

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

If, then, you should point to the Church's smallness in the midst of the world and to the greatness of the world, all its manpower and resources, I would look to Him Who died for me and now lives for me in heavenly glory at the right hand of God. And I will proclaim that God has justified me, that therefore nothing can condemn me or can ever be against me, that Christ's work for me shall also be finished in me, and that therefore I am safe in the midst of the world, yea that all things work together for my good.

See "The Breastplate
of Righteousness" — page 482

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MEDITATION

The Breastplate of Righteousness

Rev. H. Veldman

“ . . . and having on the breastplate of righteousness.”

Eph. 6:14b

Put on the breastplate of righteousness. Thus this text must be understood. We read literally here: “Having put on the breastplate of righteousness.” Indeed, we must put it on, even as a soldier puts on his entire armour.

How tremendously important is this breastplate! This was the first part of the armour the soldier put on. And that first part of the armour is righteousness. We surely have a divine order here: the truth, righteousness, gospel of peace, salvation, sword of the Spirit. And this order must not be overlooked. This righteousness, as the first item of the armour of the

Christian warrior, is therefore the first gift of grace that is imparted to us through the Bible, the Word of truth.

We must also bear in mind one more thing. These different parts of the Christian's armour are not all different parts of the girdle of truth. We cannot divide this girdle into parts. What is true is that these parts all refer to the entire Word of God.

This breastplate was the armour which covered the body from the neck to the thighs, consisting of two parts, the one covering the back and the other the front. Without this breastplate the warrior was ex-

posed to every thrust of the enemy, even to every casual dart. Without it his position was utterly hopeless in the midst of the battle.

What is this righteousness? The word itself means: a straight line, to be in a straight line with God. Must this be understood as a spiritual righteousness? This refers to our conduct, that all our life and activities are in harmony with the will of God, and this, of course, according to the righteous Judge of all the earth. Or, must this righteousness be understood legally, judicially, as referring to our justification? This concerns our state, our legal relation to the law. God, then, declares us guiltless, that He sees in us no ground for condemnation, that we are free of all guilt and heirs of everlasting life and glory. This, of course, is of the utmost significance. God is the Judge of all the earth. His verdict can never be appealed. To whom could we carry our appeal? If God justify us, who can condemn? He will surely enforce this judgment of justification and there is none who can possibly force Him to change it.

This breastplate of righteousness surely refers to our justification. In the first place, the view that this righteousness must be interpreted spiritually is surely impossible. How can my conduct ever guarantee my safety, my ability to stand in this spiritual struggle? Indeed, we must not ignore here our righteousness in the spiritual sense. But, how will I be able to hold up before the devil my good works when, in the first place, my best works are but filthy rags, and when, in the second place, all the good I do can so easily be offset by the far greater amount of evil? Indeed, my good works are important only insofar as they are the fruit of my justification and therefore assure me that God has begun His work in me. In the second place, we must bear in mind the order here of the various parts of the Christian's armour. This breastplate is mentioned first. And it is surely true that the first blessed gift we experience through the Word of God is that of justification. In the third place, we must ever hold before us the meaning of the expression, "breastplate of righteousness" in the light of Scripture. How pertinent is Is. 59:17: "For He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and He put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloke." The apostle appears to have this text in mind and to be guided by it in his description of the Christian's armour. In Is. 59:17 Jehovah speaks as revealed in Christ Jesus, and the prophet here declares that He has wrought salvation in the way of righteousness, in the way of the complete and perfect satisfaction of the righteousness and justice of the Lord.

How terrible was this breastplate of righteousness as put on by Jesus Christ, our Lord! Please note what we read in Is. 59:16. His was the task which de-

manded that the awful holiness of God be revealed in connection with our sins and trespasses, that God's infinite wrath and indignation be borne in full consciousness and in perfect obedience. Only God could do this. No wonder we read what we read in Is. 59:16! God, in Christ, took upon Himself, not only the hatred of the wicked and of all the powers of hell, but also the fearful wrath of God upon sin, tasted and experienced it in all its infinite horror. God satisfied His own justice, Himself paid the awful penalty.

This is the breastplate of righteousness of this text. This breastplate of righteousness is, of course, not another, in distinction from Is. 59:17. This breastplate of righteousness is not, we understand, our righteousness. Fact is, the breastplate of righteousness of Is. 59:17 is the only breastplate of righteousness in existence. There is simply none other. No man can ever attain unto this righteousness. Indeed, this is the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. Only, it is the perfect righteousness of God in Christ as applied to all my sins and trespasses. God, in Christ Jesus, has rendered me eternally righteous before God, has paid in full for all my sins and trespasses and has made me an heir of life and glory everlasting. This breastplate is that wonderful, unspeakable assurance, completely beyond all human understanding, that in spite of whatever the devil and my own conscience may say, I am righteous before God, free of all guilt and heir of everlasting life and glory.

First, this breastplate of righteousness is the entire Word of truth. It is not simply a part of it. One cannot divide this Word into five parts, each part, then, applying to each part of the Christian's armour. The Word of God is one as God is one. Included in this breastplate is God's eternal counsel of election and reprobation. How necessary it is that this be included! Fact is, this breastplate refers to the righteousness of God in Christ. This includes particular atonement, that Christ died for *our* sins and trespasses, inasmuch as a Christ for all is a Saviour of none. Hence, the Lamb of God and of Calvary is the Head of His church, the Head of all His elect. He dies only for His sheep, given Him of the Father. How basic is the doctrine of election!

Then, this breastplate includes the doctrine of sin and guilt and man's utter and complete hopelessness and helplessness. God saw and there was no man; He wondered that there was no intercessor. This emphasizes the scriptural doctrine of sin. Man's fall and subsequent depravity are of such an extent that all we can do is add sin and guilt. All our righteousness is therefore of God alone in Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Thirdly, this breastplate includes the scriptural truth of God's particular and efficacious atonement. Christ died atoningly; He blotted out sin; He paid for guilt; He merited everlasting life and glory. All this is

denied by the doctrine of universal atonement. A Christ for all is a Saviour of none, inasmuch as He also died for those who perish. Then there is simply no breastplate of righteousness.

To this we must also add the doctrine of irresistible grace, the certain perseverance of the saints, and eternal glory. This righteousness of God in Christ means that His grace is irresistible, inasmuch as because of His perfect righteousness Christ was raised, exalted, lifted up on high unto the right hand of God. And this also includes our certain and ultimate salvation, because God Who delivered Him for us all will surely with Him give us all things. Indeed, the whole Word of God is this breastplate.

This breastplate we must put on. This means, first of all, that we must know the scriptures. This applies to all of us. To this there is no exception. Also our young people. And, we must know *all* the scriptures. Secondly, we must appropriate this breastplate of righteousness by a true and living faith. Indeed, we are not justified because of our good works, not even because of our faith; it is not my spiritual righteousness which can ever assure our safety in the midst of the world. In the cross of Christ we glory and shall glory; God's righteousness in Christ is our only hope. However, our spiritual righteousness is for us the proof of our legal righteousness. Our spiritual righteousness means that we have been redeemed and justified, that it has been purchased for us. And it is only when we walk in God's commandments that we will be able to taste and experience this blessed love of God in Christ; in fact, if we walk in ways of sin and evil we do not even care for this breastplate of righteousness.

We now understand our calling. Put on, every day anew, this breastplate of righteousness. Cleave to this righteousness of God in Christ. This means that, in principle, we will also walk in the way of its fruit, hating sin, and showing that the righteousness of God

in Christ is our only comfort, our only hope, our only need, our only longing in the midst of the world.

Nothing else insures, guarantees my protection. Shall I face the enemy in my own strength, with my own good works, my ethical righteousness as a ground for my assurance of victory? But, how hopeless is then my lot . . . !

This is my protection: the breastplate of my righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. If then, you point me to my sin and guilt, I will claim the righteousness of Christ, claim that all my sins and guilt are paid. If, then, you point to all my filth and corruption (and there is so much of it), I will say that I love the truth, that I possess in principle the love of God, and that He has merited for me everlasting life and glory. If, then, you should point to the Church's smallness in the midst of the world and to the greatness of the world, all its manpower and resources, I will look to Him Who died for me and now lives for me in heavenly glory at the right hand of God. And I will proclaim that God has justified me, that therefore nothing can condemn me or can ever be against me, that Christ's work for me shall also be finished in me, and that therefore I am safe in the midst of the world, yea, that all things work together for my good.

Indeed, the world would separate me from the love of God in Christ. And it is indeed true that, as far as I am concerned, that world can easily separate *me* from that love of God. In fact, of myself I would and can never remain standing in the cause of God and of His Christ and covenant. This, however, is the first weapon in the Christian's arsenal. It has the priority. For this we may give thanks unto God. Nothing will ever be able to separate me *from the love of God*, will ever be able to separate God from me, will ever be able to change or alter the eternal, unconditional, irresistible, and sovereign love of God. My assurance is not my work, anything in me, but His work for me, now and forevermore.

Editor's Notes

This issue marks the completion of Volume 53, and you will find the annual index in this number. Watch the next issue for some interesting changes being introduced at the beginning of Volume 54.

* * * * *

Seldom do we discuss, much less recommend, books in our magazine other than those of a religious nature. But I cannot pass by the chance to recom-

mend a couple which I read during my vacation. They are *must* reading for ministers and public speakers and, in fact, for all who are interested in correct English and good diction. I refer to Edwin Newman's *Strictly Speaking* and *A Civil Tongue*.

* * * * *

This is the last call for those who wish to take advantage of the pre-publication sale of Herman

Hoeksema's "When I Survey . . ." The cut-off date on this sale is October 1. After that date you will have to pay the full price. The pre-publication sale is \$7.95 plus 45¢ postage and handling charge. Send your order and your check for \$8.40 to: Reformed Free Publishing Association, P.O. Box 2006, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49501.

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The RFPA Publications Committee also announces a brand new publishing venture, our first venture into the educational field. By the time this appears in print, we expect to have available in an attractive Kivar binding Gertrude Hoeksema's *Suffer Little Children (Book One)*. What is this? It is primarily a teacher's manual for Bible instruction in the primary grades, and is the first of a projected series. This first volume contains an extensive introduction on the principles of Bible instruction in the Christian school, a teacher's guide for Book 1, and 125 lessons on the first part of the Old Testament, from creation through Saul. Who can benefit from this book? Teachers, of course, primarily; but also Sunday School teachers, catechism teachers, and parents who

are looking for soundly Reformed help and guidance in telling Bible stories to their children. How can you help us and yourself, as well as the cause of covenantal education? First of all, by buying this book. The Publications Committee realized from the outset that there was probably a very limited market for this book, and therefore even hesitated somewhat to publish it. But if this venture is to succeed, and if Book One is to be followed by the rest of the series, we must have reasonable success in marketing this new book. Many parents expressed interest already when the book was in process. Now is the opportunity to give that interest concrete expression. Order a copy of *Suffer Little Children, (Book One)* at the price of \$8.95 plus 45¢ postage and handling. Again, send your order to: Reformed Free Publishing Association, P.O. Box 2006, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49501. Secondly, if you know of Christian schools outside our Protestant Reformed circles who might be interested in this kind of material, please send the information to the above address. We are interested in reaching as many as possible with our publicity campaign. Please help!

EDITORIALS

"Our Song of Hope"--A Critique (4)

Prof. H.C. Hoeksema

In this part of our critique we shall consider what "Our Song of Hope" has to say about certain key doctrines of the Reformed faith. In doing this, we shall compare the statements of "Our Song" with the statements of our Three Forms of Unity; and we shall make this comparison by consulting the index provided in Appendix B of Dr. Heideman's commentary on "Our Song."

First we turn our attention to the Reformed doctrine of pre-destination. We already noted last time that "Our Song" admittedly presents a different doctrine in this regard than our Canons of Dordrecht present — and thus, also different from that presented by the Heidelberg Catechism and the Belgic Confession. We remind you of the statement, quoted last time, "As a result, one can feel considerable tension between 'Our Song' and the Canons of Dort in the understanding of 'election' . . ."

The only reference to election in "Our Song of Hope" is found in Stanza 15, where we read:

Christ elects His church
to proclaim His Word and celebrate the sacraments,
to worship His name,
and to live as His disciples.
He creates His community
to be a place of prayer,
to provide rest for the weary,
and to lead people to share in service.

In connection with this stanza Appendix B refers us to the pertinent portions of our confessions which speak of election.

In explanation of this stanza, the following comments are made, pp. 59, 60:

The first line of stanza 15 uses the word "elects."
This is a word which is used in the Old Testament to

refer to God's relationship to his covenant community. During the history of the West, the word "election" has more often been used to indicate God's relationship to particular individuals within the covenant community than it has to the covenant community itself. This shift has occurred because in the situation of Christendom, when everyone was baptized, there came to be a preoccupation with the problem of the hypocrite and the necessity of distinguishing within the covenant community between the true believer and the wolf in sheep's clothing. The church and its preachers felt it to be essential to direct its words of warning to the hypocrites and the enemies of God and to warn the faithful not to assume that as members of the elect community they were automatically saved for all eternity.

In our time when Christendom has broken down, we now recognize that the church has been elected by God to be in the world as Israel was in the days of the Old Testament. The Biblical words which speak to that situation thereby gain new significance for us. We hear again all of those words of the prophets which warn Israel that election does not confer special safety or privileges. It does lay upon the people special responsibilities, for they are elected to participate in God's great mission of salvation in the world. Israel was to be the great mediator of God's Law or Torah in the world; her task is fulfilled in Jesus Christ who is the fulfillment of the Old Testament and the True Mediator from God. Stanza 15, lines 2-4, accepts what the Belgic Confession set forth as the three marks of the true church and indicates how these function as the characteristics of the church elected to confess and live the faith of Christ in the world.

Because the church is elected to proclaim Christ's Word, celebrate the sacraments, worship in the name of the Lord, and live as His disciples, it is not possible for us to accept a distinction made by theologians of an earlier day between the "visible" and the "invisible" church. That distinction, which was intended within Christendom to indicate the possibility of enemies of God in the church on earth, makes it all too easy for the church to think of itself as an other-worldly institution, somewhat separate from life in this world. An invisible church simply cannot have the marks of the church indicated in the Belgic Confession or in stanza 15; the church must stand for Christ at the heart of God's world.

Any Reformed believer with only a cursory acquaintance with the Canons of Dordrecht will readily recognize that Stanza 15 and the accompanying explanation are a far cry from our Reformed confession of predestination. One could fill many a page with criticism of the paragraphs we have just quoted. A basic criticism, for example, would be the underlying presupposition that truth is not permanent and that a doctrine like the doctrine of election changes. Another, closely related, is the fact that there is absolutely no appeal to Scripture; the appeal is to

what the term *election* formerly meant, what it supposedly came to mean "during the history of the West," and what its "new significance" in our present situation should be. But let us by-pass all this, and confine our attention to the doctrine itself. What is wrong? The following:

1. The stanza speaks only of an elect community. Do not be fooled into thinking that "Our Song" has in mind the election of the holy catholic church and all of its elect membership. No, this is the rather common heresy of a national election of Israel in the Old Testament and of a similar community election of the church in the world in the New Testament age.

2. The stanza obviously knows only of an election unto *service*, not an election unto salvation, not of a being chosen from before the foundation of the world both to salvation and the way of salvation, both to grace and to glory.

3. Stanza 15 is totally silent about the Reformed doctrine of reprobation, Canons I, A, 6, 15. This is extremely serious. It means that "Our Song of Hope" does not teach a doctrine of *predestination*, but only a perverted doctrine of election. And this means, in turn, that it cannot lay claim to being a *Reformed* creed.

4. Stanza 15 speaks of *Christ* as electing. True, the explanation offered by Dr. Heideman speaks of God as the author of election; but this does not change the fact that "Our Song" itself speaks of Christ. Our Canons, on the other hand, speak of God as the author of election and speak of Christ as being elected: "Election is the unchangeable purpose of God, whereby, before the foundation of the world, he hath out of mere grace, according to the sovereign good pleasure of his own will, chosen, from the whole human race, which had fallen through their own fault, from their primitive state of rectitude, into sin and destruction, a certain number of persons to redemption in Christ, whom he from eternity appointed the Mediator and Head of the elect, and the foundation of Salvation." (Canons I, A, 7, italics added).

5. Stanza 15 knows only of a present-time election, not an election from eternity. Notice that it says, "Christ elects . . .," using the present tense.

6. In Appendix B the boast is made, p. 86, that "Our Song of Hope" can be seen as vigorously re-affirming traditional Reformed themes such as, among others, "the Sovereignty of God." I ask: where would one expect the sovereignty of God to be more vigorously re-affirmed than in connection with the doctrine of election? And I ask: but where is the sovereignty of God in Stanza 15, the only stanza which so much as mentions election in the entire proposed creed? The truths that election is uncon-

ditional, that the good pleasure of God is the sole cause of this gracious election, that it is an election of “some certain persons” (Canons I, A, 10), that election is infallible and can neither be interrupted, changed, recalled, or annulled — all truths intimately bound up with divine sovereignty — these truths do not receive so much as a how-do-you-do in “Our Song of Hope.”

More could be said, much more. But let these most obvious criticisms be sufficient, especially in the light of the fact that it is *admitted* that there is considerable tension (i.e., pulling in opposite directions) between “Our Song” and the Canons of Dordrecht.

All of this is crucial, and it should be considered to be of crucial importance in the consideration of “Our Song of Hope” as a proposed creed of the Reformed Church in America. Consider:

1. That the doctrine of sovereign predestination has always been admitted to be one of the most characteristic doctrines of the Reformed faith. In fact, election has been called “the heart of the church.”
2. That “Our Song of Hope” admits to presenting an altogether different doctrine of election than do the Three Forms of Unity and especially the Canons.
3. That no attempt is made by way of due process (a

gravamen) to dislodge from the confession of the church the doctrine of election taught by the Canons of Dordrecht.

4. That nevertheless the effect will be that the doctrine taught by the Canons will be invalid in the RCA, while the doctrine taught by “Our Song” will be *de facto* the creed of the RCA.

5. That still — even though the heart is cut out of the Canons — it is claimed that “Our Song” is intended as an *additional* creed, not a replacement of the old creeds. And, I take it, the RCA will still want to be known as a *Reformed* denomination even though they will have abandoned the historic Reformed faith.

A question: should “Our Song” be adopted, what will those in the RCA who wish to remain truly Reformed do? Subscription to this new creed is obviously impossible. What will they do? They must prepare to face this serious question.

Another question: what will those who desire to have ecclesiastical fellowship with the RCA do? Will they be willing to swallow this new, but un-Reformed, creed and exercise a fellowship based on the lie? They also must prepare to face this serious question.

About Reformed Methodology

(Reply to Rev. Kortering)

In the September 1 issue there appeared a contribution on this subject from Rev. J. Kortering, and we promised a reply in this issue. We now fulfill that promise.

In the first place, colleague Kortering seems to overlook the fact that in my earlier writing on this subject, I offered proof for my position, namely, the Formula of Subscription. He and I and every officebearer in the Protestant Reformed Churches have signed our names to this statement: “We . . . do hereby sincerely and in good conscience before the Lord, declare by this, our subscription, that we heartily believe and are persuaded that all the articles and points of doctrine, contained in the Confession and Catechism of the Reformed Churches, together with the explanation of some points of the aforesaid doctrine, made by the National Synod of Dordrecht, 1618-’19, *do fully agree with the Word of God.*” (italics added) Rev. Kortering makes no mention of this, but to me this is crucial. Why? Because it means that the truths expressed by the confessions ARE the truth of the Word of God. We have all vowed this.

In the second place, this means that the confessions are by no means on the same line with commentaries and Reformed writers. I mention this because Rev. Kortering seems to suggest this when he mentions them in one breath, although I cannot believe that colleague Kortering himself thinks this. He and I and every officebearer are bound — voluntarily bound, but nevertheless bound — by what the confessions teach. We are not bound by what commentaries or Reformed writers teach. I am not bound by what Calvin or Keil or Meyer or Hoeksema or Ophoff teach. I am indeed bound — by my own subscription — to what the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, and the Canons of Dordrecht teach. Why? Because I have the deep conviction that they have the authority of the Word of God to back them up. Hence, there is but one exception: if I become convinced that there is conflict between the confessions and Scripture, I have the right and the duty to file a gravamen and try to convince the churches that the confessions are wrong, meanwhile keeping silence in my public and private teaching.

In the third place, this means the following with regard to any subject on which our confessions speak, extra-confessional matters being excluded. It means that in my dogmatical studies, my exegetical studies, synodical study committee work — whatever it may be — I never start out from scratch. I never start out with zero. On the contrary, I start out with a bias, a commitment, a prepossession. To begin with a blank slate is impossible anyway from a psychological and spiritual point of view, whether we like it or not. Even in his own article Rev. Kortering is not without a bias; and it is striking to me that his own appeal is not to Scripture, but to Article 7 of the Belgic Confession.

Now let us make a practical application of this, in order to illustrate all this. Let us say that I am going to exegete and preach on I John 2:2, which teaches that Christ is “the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” Do I start from scratch and say to myself, “I will have an open mind and investigate whether this text teaches particular atonement or universal atonement?” For me that is both impossible and dishonest. Why? I have vowed that the teaching of the Canons fully agrees with Scripture; and those Canons (II, A, 8) teach particular atonement. That, therefore, is the teaching of Scripture as a whole, including I John 2:2. In my exegesis, I approach I John 2:2 with that

bias, or prepossession, as well, of course, as with the bias that I John 2:2 cannot possibly contradict the rest of Scripture. But what if, in the course of my studies, I ultimately cannot harmonize I John 2:2 with the doctrine of limited atonement? Then the course of gravamen is open to me; but meanwhile I remain bound by my vow until the matter is resolved, my conscience being freed by the very fact of my filing that gravamen.

Finally, I call attention to the fact that H. Hoeksema takes this position repeatedly in his *Reformed Dogmatics*. On pp. 3 and 4 he writes: “A dogmatician is no ‘open Bible’ student; nor is he an undenominationalist. He does not approach the Bible for the first time and as an individual, but as a member: a) of the church of the past; and, b) of a particular church in the present. It follows, then, that in applying himself to this science the dogmatician has respect unto: a) the generally accepted *dogmata* of the church catholic; and, b) the specific *dogmata* of his own denomination. By these the dogmatician is freely bound. He is bound by them because of his membership in his own particular church. And he is *freely* bound because in the doctrine of that church he finds the purest expression of his own faith.” Cf. also pages 6 and 7 and pages 14 and 15.

I must dissent, therefore, when colleague Kortering speaks of over-reacting.

TRANSLATED TREASURES

Acts of the Synod of Dordrecht

(13)

(Connection: In the previous installment we saw that from all quarters pressure was building against the Remonstrants and for the holding of a National Synod. When the Remonstrants and their political allies in some of the provinces saw that the convening of a National Synod was inevitable, they took the measure of raising city militia allegedly to defend the independence of their provinces, thus threatening civil war — a threat which was met with decisive action by the States-General and the Prince of Orange. Finally, in December of 1617 it was decided to convene a National Synod in May of the following year.)

This Resolution having been taken, 1618, the Remonstrants raged marvelously; and through various other measures and schemes they sought to upset it and to make it useless, working through those who were loyal to their cause. In Holland, through those

who were favorable to them, they requested a Provincial Synod, something of which they had such a great abhorrence only a little while before. And seeing that it had been proposed to call foreign Theologians to the National Synod, therefore they thought that also to this Provincial Synod, foreign Theologians might be called, if men approved of this. But to this the answer was given that indeed formerly the Holland Churches had requested a Provincial Synod when there appeared to be no hope of gaining a National Synod and when the differences were confined to the Holland Churches; but since now the convening of a National Synod had been decided upon, and since the evil had spread through all the Provinces, so that it could not be removed by the Synod of one Province,

therefore it was simply unreasonable to consider a Provincial Synod at this time for the resolving of these differences. Further, it was pointed out that as in every separate Province particular Synods must precede the National Synod, so also in Holland, both South — and North — Holland, particular Synods would precede. The Remonstrants nevertheless bravely persisted in this through their leaders, and they pressed for such a Synod. They did this either because they thought that their cause would be less of a hindrance in the eyes of the Provincial Synod, seeing that there were many among the Regents and Ministers in Holland loyal to them, or because they wanted to prevent the convening of the National Synod altogether through such subterfuges. However, when they saw that their request was so improper that they would not easily be able to convince anyone of it, they took refuge in a new measure; and they desired that this case should be brought to an Ecumenical Synod, that is, to a general Synod of all Churches. The answer was given to them that it was very uncertain whether and when an Ecumenical Synod would be able to be called together. Further, the answer was given that the current ills required an immediate remedy, and that this National Synod, which would be authorized by the States-General, would be like a General Synod, since delegates from most of the Reformed Churches would be present. If they thought themselves aggrieved by the judgement of such a Synod, then it would always be permissible and justified to appeal from this National Synod to the Ecumenical Synod, provided they were willing to submit to the judgment of the National Synod meanwhile. But by all these subterfuges and quibblings they accomplished so much, that the letters of convening were delayed for some time and that the appointed day for the convening of the Synod had to be postponed and changed.

Meanwhile, Lord Dudley Carleton openly complained in the assembly of the States-General that the honor of the King of Great Britain, his master, had been scandalously and shamelessly ridiculed in the dishonorable pamphlet called the *Weegschaal*, which the Remonstrants even after the edict of the States-General, had translated and reprinted in the French language. And after a brief and pertinent refutation of many objections of the Remonstrants, he made known to the States what method and manner his Royal Majesty of Great Britain was accustomed to use in the resolving of differences concerning Religion or doctrine. Since this agreed with the resolution of the States-General, therefore, the States were more and more confirmed in this holy purpose. Also the Magistrates of the City of Amsterdam, having previously consulted with the Ministers of that Church and with others called together for this purpose, presented in writing in the gathering of the States of

Holland and West-Friesland, March 23, many and very weighty reasons by which it was very plainly proved that these differences could at this time be resolved and laid to rest in no other way than by a National Synod. At the same time they furnished a very basic answer to all the objections of the Remonstrants and all their proposals concerning a General Synod. Shortly thereafter, the Magistrates of the City of Enkhuizen confirmed this with many reasons which were put in writing and delivered in the Apology of the Cities of Dordrecht, Amsterdam, Enkhuizen, etc., p. 104 and 113; these reasons were later printed, March 27, in order that everyone might know how improperly the Remonstrants and their supporters acted when they opposed the convening of the National Synod so perversely with their new proposals and when they sought to escape the judgement of such a National Synod.

The States-General, judging that this highly necessary matter, already decided because of very proper and weighty reasons, ought no longer to be postponed for such proposals and subterfuges, decided anew that the convening of the National Synod should take place immediately, without any postponement and delay; and they ordered that the place of meeting would be the City of Dordrecht, and the day the first of November next. When certain among the States of Holland and West-Friesland who were loyal to the cause of the Remonstrants opposed this Resolution in the gathering of the States-General, complaining that thereby the dignity, the right, and the freedom of their Province was abridged, then the States-General declared in a public act that by this authorizing of the National Synod they did not desire to abridge or belittle in any wise the dignity, the right, and the freedom of any Province; but they declared that it was their upright intention, without any prejudgment of any Province, and also that of the Union or confederation itself, to resolve, lawfully, to God's honor, and the peace of the Republic, through the ordinary judgment of the National Synod only the ecclesiastical differences which had arisen concerning the doctrine, seeing that these concerned all the Reformed Netherlands Churches.

Thereafter they wrote to the States of every Province and declared it to be their purpose in the Name of the Lord, to authorize from all the Churches of these Provinces a National Synod on the first of November next, in order that by this means the differences which had arisen in those Churches might be lawfully investigated and might in a proper manner (always maintaining the truth) be resolved. At the same time they exhorted the States of every Province that they should immediately convene in their Province, according to custom, a Provincial Synod, from which six Godly, learned, or three other capable

men, making confession of the Reformed Religion, should be delegated. These men, according to the conditions presented by them, of which they sent a copy, would investigate those differences at the National Synod, and, preserving the truth, remove them. They also sent to the French Churches here in the Netherlands, who were accustomed to have a particular Synod among themselves, seeing that they are spread through all these Provinces, letters of similar content.

When these letters were received, the States of each Province called together the Provincial or particular Synods of their Churches, in which the objections which would be brought to the National Synod and the persons who were to be sent there with their mandate and instructions were appointed and delegated by the common vote of the Churches. These things took place in every Province according to the manner which had been followed until this time in these Reformed Churches, with the exception that in Holland and the Bishopric of Utrecht, because of the great number of the Remonstrants, the ordinary procedure could not be followed in all things. For, because in some Classes of Holland there had been separations, so that the Remonstrants had their own separate Classical gatherings and the other Ministers also had their own Classical gatherings, therefore the States of that Province had thought good that the Classes in which there had been no separation should, according to the manner previously followed, delegate by majority vote four men who would be sent to the particular Synod with regular power, and that in the other Classes, in order to avoid confusion, the Remonstrants should delegate two from their side, and the other Ministers should similarly delegate two men, who would be sent to the particular Synod with equal power. In the Bishopric of Utrecht the Churches were not yet divided into various Classes. On this account, the States of that Province thought it good that all the Remonstrants should gather separately in a Synod, and that the remaining Ministers, who did not follow the views of the Remonstrants, of whom there still remained a goodly number, should gather in another Synod, and that from each Synod and from each party three men should be delegated to the National Synod with the power to judge. However, the Church of Utrecht, seeing that it was divided into parties, of which the one followed the views of the Remonstrants, and the other rejected those views, and seeing that, being only recently delivered from the oppression of the Remonstrants, it was not yet provided with ordinary Ministers, but at the time was served by Johannes Dibetz, Minister of Dordrecht — therefore it happened that he was lawfully delegated by that other Synod in the name of the Utrecht Churches which did not follow the views of the Remonstrants. When

the Synod of the Churches of Gelderland and of Zutphen was gathered at Arnhem, June 25, then the Remonstrants who were delegated from the Classis of Bommel did not want to sit with the others unless certain conditions were promised to them beforehand, conditions which the Synod judged to be in conflict with the Resolution of the States. And because before this time the Remonstrants of the Classis of Nijmegen, Bommel, and Tiel had delivered to the States of Gelderland and to the Honorable Court there ten Articles which they said that the other Ministers taught, they were mandated openly to name those Preachers who taught these things, in order that they might be hailed before the Synod and that it might be lawfully determined whether this was true. For it was known that the Remonstrants had slanderously fabricated these Articles against the Reformed Ministers, in order to make them hated by the Government. But they could mention no one else in the entire Province than the Minister of Hattem, who had abundantly cleared himself in the Classis. And when the Synod nevertheless wanted to hail him in order to be heard in its presence, then the Remonstrants no longer persisted in this. Henricus Arnoldi, Minister at Delft, who was present there in the name of the South-Holland Churches, also declared that there was no one in South-Holland who taught or agreed with the aforesaid Articles. On this account, the Synod earnestly rebuked them for these grievous slanders, and at once declared that the Churches of Gelderland did not accept nor support the doctrine comprehended in those Articles as they had proposed them, although there were certain clauses in them which, in themselves and taken in a proper sense, could not be rejected. The Remonstrants at last acknowledged their guilt concerning these unjust slanders, and begged forgiveness. After this, in the same Synod the state of differences between the Remonstrants and the other Ministers was described, and this was later passed on to the National Synod. And, seeing that in that Province there were many Ministers who were suspected of many other errors besides the Five Articles of the Remonstrance, and other Ministers who had been unlawfully inducted into the ministry, and also others who led a scandalous life, therefore some of these were hailed before the Synod; and on account of these reasons (but in no wise on account of their views of the Five Remonstrant Articles, which were reserved for the National Synod) they were suspended from their ministry. The case of others was committed to certain delegates in the name of the Synod, to whom the States also added their commissioners. These, after they had fully investigated the cases of those men in the Classes, suspended some from their ministry; and others were at once deposed from the ministry.

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of the Book of Galatians

By Rev. G. Lubbers

THE THREEFOLD QUESTIONS OF GALATIANS
3:1-5 — continued

That Paul is indeed asking a very crucial question in verse 5 ought to be very evident to all who reflect a bit upon the meaning and implication of this question. It is so important that Paul can write, "Only this would I learn from you: received ye the Spirit by works of the law or by the hearing of faith?" How did grace and the experience of the grace of salvation and justification have its beginning and starting-point in their christian experience? Upon this these "bewitched" Galatians ought to reflect and come to their senses.

There are two sides to this question: the *subjective* side of our experience and the *objective* side of God's basic manner of operation. Paul calls attention to both of these. He does so in such a way that the manner of God's supplying the grace of the Spirit is the final rule and canon in this weighty matter of salvation. Salvation is of the Lord. The subjective experience in this matter must and will agree with the objective manner of God's working of faith and miraculous powers in the midst of the saints in Galatia.

Surely the Galatians received the Spirit by the hearing of faith. True it is, that, in order to hear, they already had the operation of the Spirit in their hearts by which they were made alive, and received the ability to believe. They were born again. If this were not true there could be no hearing of faith. Their hearing would not have been mingled with faith. (Heb. 4:2) However, Paul is speaking here of the active hearing of faith as this receives the preaching of Christ crucified for our sins, by sinners who are guilt-ridden, smitten in conscience, which needs to be cleansed from dead works to serve the living God. (Heb. 9:9, 14) Ever these worshippers of their horrible idols had been in the bondage of sin, trying to appease their terrifying gods with their oblations and sin-offerings. But they had not received any benefits of pardon and forgiveness of sins in them. They only sank deeper in the bottomless mire of more sin and shame! Ever more they were in the bonds of Satan

and the powers of darkness! What a plight of a helpless and hell-doomed sinner. They ever more gathered wrath unto the day when all the treasures of God will be revealed in His just judgment. (Rom. 2:1-5) But then the Gospel was preached on the Cross. A righteousness without law was preached, having the testimony of the law and prophets, the entire Old Testament Scriptures. (Rom. 3:21-25) And the Holy Spirit had enlightened their eyes, inclined their hearts to hear the good news; the arm of the Lord was revealed to them. And they consciously received the Spirit by this hearing of faith!

Of this wonderful experience these Galatians are reminded by Paul. It was the time when they received Paul as an angel from heaven and they would have plucked their eyes out and given them to Paul. The Gospel had become for them the pearl of great price, for which a man will sell all that he has to obtain it. And here they were hearing, "O all ye that thirst come to the waters and buy and eat; yea, come buy wine and milk, without money and without price." These Galatians were the nations that would run unto Christ, because of the Lord their God. (Isaiah 55:1-5) O, these waters were so sweet! There was nothing in them of the bitterness of the Mara of sin. Peace with God through Jesus Christ, the Crucified Lord.

Surely, these Galatians had not received all these spiritual blessings in heavenly places by "works of law." This had all been of no avail. It had been for them as they were "without law" a perishing with the work of the law written in their hearts, "their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile excusing or accusing one another." But from law-works they did not receive the waters which flow from the throne of God and of the Lamb. (Revelation 22:1; Ezekiel 47:1-12.) Rivers of waters which are for the healing of the nations they had not received by works of law. Not a drop of the water of life was theirs from works of law. These are all cisterns that hold no water, broken vessels are these works.

Surely this is a crucial question: did you receive the plenitude of the blessings of the Spirit, as He takes it out of Christ, gives it to you, by the works of

law or by the hearing of faith? And there can be but one answer for the believing child of God in Galatia and in all ages and times! The answer is loud and clear: by the *hearing of faith alone!*

But why by hearing of faith alone?

God is the "supplier of the Spirit" through the preaching of the Gospel and He makes this Gospel a power, wholly Divine, unto salvation in all who believe, the Jew first and also the Greek. There is a great "supply" in Christ. A fullness of grace and truth. (John 1:16) Out of this fulness have we all received: grace for grace. It is a fountain in Jacob, pure, fresh and thirst-quenching. But it all depends on the "One who supplies the Spirit." The application of the work of Christ on the Cross to the sinner-elect by faith is entirely God's work. That makes this question of Paul so binding on the conscience and so logically cogent in our reasonable service. Paul speaks of this great "supply" also in Philippians 1:19. It is grace abounding, greater than all our sins and guilt.

God does one thing more. Fact is, He had done something to confirm the manifestation of the Gospel-preaching in the midst of these Galatians. He had shown the "energy" (energoon) in the "powers," signs, which had been wrought in the midst of these churches. These were for the confirmation of the Gospel, that the Lord had taken all our sins and diseases upon himself. (Matthew 8:17) There had been healings of diseases, speaking with tongues, interpretations, which revealed the almighty power of God in Christ in their midst to save. It was not the preaching of an impotent and helpless idol, but the manifestation of the living God in the working of His saving power.

How did God supply the Spirit and work these great powers in their midst and in their hearts?

Once more the cogent question is: out of works of law or by the hearing of faith? Which? Can there be any doubt?

For such a great benefit of salvation and by the very power of this faith the Galatians had suffered for Christ's sake. They had endured reproach, scorn, and derision because they had found peace in the blood of the Cross alone. It is true that we do not read in the Book of Acts concerning this suffering. But Paul had told the congregation that "we must through much affliction enter into the kingdom of God." (Acts 14:22) And Jesus told his disciples in the night in which he was betrayed, "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." (John 16:33) That is the determining way of God for His saints. We must suffer with Christ to be glorified with Him. (Romans 8:17; II Tim. 2:3, 12; I Peter 4:13; etc.)

Now Paul can hardly believe that such suffering

was all in vain, that is, that they would not one day receive the crown of the reward and be glorified with Christ in His appearing. The "if it be yet in vain" suggests that Paul really believes the best while he fears the worst. He fears that it may be with these Galatians as it was with those who were sown in shallow ground in Jesus' parable of the sower. These received the word anon with joy when they heard the word of the Cross, but they had "no root in themselves." Such faith dureth but a little while, says Jesus. For when persecution arises because of the word, straightway he is offended. Now, Paul does not know the hearts of these Galatians. He believes they are brethren. He hopes the best for them. Yet, he would bring them to their senses by calling attention to their unique suffering for the Gospel's sake and for the truth of justification by faith alone so that they have peace with God.

It is ever good that we are recalled of better days of faith in our life so that we may take courage for the battle at hand and for what lies before us! Thus, through admonition and warnings and threatenings of the Gospel Paul will woo these Galatians, so that, once more, Christ may be formed in them. What a travail of soul for this faithful man of God!

THE GREAT FAITH-EXPERIENCE OF ABRAHAM CITED BY PAUL (Galatians 3:6; Genesis 15:6)

Paul will now begin this great exposition of the Old Testament Scriptures as these have direct bearing on the point at issue: receive the Spirit by works of law or by the hearing of faith. For what is written concerning Abraham in Genesis 15:6 is *normative* for the New Testament saint. Abraham is the father of believers, both of the Jew and of the Greek. (Romans 4:9-13) What Paul cites here concerning Abraham is applicable to both, the circumcision and the foreskin, Jew and Gentile. It is a remarkable thing that Paul simply assumes this to be true and that this is understood also by the Galatians.

When Paul therefore writes "even as" Abraham, he is connecting the spiritual father with his children. "For as many as be out of faith are the sons of Abraham." With one stroke of the pen everything is set in the proper Scriptural perspective. This is masterful use of the Scriptures which cannot be broken, but fulfilled in their last jot and tittle. Abraham's experience of faith is to be the universal experience of all. Such can not be said of other men in the church. Their name is not "father of many nations." One may think highly of a Thomas a Kempis in his *Imitation of Christ*, or of a John Bunyan in his *Pilgrim's Progress*, his *Holy War*, but it is *not* normative in the church, and it should not be suggested that such works are normative. Such men themselves must be measured by the Scriptures and

what these teach concerning the experience of "believing Abraham." Paul does not cite Jeremiah's experience as reflected in his *Lamentations*. Not Jeremiah is the father of believers, but only Abraham. And he is the acknowledged "father" by Jew and Greek. (John 8:33-58; Acts 3:13; 3:25; James 2:21, 23)

Well may the Galatian readers, and we with them, take special heed to what Paul will be telling us concerning the implications, the far-reaching conse-

quences of what God revealed to Abraham under the stars of heaven when he appeared unto him as related in Genesis 15:1-6. When this is understood the most "bewitched" will come to their spiritual senses and, once more, see the false teachers for what they really are. They are the troublers in Israel. They preach a gospel which is not a gospel at all. They are worthy of the anathema of God, and to be assigned with the Devil and the false prophets to the bottomless pit of hell. (Gal. 1:8, 9; Rev. 20:10)

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

The Antichrist

Rev. H. Veldman

The Signs of the Times which occupy our attention in this rubric are the signs which are connected with the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in His final appearance upon the clouds of heaven and as they are peculiarly characteristic of our present day and age. The church, of course, is vitally interested in these precursory signs, signs which precede the final coming of our Lord. They and the life of the church are inseparably connected. All our life and hope stand or fall with them. Without them we are doomed. Should they fail to materialize our situation is utterly hopeless. The final coming of our Lord Jesus Christ means victory and eternal glory for the cause of God in the midst of the world. This explains the longing and desire of the church of God for this final coming of the Lord as expressed in the scriptures. The church gave expression to this hope throughout the Old Dispensation. Eve called her firstborn Cain and said: "I have gotten a man from the Lord." Gen. 4:1. And how vivid is this longing of God's waiting saints, as set forth in Ps. 130. That the church of today, nominally speaking, is not characterized by this passion and longing for Christ's return is also a sign of the times. The Word of God also calls attention to the Great Apostasy, the great falling away or defection, and that the love of many shall wax cold. But the church of God continues to cry out: "Watchman, what of the night? When will it end? When will the morning dawn?" Among these signs of the times, the precursory signs, the signs which precede and are immediately connected with the final coming of the Lord, is also the sign of the antichrist.

The word antichrist is found in Scripture only in the epistles of John. This, of course, does not mean that these are the only passages in Holy Writ that

refer to him. There are many passages in the Word of God that refer to him. The Lord speaks of false prophets that come in sheep's clothing but who inwardly are ravaging wolves. Besides, He warns that many shall come in His Name, saying that they are Christ, and shall deceive many. And in Matt. 24:24 we read: "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; inasmuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." And it is well known that it is the antichrist who is held before us in the book of Revelation, chapters 13 and 17. In addition to this, we have a very vivid description of the antichrist, the Man of Sin, whose chief characteristic is sin, the "Son of Perdition," in 2 Thess. 2:3-10. But the word antichrist itself appears only in the epistles of John — see I John 2:18, 22; I John 4:3; 2 John 7.

It lies in the nature of the case that the antichrist should reveal himself in the New Dispensation. This does not mean that he was completely absent in the Old Testament. Even as Christ did not appear until the New Dispensation, but there was a shadow of Him in the Old Testament, so there was no antichrist until the New Dispensation, but there was a shadow of him in the days of the shadows. In Rev. 12 we have a picture of the church of God as in the Old Dispensation. The woman there, of whom we read that she was with child, represents the church of the Old Dispensation. The dragon who threatens her is, we know, the devil. And this certainly means that the church was constantly threatened by the representative of the dragon, and this representative is surely the type of the antichrist throughout the days of the Old Dispensation. We need not call attention to this in any detail. Think of Egypt, the wilderness, of

Haman in the days of Esther. And many of our readers must be familiar with the name of Antiochus Epiphanes. That he is the focus of the book of Daniel, the little horn of Dan. 7, is beyond contradiction. What a monster of iniquity he was! He was determined, in behalf of Greek culture, to wage a relentless attack upon the Jewish religion and the scriptures, provoking the uprising which resulted in the temporarily brilliant period of Maccabean rule. We need not call attention to him at length. He was especially a devotee, it is said, of the heather god Zeus, of whom it is probable that he thought himself an incarnation (hence his own title for himself — Theos Epiphanes, "God Manifest"). How he fought against Jerusalem! He first punished it as a rebellious city; later he determined to make it a stronghold of his kingdom as an outpost against Egypt, and it was to be Hellenized (made Greek). The Jewish religion was to be blotted out, the Temple was plundered and converted into a sanctuary of Zeus Olympios, the worship of Dionysis was introduced, the Jews were to sacrifice to heathen deities and eat sacrificed swine, while their books were to be destroyed. And these measures were enforced by frequent massacres.

The coming of the antichrist is characteristic of the New Dispensation. This, of course, is understandable. Christ came. And His coming, of course, draws forth the coming of the antichrist. The word antichrist is a compound word, consisting of Christ and another word that may mean either "against" or "instead of." We may combine these two meanings. The antichrist is surely he who opposes the Christ. But it is also evident from the Word of God that he is opposed to the Christ in order to take His place. Do we not read this literally in the Word of God? Does not the Lord speak of false prophets who claim to be the Christ, to draw the attention of the people away from Christ and upon themselves, who, therefore, would take the place of the Christ?

Is he discernible in our present day? We read in I John 2:18: "Little children, it is the last time (or hour): and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time." This time is the New Dispensation. It is the last hour upon the clock of the unfolding of God's counsel with respect to the coming of Christ's kingdom. The clock has struck Eleven. This occurred at Pentecost; the next time the clock strikes, Twelve, will mark the end of the world. And throughout this last hour there have been many antichrists. Throughout this last hour many false prophets have arisen. And they will culminate in *the* antichrist.

This antichrist is held vividly before us in Rev. 13. We need not discuss the question whether he will be a person or a federation of powers. I believe that he

will be a person. Of course, he will not merely be alone. No dictator has ever been what he is as merely alone. Alexander the Great, Caesar, Napoleon, etc., were what they were because of their support by those who stood with them. Rev. 12 speaks of two beasts. In Rev. 13:1-10 we read of the monster that rises up out of the sea. This beast has seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. This beast represents the antichrist from the aspect of his political power. The deadly wound that was healed was inflicted at the tower of Babel. Now that wound is healed. The various beasts mentioned in verse 2 refer to world powers. Now, at the end of the ages, the governments of the world will be united. The wound shall have been healed, and the antichrist will be supreme. Also Gog and Magog, the heathen nations, will be in subjection to him. And this antichrist, we read, shall make war with the saints, to overcome them. Power was given him over all kindreds and tongues and nations. All that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. All shall worship him, except the saints. They will be persecuted and killed. These will be the days of unprecedented fury and violence for the people of God. They will be the days of which the scriptures declare that they will be shortened for the sake of the elect.

Rev. 13, however, also speaks of another beast. In the verses 11-18 we read of the beast that rises up out of the earth. This beast has two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. This beast, too, represents the antichrist. Of course, there are not two antichrists. There is only one antichrist. This second beast represents him from his religious aspect. The antichrist will be greatly admired. We read in Rev. 13:8 that all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him. His reign will be characterized by great prosperity. Peace will reign. Everywhere people will enjoy prosperity and abundance. The lusts of the flesh and of the eyes will prevail throughout his kingdom. Of course, it will be the kingdom of antichrist. Upon his head will be the name of blasphemy. He will deny the God of heaven and earth. He will denounce and ridicule the Christ, the Lamb of God that was slain from before the foundation of the world. He will, we read, sit in the temple as God. He will claim full responsibility for the peace and prosperity of his kingdom. He will be worshiped and acclaimed as the sole source of all their abundance. They all will bow down before him, and shout it out: Heil, Saviour! Now we read in Rev. 13 that the second beast serves the first. The church, the false church, with all its teaching and philosophy, will prepare the children of men for this antichristian kingdom. This false church will corrupt the Word of God, undermine the foundations of the

truth, substitute the lie for the truth, instill into the hearts and minds of the children of men the love of Mammon, the love of the things that are below, the desire to make this world a better place in which to live. A social gospel will replace the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. The earthly will replace the heavenly. All things shall have but one purpose: to lead men away from the God of heaven and earth and His Christ, and to set up a kingdom in which the results of sin will be banished but sin itself will prevail and rule supreme. And whoever oppose this development of the antichristian kingdom will be destroyed; there will be no place for them upon the face of the earth.

Do we recognize this development today? How important it is that we recognize it! For those who are asleep, spiritually, Christ will come as a thief in the night. Of this we read in I Thess. 5. How terrible this will be!

Besides, it is not all difficult to envision this development. True, many things must yet happen. Indeed, many things have already happened. The gospel has been preached to all nations. Earthquakes, terrible earthquakes, have become frighteningly common. There is also much famine throughout the world. And so we could go on. Yet, many things must yet happen. The nations must become united. The peoples of the earth must become one. Let us bear in

mind, however, that this can happen in a comparatively brief period of time. It is not difficult to envision a time when a leader will emerge out of all our present chaos who will lead the peoples of the earth out of our present problems and difficulties. Such a man will surely be worshipped.

Finally, I must call your attention to one more thing. I refer now to the church, the nominal church, that which calls itself the church of God and of Christ. In the past, churches have been merging. They have been merging, of course, at the cost of the truth. And this movement will surely accelerate. However, look at this church today. It is assuming more and more the aspect of the false church. Synodically, they occupy their attention, not with things that concern the truth, but with things that are of a social nature. The fundamental truths of the Word of God are being denied and undermined. The authority of the scriptures as the unerring, infallible Word of God is being questioned and denied. The synthesis is replacing the antithesis. Fundamental institutions such as marriage are becoming increasingly a laughing stock, a mockery. The carnal enjoyment of the things that are below supercede the things of the Kingdom of Heaven. The reign of antichrist is being prepared.

What shall we say? Let us be sober and watch unto prayer. Let us hold fast that which we have, that no man take our crown.

TAKING HEED TO THE DOCTRINE

A Reformed Look at Pentecostalism

by Rev. David Engelsma

In two previous articles (April 1 and May 1 issues of the *Standard Bearer*), we examined the Pentecostal doctrine of the baptism with the Holy Spirit and began to examine the related Pentecostal doctrine of the extraordinary gifts, the “charismata.” It was readily acknowledged that Scripture teaches that there were extraordinary gifts — the miraculous — in the time of the apostles, including the gift of speaking in tongues. We will now consider Pentecostalism’s appeal to Scripture in support of its teaching and practice of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit. The answer of the Reformed faith to this appeal will be given. It will be shown from Scripture itself why miracles were found in the days of the apostles, but are lacking today.

Pent.’s argument for miracles today is simple: Scripture teaches that the miraculous was part of the life and ministry of the Church during the time of the apostles; therefore, the gift of performing miracles should be found in the Church today.

Ignored by Pent. is Scripture’s teaching that miracles were “signs of an apostle.” The power of doing miracles was attached to the apostolic office and had as its purpose the authenticating of the apostles as special servants of Christ and the confirming of their doctrine as the gospel of God. This does not imply that only the apostles could perform miracles; in fact, other saints also possessed the gift of the working of miracles. But it does mean that the miraculous was apostolic: it derived from the apos-

tolic office present in the Church at that time, and it served to attest the apostles and their doctrine. Miracles were the credentials of the apostles.

The necessity of miracles during the apostolic age is to be found in the unique labor of the apostles. They laid the foundation of the New Testament Church of Christ. So Paul writes in Ephesians 2:20: the Gentile believers, with the Christians from Israel, "are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets." The apostles *are* the foundation of the Church, even as Christ is "the chief corner stone." They are the foundation by virtue of the Word which they proclaim and write. Similarly, in I Corinthians 3:10, Paul claims to have laid the foundation of the Church at Corinth, whereas others then build upon this foundation: "According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon . . ."

That miracles, including the miracle of tongues, were part of the apostolic office is taught in II Corinthians 12:12: "Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds." Paul is defending his apostleship in view of the attack on that apostleship at Corinth. He laments, in verse 11, that he was not commended of the Corinthians, even though "in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles." The Corinthians should have recognized and honored Paul's apostleship, for Christ gave clear proof of it in the miracles that He worked through Paul. Miracles are described as signs, wonders, and mighty deeds. They are called "signs of an apostle." Literally, we read: "the signs of the apostle." Miracles indicate the presence and power of apostleship. They belong to the apostolic office.

Hebrews 2:3, 4 also connect the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit with the apostolic office. The first three verses of the chapter are a warning against neglecting the "so great salvation." One does this by refusing to give earnest heed to the Word of God. For we have this salvation *through the Word*. "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him?" The great salvation is *spoken*; we have it by *hearing*. The passage establishes the primacy of the preaching of the Word as the means of salvation. Even in the apostolic age, not miracles, not extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, but the proclamation of the Word was the main thing. Miracles were secondary; they were strictly subservient to the apostolic doctrine.

The passage also teaches that miracles belonged to the apostolic office and ministry. The author has said that the New Testament saints, the Hebrew Christians in particular, have the Word of God that brings them

salvation. They must give heed to this Word, and they must not let it slip. "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip." How do we come to have the Word of God? It was first spoken by the Lord Jesus Himself. Then it was confirmed unto us by "them that heard Him." These are the apostles. Concerning these apostles, verse 4 states: "God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will."

The reference is to miracles, described, as in II Corinthians 12:12, as "signs and wonders and . . . miracles (the same word as that translated 'mighty deeds' in II Corinthians 12:12 -DE)." Strikingly, this passage also speaks of "gifts of the Holy Ghost." The word, "gifts," could better be translated as 'distributions' (of the Holy Ghost). These are the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit found in the Church at the time of the apostles. Among them were the gift of "kinds of tongues" and the gift of "the interpretation of tongues," as I Corinthians 12:10 shows.

Miracles and extraordinary gifts of the Spirit were God's witness to those who heard Christ, i.e., the apostles. The purpose of this witness was the apostles' confirming of Christ's Word to us, i.e., to attest the apostolic doctrine as the very Word of God. Miracles and the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit are not for all times, but were for the apostolic age; they were attached by the Divine will to the office of the apostle in order that they might confirm the Word which the apostles brought.

That the function of the miraculous was the confirmation of the apostolic gospel is taught in Mark 16:20: "And they (the apostles, to whom the risen Christ had given the commission to go into all the world and preach the gospel -DE) went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following." The signs, or miracles, were the Lord's powerful confirmation of the Word preached by the apostles. Acts 14:3 ascribes the same significance to the miracles of Paul and Barnabas: "Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands."

The apostolic office was not a permanent office in the Church, but a temporary one. The qualifications of an apostle show this. An apostle had to be called and commissioned by the risen Lord directly, which included that he received the gospel from Jesus Himself. In addition, he was required to have seen the risen Jesus, so that he could preach a resurrection of which he had himself been an eye-witness (cf. I Cor. 9:1).

The specific task of the apostle also indicates the

temporary nature of the office. This task was the laying of the foundation of the Church. One does not forever lay the foundation of a building. There comes a time when the foundation is laid. Then those whose work is foundation-laying are removed; and others, pastors and teachers, whose calling it is to build on the foundation, are given to the Church.

But if the office of apostle disappeared, so also must the miraculous have disappeared, "the signs of an apostle," for the miraculous was part of that office and served that ministry.

By the same token, those who insist on miracles today must produce apostles also. Let the Pentecostals put forward their apostles! It is noteworthy that the Irvingite movement (a precursor of Pent. In England in the 1800's, named after its leader, Edward Irving) appointed twelve apostles. In so doing, the movement was, at least, consistent.

Church history witnesses to the truth of Scripture's teaching that miracles and extraordinary gifts were temporary. Miracles ceased in the Church about A.D. 100, roughly the time of the death of the last apostle. For a time after this, only the heretical and schismatic sects claimed the power of doing miracles, e.g., the Montanists (a second century sect named after its leader, Montanus). As time passed, the power of doing miracles began again to be claimed and stressed within the catholic church; but, significantly, this went hand in hand with the church's departure from the truth of the gospel. The Roman Catholic Church, of course, has always claimed the power of performing miracles and has always bewitched her people with these wonders.

The purified Church of the Reformation expressly disavowed all miracles. The Reformation was confronted with miracles on two fronts: Rome and the anabaptist groups with their mystical "religion of the Spirit." Both Rome and the Mystics appealed to their miracles as proof that they were the true religion and taunted the Reformation with its lack of miracles.

Intuitively striking to the very heart of the issue — and this is the heart of the issue also today as regards Pent., Luther called the faithful to believe, live by, and stick to the bare Word of God, even though heretics were producing a veritable snowstorm of miracles in order to seduce them from the truth.

Calvin gave a more detailed explanation of the Reformed position: "In demanding miracles from us, they act dishonestly; for we have not coined some new gospel, but retain the very one the truth of which is confirmed by all the miracles which Christ and the apostles ever wrought. But they have a peculiarity which we have not — They can confirm their faith by constant miracles down to the present day! Nay rather, they allege miracles which might produce wavering in minds otherwise well disposed; they are so frivolous and ridiculous, so vain and false. But were they even exceedingly wonderful, they could have no effect against the truth of God, whose name ought to be hallowed always, and everywhere, whether by miracles, or by the natural course of events. The deception would perhaps be more specious if Scripture did not admonish us of the legitimate end and use of miracles. Mark tells us (Mark 16:20) that the signs which followed the preaching of the apostles were wrought in confirmation of it; so Luke also relates that the Lord 'gave testimony to the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done' by the hands of the apostles (Acts 14:3)" (*Institutes*, Prefatory Address to the King of France).

The wonders of Pent., like the miracles of Rome, are fraudulent. They are part and parcel of the only miracles that Scripture prophesies for the last days: the signs and wonders of the false christs and false prophets who would deceive the very elect, if it were possible (Matt. 24:24); the power and signs and lying wonders of the man of sin who will deceive those who do not receive the love of the truth (II Thess. 2:9-12).

Beware! Do not be hoodwinked by the modern-day miracle-mongers!

Book Review

REASON WITHIN THE BOUNDS OF RELIGION, by Nicholas Wolterstorff; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976; pp., \$2.45 (paper).

This is a somewhat difficult book to review. There are several reasons for this. 1) The book is not easy to understand. It is philosophically oriented and the language is not always as clear as it could be. 2) In a way, to do justice to the book, one ought to offer a rather lengthy critique of what Wolterstorff writes. And yet a critique of the entire book would probably

involve another book of the same length; and that is manifestly impossible in a review. 3) The book is so totally foreign to the Christian faith that there is almost nothing in it with which one can agree if he takes his stand on the position of the historic Reformed faith. One scarcely knows where to begin in a review of this sort.

The book is really an attempt to establish a Christian epistemology — epistemology being that branch of philosophy which deals with the whole subject of

how we *know*. It is a rejection of the position which has been held by those of the Calvinistic and Reformed faith, and it is an attempt to develop an alternative which will be philosophically defensible. But it offers no real *Christian* alternative. In fact, as I read the book, it offers no alternative at all, but comes perilously close to scepticism.

The first half of the book is intent on destroying all the positions which have been held in the past. Among those destroyed are the position of Augustine — “*Credo ut intelligam*,” “I believe that I may know”; the position of Aquinas and his use of natural reason; and the position of Calvin. All these views are described as being the position of “foundationalism,” i.e., “the existence of a body of foundational propositions — that is, propositions which are not only true but can be known noninferentially and with certitude to be true.” (p. 42.)

It would seem that this position of Wolterstorff implies a rejection of the key role of Scripture in all our knowledge. This is indeed true. Wolterstorff does not have very much respect for Scripture (and with Scripture, faith) in the process of our knowing.

Perhaps a brief statement of his position is in order. In a footnote (sic) Wolterstorff states what seems to me his most basic error. Here he distinguishes between God’s speaking and God’s revealing. He writes:

One might be inclined to respond that to speak of God revealing is to say the same thing in different words as to speak of God speaking. But this is false. The difference can perhaps best be seen by reflecting on human speech. Suppose I say to you “Close the door.” No doubt in saying this I reveal various things, in particular, various things about myself. But I would regard it as perverse on your part for you to focus on that. For it was only in the course of *issuing a command* that I revealed something. And my intent in issuing the command was not to satisfy your curiosity about me, but to get you to close the door. Now it is because *faith* has always been paired off with *revelation* in the classical theologies, and because I think that God’s speaking rather than God’s revealing should be taken as our basic theological concept, that I wish to avoid using the concept of faith at this point. (p. 112, footnote 34)

This is totally wrong, and deadly. While it may be true what Wolterstorff says about human speech, he is completely wrong about God’s speech. All God’s speech is the revelation of Himself in the face of Christ His Son. And eternal life is “to *know* the only true God and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent.” (John 17:3.) Every command in Scripture is a revelation of God. Every command has its justification because God is what He is; and He has told us what He is; and we must obey because of this.

If Wolterstorff takes this erroneous position, then

it follows that there is no doctrine in Scripture. And this is precisely what the book says. Or, perhaps somewhat more accurately, doctrine, if it is there, is not really important, can change from age to age, may in fact be false. A few quotes will make this clear.

To be a Christian is to be fundamentally committed to being a Christ-follower. . . . (p. 67)

Anyone who is fundamentally committed to being a Christ-follower will in consequence do and believe certain things. . . . (p. 68)

On what basis a Christian ought to believe one thing (even what the Bible teaches) and not another is not explained in the book so far as I could detect. Wolterstorff does not accept the inerrancy of Scripture.

But committing yourself to be a Christ-follower also presupposes that you have some conviction about the complex of action and belief that your following of Christ *ought* to be realized in. On the matter of what that is, Christians of course disagree widely (as they do on the issue of how one ought to go about finding out). Yet every Christian, whether liberal or conservative, has some notion of how his fundamental commitment ought to be realized. And the complex of action and belief that its realization ought in fact to assume, for any given person, is what I shall call his *authentic* Christian commitment. (p. 68)

If this last statement does not make all knowledge relative and subjective, then I cannot understand the English language.

This (expressed as briefly as possible) is how in my judgment our following of Christ *ought* to be actualized. Notice that on this view authentic Christian commitment is not to be identified with subscription to dogmas. Indeed, it is not to be identified with the believing of propositions, dogmatic or otherwise. But notice also that it does *incorporate* this in several ways. (p. 69)

It may even be that the belief-content of my authentic Christian commitment contains certain falsehoods. Frequently in teaching children one tells them what is, strictly speaking, false. So also it may be that some of what God says to us is, strictly speaking, false, accommodated to our frailty. Yet, it may be that we are obliged to believe it. (p. 113, footnote 38.)

Notice that here Wolterstorff says, in so many words, that God’s revelation may be *false*.

The obvious consequence of all this is that there is no real or genuine Christian perspective in scholarship. The whole of Chap. 11 is really devoted to this matter, and it is not always clear exactly what Wolterstorff is saying. But he writes, e.g.,

From these corollaries it is clear that it will often

be insufficient for a Christian scholar to propose as his reason for holding some theory the fact that he is a Christian (i.e., that the theory is entailed by belief-content of his authentic commitment). The belief-content of his authentic commitment will frequently neither contain nor entail theories on the matter that he as a scholar considers. . . . (p. 76.)

What basis is left for a man to determine what is true and what is false?

It should be added that a person's theory of whether theory acceptance and nonacceptance is sometimes, at least, warranted is itself influenced by his control beliefs. We cannot at this point jump back onto some foundation. People no more agree on this matter than on any other. It is my own conviction that man throughout his existence is a responsible agent. This I view as a component in my authentic Christian commitment. And it is this which leads me

to the conviction that sometimes we are warranted in accepting some theory and sometimes we are warranted in not accepting some theory. (p. 100)

So that is the end of the matter. The only standard for judging the rightness or wrongness of a matter is that "man throughout his existence is a responsible agent." How Wolterstorff can even be sure that this is true, I have no way of knowing. And how this can serve as a basis for determining what is true and what is false, what is right and what is wrong, is a mystery to me.

I say again: Wolterstorff's position can only lead to scepticism and theological suicide.

Perhaps the thought uppermost in my mind as I read this book was: how interesting and important it is to develop a genuine Christian epistemology based on God's infallible Word.

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WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On Sept. 1, 1977, our parents Mr. and Mrs. Melvin Wiersema celebrated their 45th wedding anniversary. We their children are thankful to God for their many years together and pray that God will bless them as they continue along life's pathway together.

Mr. & Mrs. Phillip Lotterman
Mr. & Mrs. Richard Heys
Mr. & Mrs. Robert Noorman
Mr. & Mrs. William Masselink
Mr. & Mrs. Marvin Mastbergen
Mr. & Mrs. Carl Wykstra
and 18 grandchildren

Know the standard
and follow it.



Read the STANDARD BEARER!

News From Our Churches

The installation of Rev. Wayne Bekkering as the first pastor of our newest congregation, the Trinity Protestant Reformed Church in Houston, Texas, took place on Thursday evening, August 18. Rev. George Lubbers of Pella, Iowa, conducted the service. This must have been a special occasion for Rev. Lubbers, as he had spent a number of years working in Houston as home missionary.

There is quite a little more news concerning ministerial calls than has been seen in this column in some time. Rev. Ronald Van Overloop declined the call extended to him by Randolph, Wisconsin, Rev. Bekkering's former charge. Rev. James Slopsema declined the call from our Hudsonville church. From a trio consisting of Rev. Gise Van Baren, Rev. Meindert Joostens, and Candidate Kenneth Koole, Hudsonville church has extended a call to Rev. Van Baren of First Church. Rev. Joostens has received a call from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church of Christchurch, New Zealand.

The annual Convocation to mark the opening of our Seminary was scheduled for September 7 in Southwest Church. Prof. Decker spoke on the topic "Buying the Truth."

Toward the end of August, Rev. J. Kortering of our church in Redlands, California, left for a few weeks of work in Birmingham, Alabama. This work is being carried out under the direction of the "Western Branch" of our denominational Mission Committee. Meanwhile, Rev. Harbach was waiting to hear from the Canadian Consulate relative to his application for a Canadian work permit which he must have in order to begin a period of labor as home missionary in Victoria, British Columbia. Rev. Harbach's work is under the direction of the "Eastern Branch" of the Mission Committee.

Some additional information concerning the window drapery installed in our Hope Church, Walker, Michigan was received from the Hope Church building committee. These drapes are designed to reduce the glare which sometimes proved to be rather strong — in the minister's face. These drapes were a gift from a generous donor in the congregation. The committee further reported that "sun glasses were available for emergency conditions, but they were never used."

The annual Protestant Reformed Young People's Convention was held the week of August 21 at Camp

Geneva, just north of Holland, Michigan, on the shores of Lake Michigan. The major speeches under the general theme of "Seek Ye the Lord" were as follows: "In Our Spiritual Activities," by Rev. Mark Hoeksema, "In Our Decisions in Life," by Rev. Richard Moore, and "In Our Daily Walk," by Rev. Bernard Woudenberg.

A special congregational meeting was held in Redlands on July 25 to consider questions concerning a new church building there. The consistory was authorized to work through the steering committee to prepare plans for the new building with a view to beginning the construction in 1978. Each family is to contribute at least \$10 per month for the new church building.

Another special congregational meeting was held to consider plans for a new church building — this time at Southwest Church. Approval was given for a Phase I building program to construct a one story "Fellowship Wing" including fellowship room, society rooms, class rooms, Council room, storage room, mechanical room, kitchen, rest rooms, and a narthex. The fellowship room will be used as a temporary Sanctuary with a temporary chancel at one end. The basic design of the new building is similar to the new building recently occupied by our Hudsonville congregation. To pay for this new building, the present Southwest Church building will be put up for sale, the budget raised \$4 to \$16.50 per family per week, and a cash drive held, with the goal of obtaining \$250 from each family in the congregation to begin the building program. This new facility is estimated to cost between \$155,000 and \$170,000. Three churches now have building plans for 1978 — Faith, Redlands, and Southwest.

As a matter of interest, our *Standard Bearer* business manager likes to keep track of the states, provinces, countries, and continents to which the publication is sent. He recently received a subscription from the Republic of Nauru. When he inquired at the Post Office as to the rate for Nauru, the Post Office Officials were unable to locate this country. Of course, our business manager does not give up quickly. After considerable detective work, he 'pinpointed' the location on the globe. Can you? Answer next month.

K.G.V.