

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

“The most important good work which the child of God performs in this life is sorrow for sin.”

— Herman Hoeksema

See “My Sheep Hear My Voice” — page 946

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Editor-in-Chief: Prof. Homer C. Hoeksema

Department Editors: Prof. Robert D. Decker, Rev. David J. Engelsma,
Rev. Cornelius Hanks, Prof. Herman Hanks, Rev. Robert C. Harbach,
Rev. John A. Heys, Rev. Jay Kortering, Rev. Dale H. Kuiper, Rev.
George C. Lubbers, Rev. Meindert Joostens, Rev. Marinus Schipper,
Rev. Gise J. Van Baren, Rev. Herman Veldman, Mr. Kenneth G. Vink.

Editorial Office: Prof. H. C. Hoeksema
4975 Ivanrest Ave. S.W.
Grandville, Michigan 49418

Church News Editor: Mr. Kenneth G. Vink
1422 Linwood, S.E.
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49507

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Business Office: The Standard Bearer
Mr. H. Vander Wal, Bus. Mgr.
P. O. Box 6064
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506

Business Agent for Australasia: Mr. Wm. van Rij
59 Kent Lodge Ave.
Christchurch 4, New Zealand

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MEDITATION

Christ's People a Willing People

Rev. C. Hanks

“The people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning; thou hast the dew of thy youth.”

Psalm 110:3

Do you remember the youthful exuberance that came to expression when you sang as a child:

“Onward, Christian soldiers, marching as to war
With the cross of Jesus going on before?”

Already then we were deeply aware of belonging to

the militant church, called to fight the battle of faith in the midst of a hostile world. Confidently we confessed:

“Like a mighty army moves the Church of God.
Brethren, we are treading where the saints have trod,”

even as with misty eyes we looked for the victory awaiting the saints in glory.

Time has done something for us. As raw recruits we ran into the battle, not fearing any enemy we might meet, ready to scale any wall that might stand in our way. We had as yet almost no experience with the wiles and cunning of our inveterate enemy, the Devil. Little did we know in our sheltered life about the firm grip he holds on the world round about us. Only gradually we become aware of the power of that worst enemy of all, the sin that wars in our members, ever striving to lead us into the snares of sin, luring us on as sheep for the slaughter.

We have tasted the smoke of battle. We have met our formidable enemy head on. Disillusioned with our own will power, we have lost all confidence in the arm of flesh. We have learned that our only security rests in the Captain of our salvation, fixing our eye upon the victor's crown He holds before us.

Jehovah has said to my Adonai, to my exalted Lord Jesus Christ: "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power."

* * * * *

In the day of Thy power.

The Dutch speaks of 'Heirkracht,' which is military power. This is entirely in harmony with the pervading thought of Psalm 110. God spoke and it was: He commanded and it stood forth. He called His Son to come forth from the depths of hell and death's great domain with the Word of His power, saying: "Sit at My right hand, until I make Thy enemies Thy footstool." Jehovah declared Him to be "King of kings and Lord of lords," bestowing on Him dominion over all the hosts of heaven, over His entire wide and vast creation, even to the devils that rage out of hell, and the powers of evil that wage war against Him, so that the angels wait in eager anticipation, the creation groans in pain awaiting her deliverance, and the powers of darkness are plagued with an evil conscience and shudder at their ultimate downfall. Nations may rage, and people may imagine vain things, but God has entrusted to Christ an absolute sway over them all, so that they cannot as much as stir apart from His will. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion knows no end.

This Son of God Who is exalted with power in the highest heavens is none other than our Lord Jesus Christ. God has set Him as King in Zion. His throne is set in the middle of Zion, in the center of His Church. For He holds the unique position of a double office. He is Priest-King according to the order of Melchizedek. He rules over the nations of the earth with a rod of iron, ready to consume His enemies in His

wrath in the Day appointed for Him, yet He does so as Highpriest, Ambassador, and Intercessor for His people. Zion is redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness. Through the judgments of this present world the Church is brought into the glorious kingdom of God's dear Son, to live and reign with Him forever.

Today is the day of Christ's power. What David saw in prophecy we experience in reality.

"We see Jesus . . ." (Hebrews 2:9). We see Jesus with an eye of faith exalted in the heavens, crowned with glory and honor. Yes, we once saw Him in the flesh, in the state of humiliation, lower than the angels. Jesus had humbled Himself as a lowly servant, the lowliest of the lowly, the poorest of the poor, willingly surrendering Himself into ever deeper shame and suffering, until as a worm in the eyes of men, He was despised, rejected, condemned, cast out unto the most shameful death, the accursed death of the cross. God gave His Son in our stead to bear the burden of eternal wrath against our sins to deliver us from death and to bring us to glory with Him. The Captain of our salvation marched through death, hell and the grave, arising as the mighty Conqueror to ascend to the highest position in heaven, where He now lives and reigns as our Advocate and Savior, the Shepherd-King, drawing His sheep into His fold.

This is the day of Christ's power, the new dispensation, which at the same time is the last day, the day of the coming of the Son of man with the clouds of heaven. He holds the Book with its seals in His hand, fulfilling the entire counsel of God as He breaks the seals one by one. He assures His Church: "Behold and see in all the happenings round about you, that I am working haste toward the day of My arrival among you. 'Hold that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.'"

This is the day which the Lord hath made for us to be glad and to rejoice in it.

* * * * *

In the day of Christ's power God gives to Him a willing people. This willing people is the militant Church, the army of the living God, fighting the battle of faith against all of Christ's enemies, which are her enemies. This is a glorious Church with a marvelous inception, "in the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning; thou hast the dew of thy youth."

The darkness of the night is broken. There appeared a small streak of purple on the eastern horizon. For the moment the night seemed to grow darker as it fought off the dawn. Yet that ray of light

grew, spread itself into the morning sky, gradually bursting forth in hues of lavender, pink, and red. The night is driven away, the dawn reaches into the new day. Dew drops appear as out of nowhere, myriads of sparkling lights on every sprout of grass, leaf, plant flower, bush and tree. The new day had dawned in dazzling splendor.

Our Lord brought this new day. Centuries before, the day appeared in paradise, yet only for a brief moment. For a short time our parents stood in the state of rectitude, beholding the beauty of the Lord in all His grand creation, extolling His matchless Name of power. Satan made encroachments on that day, enticing Adam and Eve into sin and bringing upon them God's curse of horrible darkness.

In the midst of that weary night the Psalmist gave expression to the longings of the Church as he pleaded,

O send the day of joy and light,
For long has been our sorrow's night;
Afflicted through the weary years,
We wait until Thy help appears;
With us and with our sons abide,
In us let God be glorified.

That prayer was answered. Christ came as the Son of righteousness. The first ray of light broke over lowly Bethlehem where Jesus was born, arousing new hopes in those who had waited so long. But the night grew darker as it tried to prevent the dawn. A sword pierced Mary's soul. The disciples all forsook their Master and fled. The Son of righteousness disappeared completely in that awesome moment of Calvary, when darkness covered the earth even into the soul of the Savior. For a moment the powers of darkness took courage; victory seemed within their grasp. Then the powerful Hand of the Almighty Jehovah caused the new day to burst forth in glorious splendor. He arose! Christ arose as Victor over death's domain. He ascended to heaven, where He lives forever to reign with His saints.

As the Son of righteousness brought the dawning of a new day, there appeared, as marvelously as the day itself, thousands of new, sparkling dew drops, a multitude of saints rejoicing in the dawn. Insignificant drops of water, yet capable of reflecting the light of the Sun in all the colors of the rainbow. God spoke, and His Spirit went forth to the upper room in Jerusalem. There was a sound of a powerful, irresistible presence. Powerful in His roaring, was He yet soothing in His serenity. Tongues of fire showed the sanctifying, cleansing, enlightening power of the Spirit now present in the hearts of the saints. Young men saw visions, old men dreamed dreams, daughters and handmaidens burst forth with the glad tidings of the new day, even as the Spirit gave them power to

speak to every one they met in his native tongue. If they had not spoken the very stones would have cried out.

A small, waithing church grew by the power of the Word and Spirit into a universal church in a comparatively short time. Christ added daily to their numbers such as should be saved. He gathers His army from every race, color, nation, tribe, and tongue. He draws His own out of death into life, transforming children of Satan into willing subjects of the heavenly kingdom. We can but marvel as we behold what God has wrought.

As marvelous as its inception is this grand army itself. Every soldier is fully equipped. Already at his baptism he receives the august uniform that distinguishes him as belonging to the forces of His Lord and Captain Jesus Christ. No stately uniform with splendid epaulets and numerous badges of rank and honor can ever compare to this one, which can best be described as being adorned with the beauty of holiness." The only one privileged to wear this uniform is a saint, separated from the world and sanctified in Christ unto God by the precious blood of Calvary. Upon his banner is written, "Holiness unto the Lord." Each piece of armor bears the stamp of having been cast in the armory of God. The soldier's headpiece is the helmet of salvation, his breastplate is the breastplate of righteousness, his girdle is the girdle of truth. His feet are shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace. In his left hand he displays the shield of faith, and with his right hand he manipulates the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

Each soldier is known for his courage. He has and retains the strength of youth; for his strength is renewed every moment. On the march his Captain leads him to sparkling fresh waters that rush through the brooks in the way (Verse 7). Streams of grace flow from the throne to Christ, and by the power of His indwelling Spirit into the heart of every warrior to quench his thirst and to renew his strength like an eagle's. Each member of the army is a son of the king; together they comprise a priesthood of kings, consecrated to God with their whole being.

This mighty army of the church of God moves in the highway of the saints who have gone before them. In the rumblings of warfare and in the heat of battle they follow their Lord as He goes forth conquering and to conquer. Confidently they meet the foe day after day with the assurance: conquerors, more than conquerors are we. They have never suffered any casualties, never lost a battle; their home and country remain unscarred, unhurt. In eager anticipation they face the future with a joyous: Our King is coming!

EDITORIAL

The Wiersinga Case in the GKN

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Are things changing in the *Gereformeerde Kerken* of the Netherlands? Is it true that there is a change for the better? There seem to be those who are persuaded of this. For one thing, at more than one synod of sister churches of the GKN the fraternal delegates of the latter have sounded a conciliatory and persuasive note. They have expressed appreciation for the concern and the warnings of their sister churches. They have been concerned to assure their sister churches that the GKN are dealing with the various problems and errors which plague them and to plead for patience and understanding on the part of their sister churches. And in more than one instance the latter apparently have allowed themselves to be persuaded and have not suspended or cut off their relationships with the GKN.

In close connection with this, others have hailed the recent decision in the Wiersinga Case as a step in the right direction and as evidence of a desire to maintain the Reformed truth. To refresh your memory, let me remind you that Dr. Wiersinga, a student-pastor in Amsterdam, in his doctoral thesis (he received his degree from the Free University's theological faculty!) denied the very essence of the gospel by denying the atoning character of the death of Christ. He denied that Christ in His death on the cross bore the wrath of God against our sins in our stead. As has so often been the case with recent errors in the Netherlands, this was an open-and-shut case. There was no doubt whatsoever that this was Wiersinga's teaching. There was no subterfuge, no weaseling with words. Wiersinga's position was very plain. Neither he nor anyone in the GKN denied that this was his teaching. This is not to say that there were not many who agreed with Wiersinga; there were, and still are, many supporters of Wiersinga's views — views which really amount, in my opinion, to the old error of the moral theory of the death of Christ in a new dress. But the *fact* of Wiersinga's contradiction of the

Reformed confessions was recognized by all. Moreover, also the seriousness of Wiersinga's error — an error which denied the very essence of the gospel — was immediately recognized by the Synod of the GKN: for when the case first came to the attention of the Synod a few years ago, it felt impelled to assure the churches in a pastoral pronouncement that the GKN maintained the confessional doctrine of Christ's atonement.

Meanwhile, as has become customary in the GKN when heresies have arisen in the churches, the Wiersinga Case was put on the long, slow ecclesiastical track. Committees dealt with the matter, consultations with Wiersinga were held, vain attempts were made to get Wiersinga to modify his position somewhat and to concede that the position of the confessions was also true or at least that he would not contradict or militate against that position. But all was in vain. Ultimately the Synod of the GKN had to come to grips with the case and reach some kind of decision.

A few months ago such a decision was reached. It is called a "judicium." This term has reference to a clever distinction which has recently come into vogue, the distinction between *judicial* and *justitial* pronouncements and decisions. The former kind of discipline involves a pronouncement concerning doctrinal issues and concerning the question whether or not a given teaching is *heretical* (although "heresy" and "heretical" are terms which are avoided nowadays in the GKN), while a *justitial* pronouncement would involve actual disciplinary recommendations or actions against the heretic himself. In Wiersinga's case, for example, a justitial pronouncement would have involved a recommendation that Dr. Wiersinga be suspended and/or deposed from office in the GKN.

This "judicium" (the entire decision was rather

lengthy and cloaked in considerable ecclesiastical gobble-de-gook) stated in substance that Dr. Wiersinga's denial that Christ bore the wrath of God against the sins of His people is "not permissible" (*niet toelaatbaar*) in the *Gereformeerde Kerken*.

On the surface of it, this appears to be both a correct and a firm stand. And there have been many, both in the Netherlands and elsewhere, who have hailed this decision as clear evidence that the GKN do not want to forsake the faith of our fathers and will not tolerate a denial of the very heart of the gospel. They seem to think that when it really gets down to basic issues and unavoidable decisions, the Dutch churches are of a mind to be Reformed.

We disagree.

We believe that the GKN are continuing the same policy which they have followed for several years and which has made them, in effect, into a dialogue-church or a modalities church. That policy is exactly that of making pronouncements on various doctrinal matters, but not enforcing those pronouncements. And the motivation, supposedly, is the desire to keep the denomination together and to avoid any kind of ecclesiastical conflict and separation. The effect has been that heretics such as Kuitert and Baarda and Wiersinga simply thumb their noses at Synod and its decisions and continue merrily to follow their heretical course. And the more it becomes evident that Synod will never recommend or take any disciplinary measures, the more bold these heretics become.

We agree with the Rev. H. J. Hegger, who stated the following in the March 13 issue of *Waarheid + Eenheid* under the title, "Synod Allows the Unallowable." We translate:

"We are glad that synod has expressed that the denial of the substitutionary suffering and death is "not permissible."

"We are the more upset because synod did not decide on concrete measures to counteract that error. It indeed expressed the expectation (and "expectation" is the term synod used HCH) that the church of Amsterdam (and other ecclesiastical organs) opposes this denial. But this expectation is vain, because the church of Amsterdam had already declared that it will not take any disciplinary measures against Dr. Wiersinga. It also appeared from the discussion which led to this expression of synod that in any event the majority wanted nothing of a disciplinary procedure; this according to the lead article of *Trouw* of March 6.

"A synod which declares of an error that it is not permissible in our churches, and which nevertheless allows that error by reason of the fact that no single

disciplinary measure is taken against the promulgators of that error, condemns itself.

"One measure which the synod at the very least would have to take would be to break with the Council of Churches of the Netherlands, of which also the Roman Catholic Church is a member. The latter teaches exactly the same impermissible error as does Dr. Wiersinga in its New Catechism, which appeared with a recommending foreword by the Netherlands bishops.

"But also that did not happen as a result of the decision. Apparently the synod finds it more important to keep the Roman Catholic Church as a friend than to be faithful to the Head of the Church, Jesus Christ."

Meanwhile, Dr. Wiersinga has already left the GKN far behind. Long before the Dutch Synod had made a pronouncement concerning this heresy, Dr. Wiersinga was already denying that God is a punishing God, that we may say that by sending suffering and sorrow and various awful things God wants to purify us, by denying that God has anything to do with causing suffering, and by teaching that God is only a God of compassion, love, and mercy. And I suppose that eventually there might have to be another "judicium" on this subject.

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QUESTION BOX

About Mediate and Immediate Regeneration

About Common Grace for Cain

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Question

From a reader in Ontario, Canada I received the following questions:

"In the *Standard Bearer* of February 15, '76 I found that according to *The Vidalia Resolution* (see *All Around Us*) 'Through the gospel the children of God are instructed and fed, strengthened and rebuked, exhorted and corrected; but nowhere does the Bible teach that God uses the gospel as a means of regenerating sinners.'

"This seems to create a difficulty as far as I Peter 1:23 is concerned, where we read: 'Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever.'

"However the words of our Lord in John 3:8, 'The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit,' must be interpreted in favor of the *Vidalia Resolution*.

"Please could you shed more light on this?

"In the second place, Rev. Veldman does connect this statement that the sinner is regenerated outside of the preaching of the gospel with the 'well-meant offer of salvation to all who hear the gospel'; I do not see such a connection. Would you or Rev. Veldman please explain this?

"In the third place, if the preaching of the gospel is not used by the Lord to regenerate sinners, what about repentance? This in the light of Romans 10, I Corinthians 1:21-25, John 20:31, II Corinthians 5:18-21?"

Reply

These are interesting and also important questions.

First of all, I would point out that this entire subject is discussed rather at length in Volume II of *The Triple Knowledge*, in the explanation of Lord's Day XXV. I strongly recommend that all our readers who have this exposition of the Heidelberg Catechism by the late Rev. Herman Hoeksema read the chapter entitled "Regeneration Immediate," pp. 420-433. I also recommend that, in connection with the importance of this subject, the next chapter, pp. 434-442, entitled "Preaching in the Sphere of the Covenant," be read. The latter subject is, of course, closely connected with the subject of immediate regeneration. In fact, it seems to me that some time ago I received a question on this subject of preaching in the sphere of the covenant, either in private correspondence or for Question Box. At that time I made reference to the same chapter. These are two very significant subjects which are intimately related. Space does not permit quoting these chapters in our *Standard Bearer*, however; and therefore I will limit myself to a quotation of what is found in this chapter concerning I Peter 1:23-25. We read on pp. 430, 431:

"Again, also the text from I Peter 1:23-25 teaches us the same truth, namely: the regeneration in its first beginning is an immediate work of the Holy Spirit. The text reads as follows: 'Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.'

"This passage has often been quoted as favoring mediate regeneration. Does not the apostle plainly refer to the Word of God (vs. 23) through which we are reborn as 'the word which by the gospel is

preached unto you?" From this it is plain, it is argued, that regeneration is wrought through the means of the preaching of the gospel.

"However, such an interpretation fails to distinguish properly and sharply between the different concepts of the text. Especially important are the two prepositions: 'of' and 'by'. These two prepositions are better literally translated by 'out of' (*ek*) and 'through' (*dia*). We are regenerated out of incorruptible seed and through the Word of God which liveth and abideth forever. Regeneration, therefore, is here presented as developing out of a seed. This seed is evidently the new principle of life, implanted immediately in the heart by the Holy Spirit. It is wrought in our hearts not only without our will or effort, but even without consciousness. It takes place in what is often called the subconscious. And the development of the new birth out of this incorruptible seed takes place *through* the Word of God. The question is, what is meant here? It must be evident that not the preaching of the gospel is meant, for this Word of God is described as the Word that 'liveth and abideth forever', and again, as 'the Word of the Lord that endureth forever.' And this certainly cannot be said of Scripture or of the preaching of the gospel as such. For as such the written Word of God or even the preaching of the gospel does not live, nor does it endure forever. It is therefore the casual, creative Word of God that is wrought efficaciously in the heart, opening the same, as in the case of Lydia, to hear the Word of truth. And finally, the apostle writes that this living and abiding and ever-enduring Word of God is preached unto men. Conceiving, therefore, of the work of regeneration as a whole, we may distinguish three stages. In the first place, there is the seed that is implanted in the heart immediately by the Holy Spirit. In the second place, there is the Word of God, living and abiding forever, by which the seed of regeneration is developed into the new birth. Finally, there is the preaching of the gospel, through which men are externally called and in connection with which they are brought to consciousness through the power of the same living and abiding Word of God."

As to the second question, the Rev. Veldman may reflect further on this if he so pleases. But let me remark briefly that if God well-meaningly offers grace and salvation to all men in the preaching of the gospel, it ought to be plain that this offered salvation also includes regeneration, the very first of the benefits of salvation. In that case, it is plain not only that regeneration is mediate, that is, wrought through the preaching of the gospel, but also that one is shut up to the Arminian view of regeneration, namely, that it is dependent on man's willingness to respond to the offer and to seek, desire, and ask for the blessing of

the rebirth. This is the view of regeneration taught by a man such as Billy Graham. Some years ago I commented on the fact that this is exactly what Billy Graham teaches in his book *World Aflame*. It must be remembered, however, that even those Reformed men who held to a view of mediate regeneration did not hold to this Arminian theory. This, by the way, is discussed in the chapters of *The Triple Knowledge* to which I already referred.

The answer to the third question ought now to be plain. Certainly, repentance is wrought by the Spirit of God through the preaching of the gospel (that is, therefore, mediately) in the heart of the elect, regenerated sinner. It is through the saving calling, the external aspect of which is the preaching of the gospel, that the life or regeneration is quickened into active and conscious faith and repentance.

ABOUT COMMON GRACE FOR CAIN

From a reader on the West Coast I received a request to explain Genesis 4:15, particularly in connection with the idea that somehow God showed grace to Cain after having first pronounced punishment and curse upon him.

Reply

First of all, we should get the entire passage before us. In vss. 10-15 of Genesis 4 we read: "And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground. And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand; When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and vagabond shalt thou be in the earth. And Cain said unto the Lord, My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me. And the Lord said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the Lord set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him."

It is a very commonly held view that in this passage Cain complains about the greatness of his punishment, and that in response to this complaint the Lord takes pity upon Cain and shows him kindness (grace) by placing a mark upon him and thus preventing his being slain. This, then, would be grace to the reprobate, or common grace.

In response to this question, I will quote a section from my Old Testament History *Notes*, the syllabus on *The Prediluvian Period*, pp. 24, ff. The first part of this quotation is about the sentence pronounced on Cain:

"Sentence is therefore pronounced upon Cain. He is cursed from the earth which hath opened her mouth to receive' his brother's blood. Notice, in the first place, that Cain is cursed not *by*, but *from* the ground. Secondly, notice that this is explained in the words of verse 12: 'When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.'

"This is a specific curse pronounced upon Cain, quite in harmony with the nature of his sin. The ground itself was also cursed after the fall; yet for Christ's sake, and for the sake of the elect in Him, it was also kept and principally blessed. But now Cain is cursed *from* the ground. The earth itself is made to assume an attitude of cursing toward Cain. When Cain tills the ground, it will not yield its strength to him. This does not mean that Cain will dwell in the desert. But it implies that wherever Cain shall turn, he will be cursed from the earth. His presence, as it were, will cause the earth to recoil in horror, so that it will scarcely feed him, and so that only with great difficulty will he be able to derive from the soil the means of his support.

"In that same sense he will be a fugitive and a vagabond. The very earth will cast him out and forsake him, so that he will have no rest. Especially, it seems, in the light of Cain's retort and in the light of the fact that he goes forth from the land of Eden, this included two elements: 1) that he no longer had any place in the land of Eden, where Jehovah revealed His face and spoke to His people; and, 2) that he would be driven always by the impulse of fear that everyone finding him would want to slay him. As unrelentingly chased by this dread, he would have no settled restingplace in the earth. A vain, fugitive, accursed life shall Cain lead in the earth. The very earth will spew him out, wherever he turns.

"Bear in mind, too, that behind all this is the Word of God's curse, the almighty Word of God's wrath upon Cain, and that, too, in specific judgment of his sin of murdering the righteous. The covenant God takes the part of His people and takes vengeance upon their enemies."

Before I continue with the quotation of my notes, let me call attention to the fact that the very idea of God's showing kindness to Cain in the light of the preceding would be very strange. It would be in conflict with the whole idea of God's holy wrath and the consequent curse pronounced on Cain. And this reminds us again of the theological consequence of the theory of common grace, namely, that it is in conflict with God's holiness. When God shows grace toward His elect people in Christ, He does not do so at the expense of His holiness, but in a way that is in perfect harmony with His holiness. But an alleged grace toward the reprobate can only imply a contra-

diction in God, a contradiction of holiness and grace.

And now I continue to quote from my Old Testament History notes on the subject of the execution of God's sentence:

"Cain's attitude over against this sentence is not at all one of repentance. He retorts, 'My punishment is greater than I can bear,' or, according to another rendering, 'Mine iniquity is greater than can be forgiven.' Even the latter rendering, though questionable in itself, cannot be explained as a complaint of repentance, or even of remorse — not in the light of what follows. He looks at the heavy punishment imposed on him, rather than looking with sorrow at his sin. This is always characteristic of the impenitent.

"But even with respect to that punishment his attitude is one of rebellion and defiance. He retorts that his punishment is greater than he can bear. He is driven out from the presence of the Lord in Eden. He is become an accursed outcast. But his punishment, such is his defiance, shall never be executed: for everyone that finds him will kill him. The sense of Cain's retort, therefore, is that his punishment will fail of execution because it will soon be ended by death at the hand of someone who will kill him.

"But the Lord will work out His purpose with Cain. Cain himself must be a sign, a sign of the truth that the righteous shall inherit the earth, while the wicked shall be disinherited. He must serve as a sign and concrete illustration of the everlasting punishment of the wicked, who shall go on forever existing, yet absolutely disinherited. Thus in Cain is realized a theme which occurs often in the Psalms (cf. Ps. 59, 69, 109, for example).

"Hence, the Lord appoints a mark, a sign, upon Cain. There is no profit in joining the speculations which have been made as to the nature of that sign — whether Cain was a leper, or a horn, or was afflicted with trembling, etc. The simple fact is that the Bible does not tell us about this, and we do not have to know. The point is that it was a mark which served to prevent Cain's being killed by warning and threatening everyone of a seven-fold vengeance upon the man who might lay hands on this God-appointed vagabond. Nor must we mistake the purpose and motive of this sign. There was no expression of grace and longsuffering in it. This is impossible: grace and the curse do not go hand in hand. In fact, this sign had the very opposite motive: it insured the execution of God's sentence upon Cain.

"Thus, in the first place, Cain must serve as a living testimony of the fact that the Lord takes His people's part in the conflict between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. Here is a revelation that God and all things are for His people, and against the wicked; that God's people can suffer and be hurt for

a little while, but that their enemies must soon perish, while the righteous have the victory.

"In the second place, the Lord's justice upon Cain is so executed upon Cain that: 1) He is kept alive and becomes the progenitor of an ungodly generation. 2) He and his generation are given a separate place, away from the presence of the Lord in Eden, where they can develop in ungodliness and where the sin of Cain can ripen and bear its full fruit.

"In the third place, the very form of the curse pronounced upon Cain becomes, under the providence of God, the occasion for Cain and his generations becoming civilization-builders. It must not be considered mere coincidence that when Cain goes out from the presence of the Lord, he goes about building a city. This should be viewed as a consequence of his

wrestling against the curse pronounced upon him. But even this must serve ultimately the divine purpose of the defeat of the seed of the serpent. For as the line of Cain becomes great in its worldly achievements, so it also progresses in wickedness, finally filling the measure of iniquity and becoming ripe for the destruction of the Flood."

The above goes beyond the immediate question of common grace, but I wanted to be positive as well as negative in my comments. Besides, my questioner suggested that the notion of common grace for Cain was contrary to the idea of the covenant. I agree with this suggestion, and I wanted to point out somewhat how the punishment of Cain had to serve the realization of God's purpose with a view to His covenant during the pre-diluvian period.

My Sheep Hear My Voice:

Letter To Timothy

Dear Timothy,

August 1, 1976

My last letter to you ended with a promise of more to come on the whole subject of practical preaching. I am firmly of the conviction that the preaching ought to be relevant — in the good sense of the word; and it ought to be relevant by addressing itself to the specific problems of life which face the people of God. But I ended with a warning that there are dangers involved — dangers of which you ought to be aware.

To get at this, I want to come back briefly to a remark you made in your letter. You suggested strongly that preaching is lacking in one important respect. You write: "Preaching ought to be concerned with the walk of a Christian in such a way that the Christian life is not treated as an unattainable ideal, but is something which ought to be strived for daily."

I think it best to comment first of all on this matter.

Scripture is very clear in presenting to us the "ideal" when it comes to us with its many admonitions. These admonitions do not call the Christian to a

"half-perfect" life, to a certain measure of sanctification which is far from perfection, to a kind of half-way holiness. When Scripture admonishes us (whatever now may be the nature of that admonition, and whatever may be the particular sin or sins to which Scripture is calling our attention), Scripture does so in such a way that it makes clear that God is satisfied with nothing less than perfection. I do not have to belabor the point, I think. You have only to look for yourself at any admonition. I could point you to that extremely important and awesome calling which Peter includes in his first epistle: "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation: Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy." 1:15,16. The point made here can very well be applied to every admonition in Scripture: God requires of us a holiness which is no less than the holiness which characterizes His own divine being.

This, quite naturally, presents us with a problem. The problem is, in brief, this: how can these admonitions be taken seriously by the congregation when the same Scriptures teach that, as long as we live on this earth, we shall remain very sinful? Our Heidelberg

Catechism speaks of the fact that "we have only a small beginning of the new obedience", and that "even our best works are corrupted and polluted by sin." If these statements of the Catechism are true, how is it then that we can take seriously the admonitions of Scripture which call us to total perfection in the whole of our life?

This problem is not only a theological difficulty, but a very practical one from the viewpoint of the people of God. That this is so is best illustrated by the fact that every minister, I suppose, at one time or another has had someone from his congregation come to him after a sermon on one of Scripture's admonitions with the remark: "Reverend, I agree with what you said; but you must remember that we are very sinful people and that we can never attain to that holiness. We fall far short." Maybe the words are not always the same, but the sentiments expressed are common enough. The people of God have a problem with this.

What is the solution?

You can, of course, take the path of Neo-pentecostalism. I was talking a while ago to a person who had been brought up from childhood on in the Reformed faith, was thoroughly acquainted with the Heidelberg Catechism, and knew the doctrine of sanctification as taught in Scripture and defined in the Reformed creeds. But this person had drifted into Pentecostalism and he talked at great length about the renewal in life which the second baptism of the Spirit brought about. It soon became evident that this person was, at bottom, a perfectionist, and believed that the Christian could attain a sinless life in this world. When confronted with the statements in the Heidelberg Catechism which I quoted above, this person simply responded, "I do not believe those statements." It was as simple as that.

But this is really the solution of all Arminianism and Pelagianism. You will notice that Arminianism always really heads in the direction of some kind of perfectionism. That is why Pentecostals can also be perfectionists, for Pentecostalism is Arminian. And the real reason why Arminianism is perfectionistic is because Arminianism can never take sin seriously. And it cannot take sin seriously because, to a greater or lesser degree, it denies that sin is a matter of the corruption of the nature. And, denying that sin is a matter of the nature, it ascribes sin only to the *act*. If sin is only in the act, attaining perfection is always a distinct possibility. If sin is in the nature, perfection is an unattainable goal on this side of the grave.

So you had better be sure you never take this direction.

But there is also always the possibility that one takes the opposite position. That is, whether con-

sciously or unconsciously, one does not take the admonitions of Scripture seriously. Perhaps a minister may do this. He does not mean to do this, of course. But, aware of the problem, and knowing that the congregation is never going to be able to attain to the goal set before it in the Scriptures, he unconsciously leaves the impression that he does not really mean what he says, and that the Scriptures do not really mean what they say when we are summoned to a holy life. Or, if the minister takes the matter seriously enough, the congregation reacts in that way. The members, thinking to themselves as they listen to the sermon that they can never attain to such a goal, brush off the seriousness of the calling, and excuse their failure to heed the admonition on the grounds that the attainment of it is impossible. This latter is really a kind of antinomianism, and it is the kind of reaction to the preaching against which the minister must warn strenuously.

But now to the question itself. Why does Scripture call God's people to perfection? And why does Scripture do this when the same Scripture teaches that this is unattainable in this life?

There is one answer to this question which must be immediately made. This answer is so important that, even if we had no other answer, this one would suffice to put all our questionings away forever. The answer is this. God Himself can require of us nothing else but perfection. It would be completely out of keeping with His holiness and, indeed, a denial of His holiness if He should do less. Whether we are capable of a perfect life or not, God must and does demand absolute perfection. It cannot be any different. The question and answer of our Heidelberg Catechism apply also to the regenerated and saved child of God: "Doth not God then do injustice to man, by requiring from him in his law, that which he cannot perform? Not at all; for God made man capable of performing it; but man, by the instigation of the devil, and his own wilful disobedience, deprived himself and all his posterity of those divine gifts." (Q. & A. 9) And God is completely serious about this. That must never be forgotten, and God's people must always be reminded of that.

But there is more. God calls His people (and now I am talking specifically and concretely about God's people who are brought by the power of the Holy Spirit to conscious faith) to perfection, in the first place, because it is by means of this call that God's people are brought to see their own sin. This must always be the effect of such preaching. In the second place, God's people must see their sin because this is the only way in which they will flee to the cross of Christ. The order of the Heidelberg Catechism (the knowledge of misery, the knowledge of deliverance) applies also here and to all preaching. They must seek

their salvation only in the cross. And seeking their salvation in the cross, they will repent of their sin, confess their sin, and, by faith, turn from their own works to rest solely in the cross of their Lord Jesus Christ. In the third place, the preaching of perfection is so important because by means of it God tells His people what He will make them when they are finally delivered from the last traces of the sins which are so much a part of their life in this valley of tears. And when God shows them the glorious destination which is the goal of their salvation in Christ, God inspires in them a longing for that day "when they shall stand without spot or wrinkle in the assembly of the elect in life eternal." And this longing is, of course, closely connected with their sorrow for sin.

In this connection, I remember a remark which Rev. Hoeksema made from time to time both in his preaching and to us in school: "The most important good work which the child of God performs in this life is sorrow for sin."

And finally, this same preaching of perfection ought to (and does) have the effect on the child of God that he strives ever more earnestly to attain that goal. I suppose, in a way, this is the paradox of the Christian life. I do not imagine that anyone can really know what this is all about unless he himself experi-

ences it. But repentance means fleeing from sin. And the child of God does that. Even though he knows that he shall not be perfect, he strives nevertheless continuously to attain that perfection. He never considers the matter hopeless. He never gives up in despair. Or, if he does, he is quickly brought out of his despair by the stern call of God. And he once again presses forward with new resolve to fight against the sin which is ever present in him. Any different reaction to the preaching is a sin to be repented of. And if there is no repentance, that kind of a reaction is evidence of his total lack of grace.

And so, I agree with you, with one reservation. The preaching must indeed present "the unattainable ideal." It must do that. It can, in God's name, do no less. But this is by no means the kind of preaching which denies that we must strive daily for such perfection. In fact, only the preaching of absolute perfection, even as an unattainable ideal, will be the preaching which, in the final analysis, results in a daily striving against sin.

There are some other things which we ought yet to discuss in this connection. But they can (and must) wait until next time.

Fraternally in Christ,
H. Hanko

STRENGTH OF YOUTH

Get Wisdom

Rev. J. Kortering

Wisdom is hard to get. Actually it is beyond human reach. It is a precious gift of God.

Even so, we are to work at getting wisdom.

If we are to be wise young people, we are going to have to work hard at obtaining it.

There are two reasons for this.

The first is that we live in a world which is filled with so much foolishness.

Consider, for example, the sudden interest in astrology and transcendental meditation. I know they are two different "cats" that cannot be thrown into the same "bag"; but they do have this in common, name-

ly, that they both are reactionary against the cold Scientism of the '60s. In the past decades we have seen the ultimate product of the technology of the industrial revolution, our space program. The trips to the moon and their excitement brought before us the wonders of science. What limit is there to man's ability? Whoever thought men would be able to walk on the moon? There was a rush toward the precise disciplines of science, teachers' grants, crash programs for schools — yes, science was our future. Yet, we soon learned that science and its achievements do not settle the human spirit. They may make life comfortable, but with them comes more headaches and mis-

ery, war, pollution, nuclear fear, and all the rest. In our decade we see men react to this. Like a pendulum we find man grabbing for the mystic. If peace cannot be found in science, maybe it can be found in astrology; or maybe the stars control our destiny. On the other hand, maybe it can be found in the inner man which has to be drawn out by meditation. Both are mystical powers which are supposed to produce the peace which man covets.

How foolish! For God tells us so clearly, "There is no peace saith my God to the wicked," Isa. 57:21. How precious it is to listen to Jesus, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled neither be afraid." John 14:27.

Look at the evidences of the pressure of modern life upon young people. There are so many teen-age runaways that we have a Watts line in Houston, Texas, as a clearing house where they can let parents know they are alright without having to tell their whereabouts. Suicide is increasing to almost 25,000 a year; and more and more of these are teenagers. There is a 13 per cent decrease in marriages, mostly because young people are "shacking up" instead of getting married. Even then, almost one out of every two marriages ends in divorce. We cannot even imagine what this means in human suffering, mental anguish, broken homes, and wrecked lives.

Basically, all this is the fruit of the development of sin. Man's moral values are sinking to the bottom of the abyss. Pornography is a billion dollar business in our country; and you know the market is aimed primarily at today's youth. Its inevitable by-product, sexual license, now accounts for venereal disease of epidemic proportions. Sexual abuse is becoming so acceptable that even the ungodly world is afraid that public acceptance of sexual perversion will make one think that deviant sexual behavior is normal because it is condoned by the general public. What a vicious cycle that leads one to destruction!

The second threat to wisdom is the fact that our own nature is attracted toward foolishness. We can't react to the foolishness of the world and say, "That's the world, the ungodly, but I'm not that way, or I won't act that way." The sad fact is that this world influences us more than we care to admit. In fact, we can even say that we are in some ways attracted toward the world and its foolishness. It looks good to us. This accounts for the temptation to sin. In the deepest sense, this foolishness is sin and our sinful nature identifies with it.

Have you ever acted foolishly, or desired to do so? Some of our young people leave home because they can't get along with parents. Broken marriages are the sad experiences of some young people within the

church. Unwanted pregnancies sometimes force these marriages. We cannot read the law of God on the Sabbath and simply say, "Yes, we all break all the laws of God." Rather we must admit that we break certain ones specifically, and then learn the hard consequences of it.

As a minister I have had to deal with some of these specific sins of youth. All the heartache, loneliness, hurt comes out when one has walked foolishly in sin.

Get wisdom! There is a certain urgency.

WHAT IS WISDOM?

If we look at the word as it appears, e.g., in Prov. 4:7 we can distinguish certain elements. There we read, "wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom." In the context, mention is made of understanding and knowledge. These three ideas are closely related.

To obtain knowledge, one has to acquire the *facts* correctly. We must know what is real and true. These facts form a body of knowledge.

Understanding is more profound. It involves the *interpreting* of these facts. Here the Christian understanding relates to the Word of God. God is the center of all truth. He has revealed Himself to us in Jesus. All truth must be seen in the light of God's revelation, the Bible. Only in this way can we interpret all the knowledge we obtain. We can see it in relation to God.

Wisdom builds upon knowledge and understanding. Both of these are seen as the tools of wisdom. It involves the correct use of the knowledge and understanding we have. Wisdom involves making important decisions. Wisdom touches the use of our time and talents. We need wisdom to do that which is right.

From this we can make the following conclusions.

Usually, the more knowledge and understanding we get, the more wise we can become. The incentive for studying in school, catechism, and society has to be ultimately the obtaining of wisdom. Why all this work? Is it just to accumulate the facts about life, algebra, history, science, etc.? How often haven't you said, "I forget them anyway!" The usefulness is this: they make up the sum total of the tools whereby we can practice wisdom.

We must say more than this, however. Not all knowledge makes one wise. Understanding implies a thorough awareness of Scripture. This is the heartbeat for Christian education. Why do our parents organize school societies and operate Christian schools? So we can learn understanding. All this knowledge must relate to God in Jesus Christ Who speaks to us by His Word. This is why we have Christian education, thorough instruction in catechism, society life in church.

All these things, along with concerned parents at home, help us obtain understanding of the knowledge we possess.

Wisdom is the ultimate test whether we have knowledge and understanding. If we continually act foolishly by giving expression to our sinful nature, we cannot claim to have knowledge and understanding. The ultimate test of such knowledge and understanding is whether we are wise. Wisdom is the principal thing; the beginning of wisdom is to get it.

HOW TO GET WISDOM

Three things are involved in the obtaining of wisdom.

First, you must love God very much if you are to be wise. Think on this a moment. Do you really love your God? Do you know that He is your God and that Jesus died for your sins? Christ is the wisdom of God Personally. To be wise we must know Him as our Savior. Does the cross cause you to be filled with joy? Can you appreciate the amazing depth of the love of God that spared you the grief, and laid the chastisement of our sins upon Him? This brings us into friendship with God. Out of this love we desire to obey God and do His will.

Second, you must know what is right. No one is ever foolish in doing what is right. We are always foolish in doing what is wrong. Hence, if we are to be wise, we must be thoroughly acquainted with God's idea of right. Obviously, this is incorporated in God's law. We hear that law read every Sunday. Wisdom requires more than being able to recite the ten commandments. We have to be able to see how these ten laws govern the whole of our life. They guide us in our personal relationship with God. They influence us in our worship, or Sabbath observance, our witnessing, our dealing with friends, our business transactions, etc. Nothing in the whole of our life is excluded from the guidelines of God's ten commandments. These are precious to us, not because God thunders His threats at us as He did in Israel. Rather, they spell out for us the sweet savour of the gospel. They tell how we can show our gratitude to God and how we may expect God's favor upon us. In this way the Holy Spirit writes these words in our hearts.

Finally, wisdom requires of us practicing what we believe to be right. Since this is such a highly spiritual activity, this practice must be done with much prayer and Bible reading. Our devotional life must be precious to us if we are to be truly wise. God works wisdom in us through His Spirit and His Spirit works in us by His Word and prayer.

While we prayerfully and diligently search His Word, we must practice each day what we believe to be right. Wisdom increases with practice. It is a Christian skill that must be learned through experi-

ence. If you really want to overcome sin in your life, you have to work at it. If you want to do what God wants you to do, you have to practice it each day.

Let me illustrate.

Discussions, debates, controversy, all these contribute to sharpening of our understanding of what we believe. If you meet someone who believes something different than you do, take advantage of this opportunity to discuss this further. Think of your position, the points that were made; examine them further when you are alone. What would you have said differently? It helps us grow in the conviction of our faith.

How do you deal with temptation, especially sex. You need knowledge, usually called the "facts of life." This is important in order that you might be wise. Ignorance sometimes leads to heartache. You have to see that sex is not dirty; it is a part of God's creation and therefore of our nature. God has a purpose with sex, namely, the enrichment of our lives in marriage and the bringing forth of God's covenant children. This is the understanding of sex. It takes wisdom to resist the temptation to think of sex as fun and games before marriage. Rather than to entice yourself sinfully, you should busy yourself with other activities; and when God joins you in marriage with a Christian husband or wife, you then will be able to give full expression to it as God intended.

Wisdom must be practiced in all areas of our life.

THE BLESSINGS OF WISDOM

First, by practicing wisdom, we will surround ourselves with a group of friends that will be meaningful to us. The opposite is, only too often, sadly true. The foolishness of sin brings us into contact with those who will destroy us. By doing what God wills, we will have friends that help us in our daily struggle of faith.

Second, the truly happy life is in the way of wisdom. Look at the ungodly youth of the world and you don't find happiness. Superficially it may seem such; but nothing lasts. True joy is in being right with God and walking in His favor. Life holds purpose in this way. We have a future and the strength to pursue it by the grace of God.

Finally, in the way of wisdom we have peace with God. Yes, we will fall into sin, the fruits of our flesh are always with us. Imagine what this means when we can truly fall into the arms of our Lord Jesus Christ and for His sake be forgiven. Such wisdom lifts from us the burden of guilt and restores to us the joy of forgiveness. It also enables us to press on, striving every day anew to overcome sin and to walk in the way that is right with God.

May God bless you young people with much wisdom.

TAKING HEED TO DOCTRINE

“Hyper-Calvinism” and the Call of the Gospel (19)

by Rev. David Engelsma

Abraham Kuyper wrote the book, *Dat De Genade Particulier Is (That Grace is Particular)*, because many were raising the motto, “*Christus pro omnibus* (Christ for all),” to a “shibboleth of evangelical truth” (p. 3). By this “Christ for all” was meant “that Christ, according to the intention and tendency of His self-offering, died for all men, head for head and soul for soul” (p. 3). Although the doctrine of universal atonement was on the foreground, Kuyper correctly saw that the real issue was the teaching that grace is common to all men. He refers to those who proclaim the doctrine of “Christ for all” as “zealots for common grace (*algemeene genade*),” and he opposes them by defending the fundamental proposition, that grace is particular.

Although those who confess particular grace are in the minority at present, Kuyper is encouraged to defend particular grace by the fact that “in earlier, and spiritually better, ages, I would have found plenty of allies” (pp. 4,5). He points to a “cloud of witnesses” which “did not know a grace which is not particular” (p. 6). This cloud of witnesses includes Augustine; Calvin; Peter Martyr; Rivet; Voetius; Witsius; Beza; Zanchius; Gomarus; Turretin; and many others. Kuyper can safely say, without any exaggeration, that “in the time of our national glory, when there were still genuine theologians, and genuine theologians in quantity, shining in the church of these lands, the conviction ‘that grace is particular’ obtained as the only Biblical and Reformed position” (p. 14). The teaching of “universal or common grace,” on the other hand, which is the “doctrine of Rome, the Socinians, the Mennonites, the Arminians, and the Quakers, crept into the Reformed Churches from without, especially through Amyraut and the Saumur school” (pp. 13,14).

Kuyper wants to make sure that we understand what the issue is. The issue is not that those who confess particular grace affirm, whereas those who confess universal, or common, grace deny, that, in the end, only some are saved by the grace of God in

Christ. For both parties acknowledge that only some are actually saved. But the issue concerns the will of God and the intention of Christ. Those who teach universal grace maintain that it is God’s will and Christ’s intention to save all men through Christ’s death. “In contrast, the particularists . . . teach: It must be preached by the church to every creature, that atonement has been obtained by the death of Christ for everyone who believed, believes, or will believe, i.e., since all believers are the elect, only for the elect; and this is true, not merely according to the result, but according to Christ’s intention and God’s counsel. The Church must also preach that the atonement is applied, not to indefinite, as yet unconverted persons, but to persons whom the Lord loves with an *eternal* love, already before they were born, and whom He ‘calls by name’ ” (p. 27).

The advocates of universal grace in every age have three favorite texts: I John 2:2; I Timothy 2:4; and II Peter 3:9. Kuyper painstakingly explains these texts, rejecting the interpretation that makes them teach a grace of God towards every human being. “The three main texts, with which men commonly like to scare the confessor of particular grace . . . prove *nothing* (emphasis, as always, Kuyper’s – DE) for universal grace” (p. 69).

Kuyper’s explanation of II Peter 3:9 is typical. The text reads: “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” In Kuyper’s day as in ours, the popular interpretation of the text, by the friends of universal grace – and foes of particular grace! – is that God does not desire any member of the whole human race to perish, but sincerely desires the salvation of all men without exception. Kuyper repudiates this interpretation not only as heterodoxy, but also as folly. “For then I come to this absurd reasoning: ‘Jesus *cannot* yet come, because God’s will must be fulfilled, and, according to God’s will, all men must first come to repentance.

But . . . if Jesus cannot come, until all men come to repentance, *then Jesus will never come*. For, first, there are already hundreds and thousands of dead people, who died unconverted. . . . Secondly, there are millions upon millions who will die today, tomorrow, or next year, without ever having heard of Jesus. . . . And finally, if God, without a definite goal, simply allows new men to be born continuously, and the coming of Jesus then must be delayed, until also these are converted, that coming of Jesus can be delayed endlessly. . . ." The explanation of II Peter 3:9 that holds that God desires to save all men involves "the most absurd reasoning imaginable and is utterly senseless" (pp. 61,62).*

"In II Peter 3:9, nothing else can be meant than this: Jesus cannot come before the number of the elect is full, and, inasmuch now as many elect have not yet been converted, He delays His coming, in His longsuffering, not willing that some would go lost through a premature return, but willing that they all first be converted" (p. 64). In the light cast by the history of the Reformed struggle to defend sovereign, particular grace, it is clear that the explanation one gives of II Peter 3:9 can well serve as the touchstone of a genuinely Reformed confession of the grace of God.

Having disposed of the superficial explanation of a few texts commonly opposed to the truth of particular grace, Kuyper proceeds to expose the error of the teaching that God is gracious to all men. His first argument is that the doctrine of total depravity refutes the notion of universal grace. Kuyper's reasoning here is well worth noting. He argues that universal grace necessarily implies the ability of the sinner to accept that intended and offered grace, i.e., implies the heresy of free will. All that is necessary, therefore, to disprove the contention of universal grace and to establish the truth of particular grace is the demonstration from Scripture that the natural man is totally depraved, incapable of accepting any offer of salvation.

"If it be true, what the proponents of universal grace teach, namely, that grace is offered to all men, head for head, on the ground that, in fact and really, the ransom is already paid for them, then it must herewith be supposed that the sinner, as he is in sin, yet possesses a power, an ability, a possibility in his soul, *to accept* the salvation offered to him" (pp. 70,71). "If one teaches over against this, 'No, the sinner is not able to do that. He has sunk away too

deeply for that, and, for him to be able to do that, something must first happen *in him*, by which he receives the power to lay hold on that offered (presented — DE) salvation,' then, obviously, 'universal grace' is found to be completely untenable on account of this one confession (of total depravity — DE), because, in fact, *not* all men receive 'this possibility to be able to believe' by a particular grace" (p. 71). "Of an *intention* in God at the forming of the plan of salvation and the carrying out of that plan in the death of Christ *to save all sinners* head for head, there can, therefore, be no mention, unless God knew that all these sinners yet retained the might, the power, and the ability . . . to believe in Jesus Christ and in the redemption through His blood" (p. 92).

The preceding quotation, with its reference to God's intention, indicates that Kuyper's opposition to universal grace not only concerns the teaching that Christ died for all men, but also concerns the teaching that there is an intention of God to save all. This is a basic element of the present-day doctrine of the well-meant offer of the gospel. Kuyper concentrates on this aspect of the error of universal grace when he goes on to show that the theory of universal grace is in conflict with what Scripture teaches concerning "the Being and perfections of God."

Those in the Reformed camp who teach that God is gracious to all must acknowledge that God knows, indeed has decreed, that only some will be saved. How then can they say that God wills, or desires, to save all? Their answer, says Kuyper, is the contention that there is a distinction between two wills of God: "One asserts then that 'will' and 'decree' are to be distinguished" (p. 102). What they mean is that there are two, opposite, conflicting wills in God: He wills to save all, and He wills not to save all. "That," writes Kuyper, "is gibberish (*wartaal*). . . . To place in one and the same decree 'Yes' and 'No' at the same time is to ascribe to God something absurd, a thing that must be resisted with all our might" (p. 105).

It is, of course, true that there is a proper distinction to be made between God's "decree" and God's "will." But this is the distinction between what God commands men to do and what God Himself decides to do. "God's will is: Thou shalt not kill; but in His counsel the murder of our William the First is included. God's will is: Thou shalt not commit adultery; and yet Bathsheba is foreordained to be the mother of Solomon. . . . Certainly, if there is mention of the will of God *which must be a directive for us men* in our actions, then of course, this revealed will of God is nothing else than His holiness mirrored in His commandments and which, therefore, has nothing to do with His decree or with His counsel" (p. 102). But this is not at all what the defenders of universal grace have in mind with their distinction between two

*One can hear the men whose position Kuyper here demolishes assuring themselves and their followers that Kuyper is "too logical." In that case, it will at least be evident from the passage that it is historically Reformed to be logical in explaining God's truth. Those in the Reformed camp today who recommend absurdity should advise us of their origins.

wills in God. They do not refer to "what God wills that the *man* should do," but they are speaking of "a counsel and plan that *God Himself* carries out." "There would be then, on the one hand, a will of God, that He Himself shall work at the salvation of all, and, on the other hand, a will of God, that He Himself carry out a plan according to which not all shall be saved" (p. 103). This, says Kuyper, is "gibberish," unworthy of Reformed theology and an attack on the Being and perfections of God.

It becomes more and more clear that Reformed theology will not permit those who maintain both a sincere desire of God to save all and the decree of election, i.e., the defenders of the offer, to find any

refuge in their distinction between two wills in God. The "paradox" behind which they hide at the crucial moment is not a Biblical, Reformed "paradox," but absurdity, absurdity which serves to introduce conflict into the Being and decree of God and the heresy of universal grace into the Reformed Churches. The distinction between a will of God that desires and intends to save all and a will of God that does not desire and intend to save all is a spurious distinction and one that Reformed theology has not only not recognized, but explicitly condemned. The God Who commands all who hear the gospel to repent and believe is a God Who wills, desires, and intends the salvation of the elect and the elect alone.

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of Hebrews 13:20, 21

(Continued)

Rev. G. Lubbers

THE EFFICACIOUS, SANCTIFYING WORK OF THE GOD OF PEACE (cont.)

This means that the law of God, written in our hearts as the new and better covenant, must be fulfilled in us in every last jot and tittle. We do not understand this in the superficial sense in which perfectionism's teaching manipulates this truth of the Word of God. Perfectionists would here refer to the law as a prescription of rules for the Christian to follow. That is how the Pharisees understood the law concerning killing, adultery, hatred of neighbor, and perfection. It was an external code of legal rules. But Jesus says that unless our righteousness of sanctified keeping of the law exceeds this righteousness of the Pharisees and Scribes, we shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. With such a righteousness we shall never be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect. No, this sanctifying work is a matter of the purification of the whole man, the inner man, as Jesus indicates in this "but I say unto you" (Matthew 5:22,26,28,34,39,44). Here we have the word of the Great Shepherd of the sheep with the real soul-care as it pertains to what he has come to do to fulfill the

law and the prophets. Indeed, this is the new covenant, written on the tables of our heart.

Now the actual writing of this law in our heart is the work of the God of peace by the operation of the Spirit of Christ. And for this the writer to the Hebrews prays when he would see them perfected unto every good work. Writes he: "that he might perfect you in every good work!" First of all, it must be a perfection unto works which are really "good." (agathoo). They must not merely appear to be good unto men, as did the works of the Pharisees. Of this we have the description by Jesus in Matthew 5:20 ff. They must be works which proceed from a faith which is energized by love. (Gal. 5:6.) All works which do not proceed from a true faith are law-works and are not acceptable on the altar of incense and thanksgiving. These are all attempts to bring a sacrifice of sprinkling with blood, which denies the blood of the great Shepherd of the sheep. These are works which are based on the institutions and the sinful imaginations of man. Then too these are such that they are according to God's law. They must be, as the text has it, "to do His will!" This will refers to

the will of God's command. In Hebrews 10:5-10 the writer refers to the "will" which Christ came to perform to bring the perfect sacrifice as predicted in Psalm 40:7-9. We must have a righteousness which does the Will of God, remembers God's covenant to do it. These are works of thankfulness. Besides, they must be works which are to the glory of God's grace. (Matthew 5:16)

Now these good works must be "perfected in you." No doubt this refers to the man of God's being "perfected unto every good work." This God does by His word and Spirit. The entire book of Hebrews has been such a God-Spirited word, which is sharper than any two-edged sword, even to the dividing of the soul and spirit, the marrow and bones, and is a discernor of the thoughts and of the intents of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12,13) Paul says that "all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, perfectly (thoroughly) furnished unto all good works." (II Tim. 3:16,17) And this must refer to the whole man of God: his whole spirit and soul and body as temple of the Holy Spirit. (I. Thes. 5:23) All must be preserved blameless to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. We must be wholly doing the law of God — prophets, priests, and kings of God in Christ. His mind must be our mind; His will must be our will; and we must be very bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh. This perfection has in it the preservation of the power of God in Christ. We are kept in the power, efficacious power of God unto that day, and are more and more conformed to the image of God. We are changed from glory unto glory as by the Spirit of the Lord. That is sanctification. It is being perfected unto all the good works of heaven. And this will be in our heart, mind, soul, and strength. Then will the great "Hear, Israel, the LORD our God is one LORD," be a perfection in our lives, and will be upon our lips in grateful adoration forever! It will be the song of the redeemed in heaven!

But this is all efficacious grace. Here the Pelagian must live in silence, and the Semi-Pelagian with him. For this is all to the glory of God. Here no one may boast save in the Lord. This is also true concerning the work of God's sanctifying power. We do not sanctify ourselves. We are the objects of this work, and thus are caused to share in it. Being moved we move! And that is what the text says: "working in you what is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ." This ought to sink deep into our hearts. God works sanctification into our hearts. He alone! And what He works in our hearts He does through the Mediator, Jesus Christ. This Jesus came to save His people from their sins. He came to save them also from all the pollution of sin, and to bend our wills

and make us a most willing people. He gives us a free will to will the good. Christ merited this for us, and now makes us partakers of this grace of a free-will, or, if you please, a will that wills in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. Thus we are king-priests of God.

For the text emphasizes that the things worked in us are "wellpleasing before God." It should not escape our notice that the Greek text has the article. This points out that which is well-pleasing as in a class by itself. It is *the* well-pleasing things. They are the chief and weightier matters of the law. The term "*Teuarestos*" is that which is connected with the altar of God, that which is truly dedicated and sanctified by the altar. Our works which are out of faith, according to God's law and unto His glory, are such works. They are on the altar which we have, and that altar is Christ Himself. He is the Priest which sanctifies such works on the altar. For they are wrought by God through him!

TO WHOM BE THE GLORY UNTO THE AGES OF AGES, AMEN (Hebrews 13:21,b)

We have made reference to this "glory" in a former essay; however, we believe that we should explain this doxology to the God of peace a little more in depth. The doxology here reads in the Greek as follows, "*hoi ee doxa eis tous aioovas toon aioonoon; ameen*," that is, "to whom the glory unto ages of ages, Amen."

The term "glory" in Scripture has various words in the Hebrew language: Adornment (Zech. 11:3); honor, adornment (Psalm 90:16); honor, beauty, majesty (Psalm 8:1); cleanliness and purity (Psalm 89:44). The most expressive of them in the Hebrew is that of "kabod," which means: weight, heaviness, honor. We speak of a great and important person as a weighty person, whom we revere and take seriously. The seraphims in the holy temple in the Theophany of God in Christ see this glory. (John 12:40) And the whole earth is full of the glory of the LORD. (Isaiah 6:8) Small wonder that they say to each other "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts." It is the majesty of God's power and wisdom in the earth which constitutes this revealed glory of God's being.

The concept glory is connected very much with the coming of Christ, the great Shepherd in Israel. He is the Word made flesh which dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14) This is the glory which Moses saw in the cleft of the Rock prepared for him. That glory was the manifestation of the virtues of God in the Cross: The LORD, the LORD God, merciful, gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty, visiting

the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and fourth generation." (Exodus 34:6,7) When Jesus is about to die, this glory is before His Messianic consciousness very much. In the upper room at the Lord's table Jesus speaks of this glory. Says He, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him." (John 13:31) This refers to the work of His crucifixion at Calvary and also His ascension on high. And in His Highpriestly prayer in John 17:1 Jesus says to God, "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee, as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou has given him." From this it should be evident that the chief end of Christ's death and resurrection was to reveal the mighty glories of God in this work of salvation. God would glorify Himself in His Son, the great Shepherd of the sheep.

If we keep this in mind we shall understand that, in the doxology which is here ascribed to God, all the virtues of God as they are manifested in the Son constitute this glory, this weightiness, this high and exalted esteem and honor, which God ascribes to Himself. He gives His glory to no one else. He is very jealous of His glory.

Now there is a glory of God in the saints. There is a riches of His glory in the saints. (Eph. 1:18) And we are elected that we should be to the praise of the glory of His grace. God's work of grace as rooted in sovereign election is such that it only glorifies Him. It is God's glory manifested in the saints. For the saints are the fulness of Him who filleth all in all. (Eph. 1:23)

Keeping this in mind we begin to understand a bit what this means in the text here in Heb. 13:21. This is a glory which is ascribed to God in Christ. It is the glory which is His in the great Shepherd of the sheep, and which particularly came to manifestation in raising Him out of the dead. And this resurrection life God planted in the hearts of the Hebrew Christians. That was His covenant life. And that life showed the glory of His saving power and grace and faithfulness.

Now the design of that glory is that it is unto the ages of ages. God would show in the ages to come the exceeding greatness of His goodness to usward. (Eph. 2:7,8) No, this glory is not simply as long as this world lasts and the ages roll along. The distant vistas of the new heaven and the new earth beckon. God will bring in that immovable inheritance, when He will not only shake the earth but also the heavens. Then will the glory of the Lord be revealed and we shall see Him face to face in all His glory in the face of Jesus Christ. Having this hope in us let us purify ourselves as He is pure. God will perfect that in us which He has begun.

This shall surely come to pass. All the church says "Amen." All who share in this work of grace are assured and sealed by the Spirit and all say "Amen." "Blessing, and honor, and glory and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever! And the four beasts say, Amen!" And all that hath breath praise the Lord God almighty! Amen!

STUDIES IN ISAIAH

The Six Woes Pronounced on Israel Isaiah 5:8-30

Rev. Robt. C. Harbach

1. *The End and Ruin the Vineyard Deserved.* "And I will make it a desolation (put an end to it). (It) shall not be pruned, and not be dressed, and shall come up thorns and (more) thorns. And I will not command the thick clouds to rain rain upon it" (5:6, Heb.). The Lord puts a sudden and hopeless end to the vineyard by letting it lie in neglect, to run wild, choked with thorns and scorched with drought. The vineyard will be taken over by products of original sin and the curse. Here it is plain who the Lord of the vineyard is,

the Lord of the clouds, the Lord of heaven and earth. Blight and drought, which often enough sweep vast areas in our land, come not by chance, but are ordered of the Lord; and it should be evident to anyone who knows Scripture at all, that God, not being mocked, punishes in this way the ingratitude of men for despising Him and His good gifts. So blight and drought also come into the church. There are tares, thorns, and briars, a sign of judgment beginning at the house of God, and a sign of reprobation. For "that

which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and its cursing near," so near that it is presently to come, (and the curse causeless shall not come, Prov. 26:2b). In the church world are found, as Romans One reveals today as never before, "sons of Belial, wicked, ungodly men, immoralities, errors, heresies, contentions, quarrels" (Gill). For this the curse would come on Israel. The fulfilment of this came in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, the captivities in Babylonia and Assyria. Its fuller accomplishment came in the rejection of the Jewish nation and its destruction in 70 A.D., the wrath of God coming upon it to the uttermost. (Matt. 22:7; 23:38; I Thess. 2:14-16). It has a continued and frequent fulfilment in those churches which have apostatized from the gospel, have quenched the Spirit, and where the glory of the presence of His Spirit has departed. It continues where the gospel has been removed from places which have long been reproached and a scandal to the church. But the loss of the vineyard in any case is no loss to God. For from the very stones of the wilderness He can raise up children to Abraham.

Sin, then, is not restrained, but unchecked developments in increasing tidal waves of wickedness. The volcanoes of iniquity spew out the ruins of decayed civilizations, covering the earth with the muck and miasma of Sodom and Egypt, the only cure for which will be the final great conflagration of the Day of God (II Pet. 3).

2. *The Explanation of the Parable.* "For the vineyard of Jehovah Tsebhoath (is) the house of Israel, and the man of Judah a plant of His pleasures; and He hoped for justice, and look! bloodshed! for righteousness, and look! a cry!" (5:7, Heb.). The vineyard of Jehovah, Beth Yisraeli, the man of Judah, a plant of His pleasure — that is election, in this case, national election, in which the national Israel was the hull and chaff of the kernel and seed Israel. The national Israel seemed to be the people of God. Outwardly they appeared to be the elect. This could be and was deceiving, if the shell and hull were taken as the true Israel. Within the entire organism of the nation, the mere shell church was a living hypocrisy. We as believers must be sure we belong to the heart of the wheat. Isaiah writes with a word combination of sight, sound, and sense. It may be imitated in English by, He hoped for *Equity*, and, look, *iniquity*! for *right* and, look, *riot*! Where praying and praising were looked for there were cursing and swearing. In Christ's day, the Jews should have embraced the righteousness of Christ, but they *shrieked*, Crucify him! Away with him!

3. *Six Woes for Six Bad Fruits Produced by the Vineyard.* "Woe to those who cause house to touch against house; field against field they bring together, until (there is) no more (place), and ye set them by

themselves in the midst of the land" (5:8, Heb.). (a) Woe against covetousness (in the form of greed for worldly wealth). Avaricious grasping punished with sterility (vs. 8-10). Micah expressed the same condemnation against house and land monopoly. "They covet fields, and seize them; houses, and take them away. They defraud a man and his household; the person and his household" (2:2, Berkeley). A man became a land baron and a city boss when he acquired all the houses in an area, owning the whole city, and all the fields, owning the suburbs. Here is the man who set his heart on wealth and cannot get enough of it. The more he gets, the more he has to get. He already has a house, but also a winter house, a summer house, and is wheeling a deal to acquire a main line house and a down town hotel. He does not have time to enjoy what he has, nor time to do any good with it; he is too busy working at getting more and growing rich rapidly. If a man were given the whole of Ireland, he would want the Isle of Man thrown in. If he could monopolize the whole world, he would want to annex the moon.

"In my ears (is) Jehovah Tsebhaath. If (the following shall) not (occur, I am not God): many houses shall be (brought) to desolation, great ones and beautiful ones without inhabitant" (5:9, Heb.). God is in the prophet's ears (Isa. 22:14; I Sam. 9:15), so that what he hears is not his own subjective meditations, but is divine revelation; his ears ring with it. The coveting of houses and lands is punished with the loss of both, and their being abandoned, no one to inhabit them. This occurs because of the owners' having been degraded to poverty, or taken into captivity, or the building trade died, or they themselves died. Nothing but a ghost town remains. Men build mansions, *great*, or huge, grandly and expensively gotten up, and *beautiful* ones, the dream homes we all dream of and none of us can afford. These are set in the exclusive land developments of the rich, the accomplishment of which they themselves consider to be the height of virtue; but, in a few years at most these opulent dwellings become bare, empty, uninhabited. Some of these elite environs have become slums, or desitute inner city canyons, or bulldozed off the map, or sacrificed to the demon, City Beltline, or to the dragon, Highway Cloverleaf. These things occur every day, yet "the inward thought of men is that their houses shall continue forever; so they call their lands after their own names. Nevertheless, man being in honor abideth not; he is like the beasts that perish" (Ps. 49:11-12). So that he must face the Judge of all when He asks, "then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" (Lk. 12:20). Fools, wrote Matthew Henry, build houses for wise men to live in, and sometimes for no men to live in.

"For ten yokes (land ploughed with ten yoke of

oxen in one day) of vineyard shall produce one bath (of wine), and the seed of a homer shall produce an ephah" (5:10, Heb.). Here is the condition of things which helped to produce the desolate situation of sterile land and vacant dwellings. So that ten days work produce but a single bath (Ezek. 45:11-14). The harvest would be no more than one tenth of the sowing. The curse is the penalty for covetousness.

At this fourth month writing, the news media reveals the concern of weather authorities in connection with expected changes for the worse in world weather. Signs indicate the coming of drought, famine, dearth, crop failure, and starvation, causing great suffering (to mention a few areas) to India, Russia (a Communist country which must always depend for its economy and sustenance on capitalism), and the United States. Such occurrences are brought in the providence of God as judgments which desolate whole kingdoms, reducing all ranks of men to abject misery. It is by such divine vengeance that the upper strata of society in their proud feasting, and the meaner sort, in their base revels, descend into hell, "which enlarges itself and opens its mouth without measure" to swallow up its prey of every class of men. These blasting judgments, then, are but the precursors of hell, for in that dreadful place not a drop of water will be afforded to cool the burning tongue of those who in this life fared sumptuously every day.

(b) Woe Against Rioting, Reveling and Drunkenness (11-17). "Woe to the ones rising early in the morning (that) they may run after strong drink; (so

immediately) from after (this, continuing) into the evening (until) wine inflame them" (5:11, Heb.). Isaiah is talking about the people of his nation, the Jews, who, having been scattered among the Gentiles, have learned their reveling, carousing, and drinking habits. Their excess in drinking to drunken stupor continued morning and night, all day and all night. Luther asked, "What would the prophet have said to the Germans for whom natural capacity is insufficient to drain so much drink? Theirs are not feasts of joy but feasts of pigs. It is all right to eat and to drink, but to cultivate drunkenness is evil." Gill said, "To rise up early in the morning is healthful . . . to rise to do business is commendable; but to spend the day in drunkenness . . . is . . . criminal." These libertines make drinking their trade and business; they are pros at it. They are always at it, not losing a moment of time at that which is the greatest waste of time. They neglect every other, even necessary business, to abandon themselves in addiction to the flesh and the lust of the heart. Manton it was who said, "When men make a set business of drinking, though they be not grossly distempered, *yet* THEY ARE DRUNKARDS before God" (emph., RCH). These first two woes, Isaiah warns, shall be punished with captivity (enslavement to sin), hunger, thirst and death. Peter spoke for those delivered from this horrible evil. "For to have been practicing the ways of the Gentiles heretofore is quite enough, indulging in unbridled lusts, in passions, in drinking parties, in carousings, in dissipations and forbidden idolatries" (I Peter 4:3, Berkeley).

ALL AROUND US

Does God Ever Change? And Now -- A New Stand on Divorce? Church Union in Holland

DOES GOD EVER CHANGE?

Rev. H. Veldman

In GN, THE GOOD NEWS, (Whose editor-in-chief is Herbert W. Armstrong) of May, 1976 appears an article entitled: Does God ever change? Many passages are quoted which seem to indicate that a change in the Lord does occur. We need not quote all these passages. Exodus 32:14 is quoted, which reads: "And the Lord repented of the evil which He thought to do unto His people." Also Jeremiah 26:19 speaks

of such a repentance on the part of Jehovah. And the article also calls attention to the scriptural narrative concerning Nineveh, quoting Jonah 3:10: "And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that He had said that He would do unto them; and He did it not." Many more passages can be quoted from the scriptures to this effect.

Now the Word of God speaks often of this "change" on the part of the Lord. However, we

would remark in the first place that the Word of God surely emphasizes that the living God is unchangeable. Does not Malachi 3:6 state it emphatically: "For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed"? Do we not read in Hebrews 13:8: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever"? What, then, do all these passages indicate which are quoted in this article? A change in God? Indeed, not! God never changes! He is everlastingly the same. He is and remains everlastingly the same in all His holiness and righteousness and love and mercy. What these passages indicate is not a change in God but in the sinner, and this change in the sinner is wrought by the almighty Spirit and grace of God, according to His sovereign will.

AND NOW — A NEW STAND ON DIVORCE?

The editor of *THE OUTLOOK* has an editorial in the May, 1976, issue on the above named subject. This article appears on page 14 of this issue. We need not quote the entire article. The editor calls attention to the fact that "throughout the history of the CRC, now well over a hundred years, except for a brief two-year period, adultery was recognized as the only Scriptural ground for permissible divorce. For a short time, 1894-1896, willful desertion by an unbeliever was also accepted as a ground for divorce in the light of I Corinthians 7:15 but the church soon reverted to the previous stand." But now a committee will report to the Christian Reformed synod this year, advising a change in this stand, advising the synod that there can be other kinds of actions, situations, and conditions that in the judgment of the consistory can only be judged to be the *equivalent* of unrepentant unchastity in signaling the complete breakdown of a marriage and the unlikelihood of its restoration. And then the editor concludes his article as follows:

True, the Committee adds: "This ought not to be construed as opening the door to all kinds of justification for divorce." (1976 *Agenda*, p. 335). But I make bold to say, when you once change our Lord's specific rule for divorce to "a moral principle" to be applied in each case according to a consistory's judgment, human nature being what it is, the result of taking such a liberty with Scripture can only be expected to accelerate the already mounting divorce rate among us."

With this concluding remark of the editor of *THE OUTLOOK* we certainly agree. But we hasten to call his attention to the fact that this situation in the Christian Reformed Church is already hopeless, unless that church retract a previous decision. We do not know what the synod of that church will decide this year. But, what difference does it really make? Did not the Christian Reformed Church already decide some years ago that when a person divorces his (or her) mate on biblical or unbiblical ground, remarries,

then confesses his (or her) sin of remarriage, such an one may continue in his (or her) remarriage? This is the bad decision that must be changed. And we do not believe that it will ever be changed. O, yes, now a committee will advise the synod to the effect that many divorces will rest on biblical grounds. We say to the editor of *THE OUTLOOK*: why try now to lock the door of the barn? The horse is already out of the barn.

O, the editor may wish that this synod will not adopt this advice of the committee. And, this advice is surely contrary to the Word of God. He is also glad that Dr. William Hendriksen will be a delegate to this synod. But, the Christian Reformed Church must repent of that previous decision.

CHURCH UNION IN HOLLAND

In the Banner of May 7, 1976, pages 10 and 11, appear two short articles as news items, which we would pass on to our readers. They are entitled: Church Union in Holland (I) and Church Union in Holland (II). The first article reads as follows:

A program of cooperation between the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKN) and the Netherlands Reformed Church (NHK) seems to be running smoothly. This effort at increased unity, call "Samen op Weg" (Underway Together), includes a combined meeting of the synods of both churches for the second time, to take place on September 17 and 18 of 1976.

On the agenda will be the confession of the church, cooperation on the local level, and questions of church order raised by such cooperation. Committees of both churches working on the mandate hope to involve local congregations of the two churches in this action. The two denominations are by far the largest on the Protestant scene in the low countries.

And the second article, which appears on page 10 and 11, is of a similar vein and reads as follows:

The Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (CGKN) and the Reformed Churches (Liberated, Unaffiliated) of the Netherlands have issued a declaration that seems to have brought them one step closer toward unity. Far-reaching agreement was found to exist on the subject of the "appropriation of salvation," involving questions such as rebirth, the experience of faith and conversion, the place of the covenant, and God's promises in preaching. These issues have long separated the two churches.

The discussions between the two churches date back to the mid-sixties when the one group disaffiliated itself from the Reformed Churches (Liberated). A recent recommendation from the synod of the "Unaffiliated" stated that since they have no seminary of their own, their future ministers should undertake their studies at the school of the Christian Reformed Churches in Apeldoorn.

The Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands number 173 congregations and a total of 71,000 members, and the Reformed churches (liberated, Unaffiliated) have 95 congregations and 29,000 members.

So, the merging of churches continues. What is

disturbing is that there is in neither report any confession of sin. Sin, of course, was the cause why these churches drifted away from each other. And we fear that if sin be not confessed, then these mergers will occur only at the expense of the truth.

Pre-Seminary and Seminary Students!

The Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches will begin its 1976-77 term, the Lord willing, on Wednesday, September 8. All students must be present at 9:00 A.M. for registration and assignments.

— H. C. Hoeksema, Rector

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies Society, Ruth, of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church extends its sympathy to one of our members, Mrs. G. Korhorn, in the recent loss of her sister, Mrs. Tena Visser, and her sister-in-law, Mrs. Rena Korhorn.

"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." (Rev. 14:13)

Rev. R. Van Overloop, Pres.

Mrs. R. Bloem, Vice Sec.

Walker, Mich.

IN MEMORIAM

The Ladies Society, Ruth, of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church mourns the loss of a faithful member, Mrs. Anna Kievit who was called to eternal glory on June 15, 1976. We are comforted with the words of the Psalmist, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." (Psalm 116:15)

Rev. R. Van Overloop, Pres.

Mrs. R. Bloem, Vice Sec.

Walker, Mich.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in Loveland, Colorado on Wednesday, September 1, 1976, the Lord willing. Delegates in need of lodging should inform the clerk of the Loveland consistory.

Rev. David Engelsma

Stated Clerk

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On July 25, 1976, Our beloved parents Mr. and Mrs. Arnold Haveman, celebrated their 35th wedding anniversary. We, their grateful children, thank and praise God for them and for using them to instruct us to walk in the fear of His Name.

Our prayer is that He may continue to bless them in the future, and to lead them and us in the paths of righteousness.

Mr. and Mrs. Chester Haveman and Janna

Betty Haveman

Mr. and Mrs. Willard Haveman, Jennifer and Nicole

Mr. and Mrs. Laverne Haveman

Ruth Haveman

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Council of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church of Walker, Michigan, expresses its sincere sympathy to its Clerk and fellow-officebearer, Elder John Kalsbeek, in the bereavement of his sister, Mrs. John (Grace) Van Beek.

"For me to live is Christ and to die is gain." (Phil. 1:21).

Rev. R. Van Overloop, Pres.

Arnold Dykstra, Ass't. Clerk.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The members of the Mr. and Mrs. Society of Faith Protestant Reformed Church of Jenison, Michigan, extend their sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Truett Hugg in the passing of her mother, MRS. ALICE DUTRO. May our covenant God comfort them with His Word and Spirit in the assurance that — "All things work together for good to them that love God." (Romans 8:28).

Rev. M. Joostens, Pres.

Mrs. R. Van Til, Sec'y.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On July 13, 1976, our parents, MR. AND MRS. DAVID ZYLSTRA, celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary. We are very grateful for the blessing of their covenant instruction throughout the years, and wish them God's blessing in the years to come.

Their children:

Mr. and Mrs. John Zylstra (Adam, Rachel)

Peter

Martin

Geraldine

Jacqueline

Arlene

Patricia

Marsha

Timothy

Valerie

Rhoda

Edmonton, Alberta,
Canada.

News From Our Churches

The Evangelism Committee of our South Holland, Illinois church has been informed that the Family Radio Network will be broadcasting a series of 12 to

13 or their pastor's sermons on Ephesians 5 and 6 during the months of July, August, and September. Some seven stations will broadcast Rev. Engelsma's

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sermons to a large audience on both the east and west coasts. No charge is made for this service as these stations are supported by contributions. In their announcement, the committee states that they "are thankful that God has opened this door to us and pray that He may bless this effort to the glory of His name."

Our small congregation in Forbes, North Dakota, does not usually have a printed bulletin. But, had there been one, mention would have been made of the confession of faith made by two young men of the congregation, as well as of the birth of a second son, Michael Jon, to Rev. and Mrs. M. Hoeksema. Prof. H. C. Hoeksema planned to baptize his grandson on June 20 while visiting Forbes for a few days. Mrs. Hoeksema writes that, because they have not experienced much interest from those outside our denomination in attending the Forbes church, they are very thankful to see the internal growth and development of this small band of believers.

Since the Report of Classis East will take most of the remaining space in this issue, we will only have room for the following 'potpourri' of items: Rev. Kuiper conducted services in Charlotte, Michigan, at the request of five families in that area. Rev. W. Bekkering declined the call from Kalamazoo. Seminarian Ken Koole is ministering in Doon this summer. Doon has extended a call to Rev. M. Kamps of Redlands. Rev. J. Heys was scheduled for surgery on July 13 in Holland, Michigan. The new Hudsonville Church is under construction. Prospect Park has purchased property for the future building of a church (more on that next month.)

K.G.V.

Report Of Classis East
July 7, 1976
Hope Prot. Ref. Church

Rev. A. den Hartog of Prospect Park, New Jersey, lead Classis in opening devotions. After the reading and acceptance of the credentials of the churches represented, Classis was declared properly constituted. At this time Rev. J. A. Heys, by order of rotation, took up the chairmanship. Before attending to the business of Classis, Rev. Heys addressed a few

words of welcome to the delegates.

As is usually the case with our July meeting of Classis, the business was routine and no extraordinary matter appeared on the Agenda. We can be thankful to our faithful God that He preserves unity and peace in the midst of our churches.

The chair appointed a Finance Committee consisting of Elders E. Kortering and G. Bylsma. This committee reported a total expenditure of \$318.90 for this session of Classis. Classis authorized payment of this amount.

Due to the fact that there were three new faces at this classical meeting, the chair had difficulty selecting one to thank the ladies for their catering (the one who makes his appearance at Classis for the first time is usually appointed). However, he elected to have Elder C. Prince perform this duty.

Kalamazoo, in the absence of an undershepherd, again requested classis to supply her pulpit. Elders T. Engelsma and A. Alphenaar were appointed with Rev. den Hartog to construct a schedule to supply the pulpit of Kalamazoo. Classis adopted the following schedule for Kalamazoo's supply: July 25, Rev. C. Hanko; Aug. 8, Rev. G. Van Baren; Aug. 22, Rev. H. Veldman; Sept. 5, Rev. M. Joostens; Sept. 19, Rev. R. Van Overloop; Oct. 3, Rev. M. Schipper; and Oct. 10, Rev. J. Heys.

The church visitors reported that they had visited the churches in the Michigan area, but that Prospect Park can expect a visit in the future. This report also reflected a spiritual welfare in our congregations.

A motion prevailed that Classis meet next time on Oct. 6, 1976, at First Church.

The questions of article 41 of the Church Order were asked. The Churches answered these questions satisfactorily and none desired the help of Classis in the government of their church.

Rev. J. Heys made a few appropriate remarks thanking the delegates for their cooperation and asked Rev. H. Veldman to close this session with prayer.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. M. Joostens, Asst. S.C.
of Classis East