method of divine revelation which will not yield to such a treatment. It might be that in some clay tablet yet to be unearthed — and Chiera said 90 percent are still buried! — will come a new clue to the interpretation of these early chapters. Until we get further light from science or archaeology we must suspend judgment as to any final theory of the harmonization of Genesis and anthropology, realizing that if we are pledged to period geology we perhaps shall have to be pledged to period anthropology.

## A FALSE SYNTHESIS

By way of a brief criticism of the above, we offer the following:

1. Unbelieving science is readily accepted as the interpreter of natural revelation. This we reject, for such science prostitutes that revelation rather than understands it. Rom. 1:20-24. Only the believer thoroughly imbued with the love of God and the wisdom of the Word of God is qualified to address himself to the givens of natural revelation. He alone is spiritually prepared to deal properly with it. Such a scientist has nothing in common with the unbeliever, much less will he be impressed with the unbeliever's conclusions on origins. The blind must not be leaders of the blind or they both fall into the pit. Matt. 15:14.

2. If the "evidence" of natural science will control



our exegesis of Scripture, the result is a complete sell-out of divine revelation to human speculation. Follow the line of reasoning. (1) Evolution is compatible with creation (the basic assumption we believe to be a serious error, theistic evolution or progressive creation are self-contradictory terms). (2) Evolution is a process so creation is a process. (3) The process applies to the whole of creation, man is part of that creation. (4) Evolution claims man's origin began at least 500,000 B.C., this is too early for Adam's presence in history if we take Genesis 3 and 4 seriously, so there must have been pre-Adamite creatures. So Ramm is willing to sell his spiritual birthright of the beautiful doctrine of creation of man for a mess of scientific pottage when he says, "we perhaps shall have to be pledged to period anthropology."

3. This is a tragic example of man ever learning but

never able to come to the knowledge of the truth, II Tim. 3:7. After having given different propositions to consider, having documented these possibilities with learned quotations from authorities in the field, what do we get? This, "It might be that in some clay tablet yet to be unearthed — and Chiera said 90 percent are still buried! — will come a new clue to the interpretation of these early chapters." Of all things, learned men still need more tablets to be able to understand the Scriptures.

God give us child-like faith to believe what our fathers expressed so beautifully in the Belgic Confession, "We believe that God created man out of the dust of the earth, and made and formed him after his own image and likeness, good, righteous, and holy, capable in all things to will, agreeable to the will of God."

Such faith is a gift of God.

## About Theological School

# Seminary Building--A Progress Report

Many are very interested in the progress of our drive for funds for a new seminary building, and the development of plans for its erection in the near future. We expect, by reports such as these, to keep you well informed.

But first, a word of apology. In the last report, the undersigned included the names of the individual churches in the denomination and the sums collected by them in the recent drive. This was presented in the interest of a full and complete report. However, some thought that this invited unfair comparison between the various churches and ought to have been omitted. For this invitation to apparent unfair comparisons, I do want to apologize. In the future, we expect not to report in that manner.

## CURRENT FINANCIAL STATUS

It can only be with continued gratitude to God that we can report on the willingness of the members of our churches (and from some outside of our churches) to support so generously this cause. The need was recognized, and the response was in harmony with the recognition.

Our last report (August 10, 1972) showed cash gifts and pledges of \$64,278. That was just a shade under the 65% that Synod required before building would begin. To date, we have far exceeded that 65%, though we have not attained to 100% of the goal. With still about three of our churches to report, we have on hand or pledged a total of \$84,638.27 (a gain of over

\$20,000 above the last report). Of this total amount, we have \$40,149.27 in cash.

A little twiddling with a pencil will show that already, *on an average*, our families have contributed each \$54.00 in cash, with an additional \$59.00 pledged — for a total of \$113.00. Remember: this is the *average*. Now that is nothing short of amazing — and surely reason for gratitude to God. True, we need an *average* of \$150.00 per family — but right now we are only \$37.00 per family short of that goal. We would earnestly ask our families for continued support: if gifts in cash or pledges have not yet been given, we would ask for your gifts soon; if you have already contributed or pledged, but could see your way clear to provide additional support, we ask for that assistance. And our sincere thanks go to each of you who have so generously supported this project.

## AND NOW: THE TASK OF BUILDING!

Synod instructed our committee to dispose of the proposed building site next to our Southeast Church and to purchase at least a two-acre site at the approximate cost of \$10,000. Synod also instructed our committee to appoint a "Blue Ribbon" Committee which would advise on site locations and supervise the erection of a building.

We are in the process of attempting to sell our original location. This is not yet completed. The committee is of the opinion that this site will be finally sold for at least as much as was originally invested in it.



That "Blue-Ribbon" Committee was also appointed. The chairman is Mr. Gordon Van Overloop from our Hudsonville church. The other members are: Mr. Ernie Miedema from our Hudsonville church; Mr. John Kuiper, Jr. from our Hope Church; and Mr. Tom Newhof, Jr. from our First, Grand Rapids church. (We would also wish to express our sympathy to one of the members of the committee, Mr. Ernie Miedema, and his family in the sudden, recent death of their son. May God richly provide for them in this grief through His Word and by His Spirit.)

This committee began with great enthusiasm to carry out their task of finding a location for the new building. After spending much time investigating, they proposed two possible sites to the Theological School Committee with the suggestion that this committee select one of the two. It was not easy to select. Neither of the parcels was improved (no water or sewer). But both were very lovely sites. The chief consideration was: which site would be of greater benefit for the new Seminary building and for the churches at large? We could not unanimously agree on this question, but a selection was made. And the Theological School Committee unitedly agrees that now that the selection is made, we are going to proceed as soon as possible with building.

"Where is it? Where is it?" you ask. Perhaps, if you are acquainted with Grand Rapids, I can explain its location. It is west of, and fronting on, Ivanrest, S.W. One crosses Ivanrest on 28th Street (the South Belt Line), not very far from the location of our Southwest

Church. Proceeding south on Ivanrest, and just before reaching 52nd Street, just south of the Grandville-Wyoming city boundaries, one can find the proposed site. (Try to find it — it isn't all that hard. Perhaps the Theological School Committee or the "Blue Ribbon" Committee can be persuaded to erect a sign: "Future Location of the Protestant Reformed Seminary.")

The site is very lovely. The building would be placed on the top of a rather high knoll overlooking most of Grand Rapids area. The view is extremely beautiful — and we hope not too distracting to professors and students.

Now the "Blue Ribbon" Committee has been instructed to prepare, for final approval of the Theological School Committee, plans for a building which will be suitable for this site. Likely there will have to be modifications of the plan which was printed in the last *Acts of Synod*. We will try to pass these on to you, through the *Standard Bearer*, as soon as they are prepared.

We do hope that building can begin by early spring — at least we are aiming for such a goal. And we can not help but be excited about the prospect of having, finally, our own seminary building.

We thank our covenant God for all these blessings bestowed richly and freely upon our churches — and now seen again concretely in this endeavor which He has prospered.

for the Theological School Committee,  
Rev. G. Van Baren

## Contending For The Faith

# The Doctrine of Atonement (Reformation Period)

Rev. H. Veldman

In our preceding article we quoted Article IV of the Rejection of Errors of Head II of the Canons of Dordt which treats the atoning suffering and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. And we noted the fact that, in this article, the Remonstrants present what they consider the condition upon which God will bestow life and salvation. In the preceding articles of this Rejection of Errors the Arminians declare that Christ by His death upon the cross merited for the Father the authority and will to deal again with the sinner, to prescribe new conditions for that sinner unto his salvation. Now, in Article IV, they state what this new condition is. We must bear in mind, of course, that the fathers, in this article, set forth the position of the Remonstrants, hold before us what they believe and know to be the

position of the Arminians with respect to faith as the new condition prescribed by the Lord in connection with the salvation of the sinner.

It is well to understand the meaning of faith as interpreted by the Reformed fathers. The Arminian believed that faith is a condition which man by his free will must be willing to meet in order to be saved. However, the meaning which the Remonstrant gave to faith is entirely different from that which the Reformed fathers attach to it. According to the Reformed conception, and with this the entire church agrees, as is stated at the conclusion of this fourth article, faith is that gift of God whereby He places us in living connection with Christ, so that the satisfaction of Christ remains the ground of all our



salvation. In the first place, the Reformed fathers emphasized that faith is a gift of God. This, we know, is according to the Scriptures, as stated in Eph. 2:8: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." In the second place, the Reformed position calls attention to the fact that this faith is one of the benefits merited by our Lord Jesus Christ. Faith is not a condition upon which the atonement of Calvary rests, but it is a benefit of that cross. This is stated emphatically in Article VIII of the Second Head of the Canons, and we quote: "For this was the sovereign counsel, and most gracious will and purpose of God the Father, that the quickening and saving efficacy of the most precious death of His Son should extend to all the elect, for bestowing upon them alone the gift of justifying faith, thereby to bring them infallibly to salvation." Notice, please, that the gift of justifying faith is here connected with the quickening and saving efficacy of the most precious death of the Son of God. And notice, too, that faith here is God's means to bring these elect infallibly unto salvation. And, in the third place, please notice that, according to the Reformed fathers, faith accepts the merits of Christ. What a fundamental statement this is! How this should be emphasized! Do we understand this statement in all its implications? Faith accepts. Of course! None will dispute this. Faith embraces, lays hold of something. The Reformed fathers, however, emphasize that faith accepts, embraces, receives the merits of Christ. This means that faith itself never merits anything. Faith only receives. There is never anything meritorious in faith. That a sinner believes means that he appears before the living God as a worthless, condemnable sinner who can never do anything else than render himself condemnable before the living God. Of course, we must believe. Of course, the child of God must walk in the way of sanctification, must seek the things that are above and reject the things that are below. But all this is the fruit of faith and, therefore, the gift of God which never merits our justification, never precedes our justification but is always the fruit of it. Faith never has anything to give, can never claim anything before the living God. Faith always receives and embraces the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ. The ground of our justification is never anything we do but only what Christ has done for His own upon the cross of Calvary. To believe means that we lay ourselves prostrate in the dust with the plea of the penitent in our hearts and upon our lips: O, God, be merciful to me, the sinner. This is the meaning of faith as interpreted by the Reformed fathers.

How radically different is the meaning of faith as set forth by the Remonstrant! We read in this fourth article: "Who teach: That the new covenant of grace, which God the Father, through the mediation of the death of Christ, made with man, does not herein

consist that we by faith, in as much as it accepts the merits of Christ, are justified before God and saved, but in the fact that God having revoked the demand of perfect obedience of faith, regards faith itself and the obedience of faith, although imperfect, as the perfect obedience of the law, and does esteem it worthy of the reward of eternal life through grace."

We have already called attention to the fact that this translation as it appears in our psalter is an imperfect translation of the original article. In the translation we read: "but in the fact that God having revoked the demand of perfect obedience of faith." This should read: "but in the fact that God having revoked the demand of the perfect obedience of the law." For the Remonstrants faith becomes a work of man, which indeed is not perfect, but which God in grace will account as the perfect obedience of the law. We should notice the following. God has now revoked, recalled His demand of the perfect obedience of the law. This refers to the law of the Old Dispensation. In the Old Dispensation God demanded the perfect obedience of His law. Perfect obedience was God's requirement in the days of the Old Testament shadows. Only then would the sinner be justified and accounted righteous before the Lord. This, however, failed. The sinner did not measure up to this standard. And now the Lord introduces another condition for the sinner's righteousness and salvation. He will accept the faith of the sinner. It is true that this faith is imperfect. But the Lord will accept this imperfect faith of the sinner as his righteousness. Notice, please, that the righteousness of Christ is not this perfect righteousness of the sinner. It is not what Christ did upon the cross of Calvary which renders man righteous before the Lord but the sinner's faith. So, the sinner's faith has become a work-righteousness, a work or activity of the sinner which renders him righteous before the living God.

It is true that the Arminian also speaks of the grace of God. You will notice that he speaks of the "new covenant of grace." Of course, the Remonstrant realizes that he must insert the element of grace. Do not the Scriptures emphasize that we are saved by grace? So, he, too, speaks of the grace of God. But, according to him, the grace of God is simply this, that the Lord has consented to accept an imperfect faith as the perfect obedience of the law. For the Lord to accept as perfect that which is very imperfect is the condescending goodness of the Lord.

Of course, this also implies that, according to the Remonstrant, also the works which proceed from faith are reckoned as part of that condition. This all comes down to this, that man by faith can merit salvation with God. And this is also the teaching of Roman Catholicism which declares accursed anyone who denies that our works cannot merit anything before the Lord. The Arminians have certainly followed in the footsteps of the workrighteousness of Rome.



How do our Reformed fathers appraise this conception of the Remonstrants? In the first place we would again remind our readers of the fact that the Arminians declare that the Reformed position speaks contemptuously of the sufferings and death of Christ. How bold and evil is this charge of these heretics! We speak contemptuously of the death of Christ? We speak of the cross with disdain when we maintain that this death of our Lord Jesus Christ is the one and only ground of our justification, when we emphasize the power and efficacy of that cross, that the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ actually blots out all our sins and trespasses and merits for all His own everlasting life and glory? The Reformed fathers speak contemptuously of the death of Christ, when in the cross of Christ they glory and seek in it all their life and salvation? And what about the Arminian? Why, actually discards the cross of Calvary. He declares that the Lord accepts his faith, however imperfect, as the ground for his justification and forgiveness of his sins. Of course, he must maintain this. Does he not believe in a death of Christ for all? Does this not mean that Christ, therefore, also died for those who perish? And does this not mean that Christ therefore never really did pay for man's sins and trespasses? Hence, he cannot seek in the cross the ground of his justification. That cross never did pay for his sin. The Lord, therefore, will accept the sinner's faith as the ground of his justification, and will also regard that sinner's works as meritorious. But this is not all. This Arminian conception also violates the justice and righteousness of the Lord. The Lord will regard a sinner's imperfect faith as a perfect fulfillment of His law. This means that the Lord will evaluate as perfect that which is very imperfect. This means that

the Lord will declare something to be true that is not true. How can the holy and righteous God declare something to be worthy of everlasting life which is not worthy of that everlasting life? This is completely contrary to what the Heidelberg Catechism declares in Question and Answer 11, as setting forth the truth of the infallible Scriptures: "Is not God then also merciful? God is indeed merciful, but also just; therefore His justice requires that sin which is committed against the most high majesty of God be also punished with extreme, that is, with everlasting punishment of body and soul." And this is surely the truth of the Word of God. The holy and unchangeable God can never deny Himself, can never accept as the ground for the justification of the sinner that which is in violation of His righteousness and justice.

Of course, that the Arminian takes this position does not surprise us. Fact is, he is not interested in the Lord. He is not interested in the holiness and righteousness of the alone living God. The Arminian is interested only in the sinner. It is not his concern whether sin be paid or not. He therefore tramples under foot every truth that extols and magnifies the Lord, and prates of that which elevates the sinner. Everything revolves about the free will of man. Man's salvation does not rest upon God and the work of God. It does not rest upon the cross of Calvary. It rests upon his faith, and the Lord, although denying Himself and everything that is just and holy, simply accepts his imperfect faith as the perfect obedience of His law. But the Reformed fathers, and the Church of God throughout the ages, proclaims that faith is a gift of God and that we are saved only because God loved us first in Christ Jesus our Lord.

## *From Holy Writ*

# Pure and Undeiled Religion (4)

*Rev. Robert D. Decker*

## CHAPTER 1:5-8

The question to be answered is, "What is this wisdom which, according to the text, we lack?" Wisdom is not to be confused with intellectual knowledge. One may be brilliant and have a head full of knowledge and still be a fool. One may even have a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures and be a fool. James is speaking of the wisdom of God. We must ask for wisdom of God because "the Lord giveth wisdom" (Prov. 2:6). There is no other source of true wisdom than the Lord. All the wisdom of this world, of sinful man, is foolishness (cf. I Cor. 1, the Book of

Ecclesiastes). God reveals Himself in His Word, the Bible as the all-wise God. God, in His infinite, perfect wisdom, determined the end or goal (*telos*) of all things; viz., the perfect glory of Himself revealed in the Body of Jesus Christ. And God determined all things, great and small, that should by the power of His providence work toward that goal to be finally realized in the new creation. Thus the Scriptures teach that everything finds its meaning and significance in relation to Jesus Christ crucified and raised from the dead (cf. that beautiful passage, Col. 1:13-23).



Everything was created by and for Christ Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature. In Christ we have redemption, even the forgiveness of sins, and are delivered out of the power of darkness. By Christ all things consist and in all things He has the preeminence. This is the counsel of God: "For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things to himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven." (vss. 19,20) That is the wisdom of God. Wisdom in the child of God then is to know the reality of that good pleasure of God as revealed in Jesus Christ, preserved in the infallibly inspired Scriptures. And, wisdom is to possess the skill to live in harmony with that reality. One is truly wise when he orders his life in obedience to the revealed will of God and lives in harmony with God. Jesus Himself illustrates true wisdom in the little parable of the wise and foolish builders, recorded in Matthew 7:24-29. The wise man knew the reality of the wind, rain, and floods; and he therefore built his house upon the rock, and it stood. The foolish man, refusing to reckon with the reality of the rain and wind, built his house upon the sand. It fell, and great was the fall of it! Jesus teaches that the point is: whoever hears and does His sayings is wise, and whoever hears and does not his sayings is foolish.

Now, if we are going to count it all joy when we fall into divers temptations in the knowledge that the trying of our faith works patience, we need the wisdom of God. By the wisdom of God we are able to see God's gracious direction of our lives, His molding us after the image of Christ. But, as we saw last time, this is precisely what we lack. For that reason the inspired James says, "Ask of God." That verb really means "demand," and it carries the notion of extreme urgency, an urgency born of a crying need. This is determined by the use of this term in other Scriptures. I Peter 3:15 teaches that we must be ready always to give an answer to everyone who "asks" (demands) a reason of the hope that is within us. Jesus exhorts us to ask, seek, and knock, and we shall receive, find, and it shall be opened to us (Matt. 7:9-11). This urgency is further emphasized by both the tense and mood of the verb: present, imperative. A literal translation is: "Let him keep on demanding." The child of God in divers temptations is to pray without ceasing for the wisdom of God. His whole life must be a life of persistent prayer for the wisdom of God, in order to know God's way with him and live in harmony with that way.

All this says something about praying. Prayer is demanding of God. We have the right to do that on the basis of the merits of Jesus Christ. As the redeemed, we encounter many temptations; and for Jesus' sake we are to demand of God the wisdom necessary to endure them patiently and joyfully. And, we are to

pray constantly. We must not expect that God will grant us the necessary wisdom apart from the means of constant prayer. More often than not, when God's people are troubled and perplexed, it is simply because they aren't praying as they ought. God doesn't drop wisdom from the sky automatically. As the Heidelberg teaches, He gives His grace and Holy Spirit only to those who sincerely and continuously ask them of Him. (Lord's Day 45) Further, our praying must be very specific. We are to ask for wisdom. That's the need. The need is not that the temptations be removed, or that we be exempt from the resulting sufferings and reproach. The need is God's wisdom, so that we may conform to God's will and way.

We are to ask: "of God who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not." Again the translation is not accurate. A literal rendering appears somewhat stilted in the English. "Let him ask from the giving God, to all liberally and not upbraiding." Notice that. We must ask from the giving God, from the God Whose very nature it is to give. Our God is the giving God. The cross is the proof. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16.

God is the giving God in Jesus Christ. In Christ He gives us all spiritual blessings, and, in this context, the wisdom we need to count it all joy when we fall into divers temptations.

The text speaks of *how* God gives as well. He gives to all. Not to all men. The word "men" doesn't even appear in the text. But He gives to all. All, not only who find themselves in divers temptations, but all who keep on asking for wisdom from God. All the slaves of God through the Lord Jesus Christ who pray earnestly and fervently and unceasingly for God's wisdom. God furthermore gives liberally. That is: God gives simply, openly, freely, sincerely; moved only by His gracious desire to give to His redeemed. Out of His abundant and merciful generosity God gives wisdom to His praying children. "And he upbraideth not." Here the Holy Spirit uses the negative for emphasis. To upbraid is to reproach, so that the point is that God does not give grudgingly, as we often do. He does not reproach us for lacking and asking. God doesn't scold His children when they come to Him just as they are — empty. When the child of God comes to this awareness of His giving God, he is moved to sing with Asaph; "O God, how good thou art to all the pure of heart, though life seems vain; Burdened with anxious care, I groped in dark despair, 'till in thy house of prayer all was made plain." No one ever keeps on asking from God without receiving. This is the sure promise of the Word of God; "it shall be given him." There can be no doubt about that. God will surely give His asking children the necessary wisdom to see His way and live in harmony with it.



But, writes James, "Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering . . ." (verse 6). To be sure, this means that we must pray without doubting. Doubting is really sin. Surely, one cannot pray for the wisdom of God doubting that God will hear his petition and grant his request. Jesus in Mark 11 told His disciples that when they pray, they must believe. It is that faith which moves mountains. Hebrews 11:6 teaches: "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

As true as this may be, it is not the point of the text. We are to pray in the sphere of faith, which means in reference to faith. This is explained by "nothing wavering." Wavering is vacillating. James is saying, then, that we must not pray for wisdom while secretly loving the world and yielding to the temptations. In no way vacillating, but only out of a pure, sincere desire for the wisdom of God, we are to ask in faith.

The ground for this admonition to ask in faith is: "For (because) he that wavereth is like (is to be compared to) a wave of the sea (or, the surge of the sea) driven (agitated) by the wind and tossed about. For let not that man think (suppose, imagine, or delude himself into thinking) that he shall receive anything from the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways." (verses 6-8). The meaning is clear. The man who wavers is double minded, literally "two-souled." He is the foolish man who tries to live

straddling the fence, with one foot in the world and the other in the church. On the Lord's Day he's in church and apparently a sincere child of God. With a show of great piety he listens to and agrees with the preaching of the Word; but from Monday through Saturday he is found seeking the perishing things of the earth. Thus he is described as "unstable in all his ways." He lacks the ability to stand firmly on the Word, and therefore he is always reeling about as a drunken man. He is unsteady in all his ways: in his home, at his job, in school. In all his ways, in all his life, he is unstable. He's always compromising with sin. Rather than counting it all joy in divers temptations, he yields. Thus he is to be compared to a wave of the sea, or the surge of the sea, as it is always agitated and tossed about by the wind. Thus James gives a vivid picture of the one who fails to pray in faith. He has no stability.

Flatly the text states: "Let not that man imagine that he shall receive anything of the Lord." When he prays, he will receive nothing. And, lacking the wisdom of God, he will find no peace. Anxiety and despair and ultimately destruction will be his experience.

The message is well taken. We do find ourselves amid divers temptations. Let us humbly keep on asking wisdom from our giving God, in faith, without wavering. It shall be given us. And we shall be able then to know God in Jesus Christ and order our life in harmony with His will. That affords unspeakable joy — even now in this weary night of sin and death.

#### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies Society of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church expresses its sincere sympathy to one of its members, Mrs. Ted Engelsma, in the passing of her mother,

MRS. WILLIAM MASTENBROEK.

"For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's." (Romans 14:8).

Rev. H. Veldman, Pres.  
Mrs. John Buiter, Sec'y.

#### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies Society of Hope Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, expresses their sincere sympathy to one of its members, Mrs. William Kamps, her husband and their children in the death of their son and brother

GEORGE KAMPS.

May our God comfort the bereaved in their sorrow and grant them His peace.

"The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." (Job 1:21).

Rev. R. Van Overloop, Pres.  
Mrs. David Meulenberg, Sec'y.

#### ANNIVERSARY ANNOUNCEMENT

On December 4, 1947 our parents,

MR. AND MRS. GORDON VAN OVERLOOP, were united in holy matrimony. We the children and grandchildren wish them God's continued blessing on their 25th wedding anniversary. We are thankful to our covenant God for bringing them to this milestone. We wish to thank them for their love and guidance in the

Word of God in the past years and wish them God's blessing in their remaining years together on this earth.

David  
Randal  
Greg  
Tom

Mr. and Mrs. Jim Van Overloop  
Rev. and Mrs. R. Van Overloop  
Kevin  
Ronda



## News From Our Churches

It's evident from information found in church bulletins received during the past couple of weeks, that many of our churches were actively involved in the commemoration of Reformation Day. We find the following, for example, in the October 29 bulletin of Southwest: "Rev. Veldman has received the consent of the Consistory to administer the Word to the Congregation at Pella today. He will deliver a Reformation Day speech Tuesday evening in the Pella area."

From a couple of Hull bulletins we can learn of further activities of our western churches. "The Reformed Witness Committee," according to one of those bulletins, made "plans to sponsor a Reformation Day lecture in each of the local congregations. Rev. Lanting will speak in Edgerton, Monday, October 30, Rev. Moore in Doon, Tuesday, October 31, and Rev. Kortering, Wednesday, November 1, in Hull." The topics of the lectures, according to another bulletin announcement, were as follows: "Faith of our Fathers," by Rev. Lanting; "Scriptural Basis of the Reformation," by Rev. Moore; and "Reformation Today," by Rev. Kortering. Hull's congregation was encouraged to "help promote the lecture in our area by distributing the invitation cards available in the bulletin rack. These can be handed out or sent through the mail to anyone you think might be interested in attending."

From Isabel, South Dakota, comes word that "the congregation and the public (were) invited to attend a public lecture by (Rev. Miersma) discussing the 'Reformation and its significance for us as Protestant Reformed churches.'"

And, still further west, the Church Extension Committee of Loveland Protestant Reformed Church sponsored a public, Reformation Day lecture in the Denver Christian High School Gym. Rev. Engelsma spoke on "The Importance of the Preaching of God's Word." Advance work for this lecture included the following, according to an early October Loveland bulletin: "The plans of our Church Extension Committee for a Reformation Day lecture in Denver include calling on persons living in Denver with whom we have had some contact. If you know of someone whom we may contact personally, please give his name to our (committee) soon."

Then, from our eastern churches, we learn that the Men's Society of our South Holland congregation sponsored a public lecture held on November 10. The lecturer was Rev. D. Engelsma, who spoke on the subject "How does the Protestant church of today stand in relation to the church and doctrine of the Reformation Era?"

The lecture in the Grand Rapids area was held, as

usual, in First Church. As part of the program presented at that time, the choir of our own Covenant Christian High School, under the direction of Mr. Roland Petersen, sang "Holy is the Almighty," and "Sing Unto God." The lecture, on "Holy Scripture — Wholly Divine," was delivered by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema. According to a note in the printed program, a tape recording of the lecture has been made available for a nominal sum. Further, free literature was displayed on a table in the foyer on the evening of the lecture.

A couple of quotes from the message on the above-mentioned printed program might be appropriate in this connection. The Protestant Reformed Churches in America, it was pointed out, "are approaching the fiftieth year of their existence, and still hew the line of the truth expressed by the fathers of the Reformation of the sixteenth century. This they do both in preaching and in practice."

"Our reference to antiquity is simply to remind you that biblical concepts believed and expressed by the Reformers are, according to our conviction, the sole basis for the right of existence of any church which purports to be Reformed . . .

"It is our prayer that God will call His people who have strayed from this foundation back to the old paths, and to a firm resolve that the ancient landmarks never be removed."

Permit me one more yet — this one a line from John Calvin's *The Necessity of Reforming the Church*, quoted in "Thoughts for Contemplation," of Loveland's bulletin: "There is nothing in which all men ought to feel a deeper interest, nothing in which God wishes us to exhibit a more intense zeal, than in endeavoring that the glory of His name may remain unimpaired, His kingdom be advanced, and the pure doctrine, which alone can guide us to true worship, flourish in full vigor."

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The worthwhile news yet before me is sufficient to fill at least another complete column. It will have to wait, of course, but there's one item which we cannot pass by. From Mr. Vander Wal, the following:

"The business manager of our *Standard Bearer* is 'hunting' again! Last time reported, he was hunting for a subscriber in Hawaii. Well, we got one. The time before, one in Alaska. We got three! *This* hunting trip is aimed at the state of Utah. At present our paper is not sent to any resident of that state. Any reader of *The Standard Bearer* who submits a name and address of a resident in the state of Utah, is promised that the name submitted will receive a three-month *free* subscription.

"Westward Ho!"

D.D.