

# The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Jehoiakim cut it up and threw it into the fire. During the Dark Ages it collected dust in libraries. During the Inquisition, men were burned at the stake for reading it. And today it is mutilated by perverse paraphrases, and dissected by higher critics. Yet, through it all, we have the Bible, and true believers are strengthened in their faith by it. God preserved His Word for us.

See "Our Appeal to Scripture"  
— Page 424

## CONTENTS:

Meditation —	
The Girdle of Truth .....	410
Editorial —	
Seminary Graduation .....	413
Correspondence and Reply .....	414
Synod of 1977 .....	414
Seminary Graduation Address —	
Predestination: The Heart of the Gospel .....	416
The Day of Shadows —	
A Painful Parting .....	420
Studies in Isaiah —	
The Call of Isaiah to His	
Prophetic Office .....	422
Strength of Youth —	
Our Appeal to Scripture (1) .....	424
Guest Article —	
The Rich Fool .....	427
News Feature —	
Building Project — Covenant Protestant	
Reformed Church, Wyckoff, N.J. ....	429
News From Our Churches .....	431

## THE STANDARD BEARER

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## MEDITATION

## The Girdle of Truth

Rev. H. Veldman

*"Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth."*

Eph. 6:14a

Beginning in verse 14, the apostle calls our attention to the Christian's panoply, or armour. Paul also calls attention to this armour in I Thess. 5. Here, however, we have a complete description of it.

The apostle writes this epistle while in prison at Rome. Is it possible that the Roman legionary, while guarding him, is sitting here, although unaware of it, for his own portrait?

This Christian armour is almost entirely defensive. The only offensive weapon is the sword of the Spirit.

Indeed, the Christian's warfare is primarily defensive, not to gain the whole world, but to hold fast what we have.

\*\*\*\*\*

The girdle, although properly speaking not a weapon at all, is mentioned first because of its primary significance. It was a military belt, fastened around the soldier's loins or waist, with which he bound in his undergarments that there be nothing loose or trailing behind him; and it braced up his



limbs for action. The soldier did not wear a long garment but a short tunic. The belt held this tunic in place. Also, to the belt were attached the sword and the thorax or breastplate. The girdle, therefore, was designed to keep the whole armour in place.

It is obvious from the text that this girdle represents the truth. Some would interpret this truth subjectively, our knowledge and belief of the truth of the scriptures. This interpretation is based upon verse 17. It is claimed that the Word of God in verse 17 is the Bible, and that therefore this girdle cannot refer to the Bible because then we would have two weapons meaning the same thing. We must surely distinguish between this girdle and the sword of the Spirit.

We cannot accept this interpretation. First, it rests solely upon the assumption that the Word of God in verse 17 is the Bible. Should this interpretation of verse 17 fall away, this entire argument would fall away. It is surely better to explain verse 17 in the light of verse 14 than to explain verse 14 in the light of verse 17. Secondly, we must not interpret the truth here merely in the objective sense. After all, we must gird our loins about with the truth. And this surely implies that this truth must also live within us. Otherwise we have nothing else than cold dogmatism and intellectualism. And, thirdly, we cannot accept this interpretation in the light of Scripture. According to Ps. 119: 105 God's Word is a lamp before our feet and a light upon our path. Also pertinent is surely the word of God of 2 Tim. 3:16-17. In this text the underlying thought is that of the Christian soldier who must be thoroughly furnished. How is this man of God thoroughly furnished or equipped? And then we read that all of Scripture is inspired unto this end.

Indeed, we must believe the truth of the Word of God. However, there is no spiritual knowledge, belief of the truth in the consciousness of the Christian warrior, except as in constant contact with the Bible, the written Word of God. Indeed, the Bible is the truth.

The world lives the lie. We are engaged with the world in mortal combat. Of this struggle we read in our context, as in the verses 10 through 12. What is the issue here, the real cause, the underlying principle and motive of this hatred of the world against the church of God? Christ suffered the same opposition — why? Surely, the world does not hate us simply because it would take from us the things of the world. Fact is, the world offers us all the riches and kingdoms of the world. The issue here is: GOD! This was the issue in Paradise. Man would be as God. It was also the issue as it involved the Christ. The world is anti-God, hates God and all that is connected with Him. The world loves sin, lives in rebellion against the Lord, seeks to establish its own kingdom, without God, in which it can live unmolested its own life,

without God, in the midst of the world. The Church is pro-God, loves and seeks the Lord, would live unto His glory, and knows that this kingdom of God, established in and through Christ Jesus, will not be realized ultimately until we have new heavens and a new earth. Hence, the world lives the lie. They seek a righteousness of their own, and this righteousness does not exist. They seek life apart from God, but apart from God is death. They seek happiness and peace in the way of sin, but the wages of sin is death. They live in a dream world; their wisdom is folly, their glory is shame, their life is death. They live the lie, are enemies of God and of His kingdom.

The Bible is the truth. The Bible is the Word of God. And God is the God of truth. All these weapons of the Christian's armour are real, will never put us to shame. In our struggle we live, not in a dream world, but in a world of reality, characterized by the living God. The breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of the preparation of the gospel of peace, etc., are the salvation of God, wrought for us in Christ Jesus and by His Spirit in our hearts. To Him we cling; in His kingdom we have a name and place and in His battle we are engaged; the Lord will never put us to shame.

How important it is that we gird our loins about with this girdle of the truth! Negatively, this text warns us against two dangerous errors. First, it denies all Rationalism. Now the scriptures are surely rational. The Word of God is not in conflict with our reason. Just because something is above my reason, cannot be comprehended by me, does not mean that it is in conflict with it. It is surely not irrational, contrary to my thinking, that God can do and does things I cannot understand. Rationalism is that sin of the natural man which exalts the natural mind above the scriptures. It does not subject the mind to the Bible but it exalts the mind above the Bible. Rationalism believes things, not because the Bible sets them forth, but because it can understand them. It is sin's most abominable conceit, also because, in reality, the natural man never accepts things because he can understand them, as in the world of harvesting.

This Rationalism is surely denied by this word of God. We must gird our loins about with the truth, the truth of the Word of God. If we fail to do this, we will never be able to cope with the wiles of the devil. Fact is, as far as my natural mind is concerned, all things appear to be against us.

Secondly, this scripture is also the denial of all false Mysticism. Indeed, there is a certain sound mysticism. God surely speaks in our hearts and soul; He convicts us of sin and grants us the assurance and joy of salvation. False Mysticism, however, emphasizes this inner speaking of the Lord at the cost of His Word and testimony. It drives a wedge between this inner speaking or voice of God and the holy



scriptures. It and Rationalism have this in common: both deny the scriptures. False Mysticism views the Bible to be a dead letter; everything depends upon the inner voice. Now this, too, is surely denied in this word of God. We must gird our loins about with the truth. The Bible alone is and must be our constant strength in the battle.

Positively, we must gird our loins about with the truth. According to the translation, we must have our loins girt about with the truth. The idea, then, is passive. Literally, however, we must gird our loins about with it. We must put on this belt.

This does not mean that we must simply do this theoretically, dogmatically. We must not simply know all about the scriptures, however important this theoretic knowledge may be. But, mere intellectual knowledge will never enable us to fight and suffer and persevere; then we will surely flee from the struggle as soon as we are personally in danger. Indeed, we must gird ourselves spiritually, experientially, by faith. That Word must be our strength in the battle; upon it we must rely and trust; to it we must cling in the midst of the fight; it we must know and appropriate unto ourselves; it must carry us, by faith and through prayer.

This girdle is one of the utmost importance. It is the first "weapon" mentioned by the apostle Paul. In this girdle are included all the other weapons that follow. If this girdle falls away, everything falls away. Indeed, the natural man trusts in an arm of flesh, in horses and chariots. But the Christian warrior puts all his trust and confidence in the Word of God.

\* \* \* \* \*

Let us gird ourselves with this girdle of truth. Let us equip ourselves thoroughly with the scriptures. This implies that we read them, study them, always be

near them. This we will do if we love the Word of God.

Are we girding ourselves with the truth? This applies to all of us. What an abundance of spiritual literature we have! What a rich access to the scriptures! O, we have money and time for so many things that are of the world, its amusements and pleasures, etc. We have so little time for the Word of God. Do we read? We surely read. But what do we read? How much do we read? Do our young people and children read? And what do they read? Where are they when they are not at home? Think of all the spiritual literature that is available, such as our Standard Bearer, Beacon Lights and so many books and pamphlets! How often do we discuss with our children the Battle of the Ages, this struggle against the wiles of the devil and the spiritual powers in high places? How often do we discuss our weaknesses and the need of the truth, the Word of God, to lead and guide us?

Let us, therefore, put on this belt, this girdle. Let us know the scriptures. That is the calling of everyone of us. Indeed, there is none exempt; we all, young and old, are so desperately in need of the Word of God. May we study them, with the prayer that they may more and more be a lamp before our feet and a light upon our path, that we may know them, intellectually and spiritually. Study them, personally and also collectively, in all our society meetings, in all our social visits, ever comforting, edifying, and strengthening one another, in order that we may put on the whole armour of God, may live out of His entire arsenal.

Gird yourselves with the truth.

Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

And the victory is sure, only because of God's sovereign grace.

## Editor's Notes

**Blunder.** We hope that all our readers realize that there was a serious blunder in the editorial columns of the June 1 issue. Part of my second editorial, which was an introduction to our critique of "Our Song of Hope," was foolishly and inexcusably printed as though it were a continuation of the first editorial. The title appearing on page 391 should appear at the beginning of the first paragraph of column 2 on page 390. Responsibility for this blunder belongs not to us, but to our typesetter, Photo Composition Co.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Postponement.** Due to lack of space, the critique of "Our Song of Hope" will not be continued in this issue. The discussion of this proposed new confession

of the Reformed Church in America will be continued in the August 1 issue.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Reduced schedule.** As is customary, the *Standard Bearer* appears only once per month during the summer.

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## EDITORIAL

## Seminary Graduation

*Prof. H.C. Hoeksema*

Not since 1974 has there been a graduate from the seminary department of our Theological School. That in itself was sufficient reason why the commencement program of our seminary constituted a highlight of our recent synodical meetings. Personally, I always find such a graduation program to be a rather pleasant interlude during synod — especially when I can relax and listen to a colleague deliver the address, as was the case this year. And this year was no exception.

In fact, there was something special about this year's graduation: it was a first in the history of our Theological School. First of all, Mr. Kenneth Koole (a son of our former Creston Church, and now a member of Hope Church in the Grand Rapids area) successfully completed his course at school, very acceptably passed his examinations at synod, and was declared a candidate for the ministry in our Protestant Reformed Churches. Soon, the Lord willing, another minister of the gospel will be added to the ranks of our Protestant Reformed ministry. That is reason for rejoicing and thanksgiving. In addition to Mr. Koole, however, there were two more graduates.

Three years ago, at the request of the Free Reformed Church of North America, we agreed to train two students from that denomination. Messrs. Carl Schouls and Peter Vander Meyden, both from Canada, also had successfully completed our regular theological course, had also passed several comprehensive written examinations, and therefore were entitled to diplomas as non-licentiate students. Later this year they will undergo further examination in their own denomination with a view to candidacy.

To a large audience in the beautiful auditorium of our Hudsonville Church — an audience which also included a goodly number of visitors from the Free Reformed Church — Prof. Hanks delivered a very fitting address, a transcript of which you will find elsewhere in this issue.

All in all, it was a memorable evening.

The photo of the graduates (l. to r., Carl Schouls, Peter Vander Meyden, and Kenneth Koole) is courtesy of Rev. Van Baren.

Congratulations and the Lord's blessing to our graduates!

## CORRESPONDENCE AND REPLY

### Contribution

Dear Editor in Chief,

In your editorial in the Standard Bearer, Feb. 15, 1977, page 222, you wrote that it was your conviction that the synod of 1975 misled our study committee when it referred them first to take into account the Biblical doctrine, particularly the New Testament passages. You mention that this has never been the Reformed method, that it must be kept in mind that we already have an interpretation of Scripture in our confessions, both those of a major order and those of a minor order. To these we should turn first in the consideration of any question of this kind.

This may all be true, but we do not believe that our synod of 1975 misled our study committee when it referred them first to take into account the Biblical doctrine, particularly the New Testament passages. We believe that the Word of God is always first, and we believe that the whole of the New Testament and especially the Acts of the Apostles is a commentary in regard to mission work. It is indeed a lamp unto our feet. Synod of 1975 did not mislead our study committee when it referred them first to take into account the Biblical doctrine particularly the New Testament passages.

Synod could have included to also take into account our confessions, although our confessions are never of equal value with the Divine Scriptures, Art. 7 Belgic Confession.

This statement in your editorial ought to be rejected.

Yours in Christ,  
Thys Feenstra

### Reply

1. I'll go you one better, and include the Old Testament in that commentary, too.
2. Nevertheless, good Reformed methodology turns first to the confessions. There you find the Biblical *doctrine*. In our churches, if it is not Reformed according to the confessions, neither is it Scriptural. Proof? Consult the Formula of Subscription.
3. For me, the only exception to this rule is matters which are "extra confessional," that is, not spoken of in the confessions.

The statement, therefore, ought to stand.

HCH

## Synod of 1977

*Rev. G. Van Baren*

The Synod of 1977 now exists only in history. It met this year in the new and beautiful edifice of Hudsonville, Mich. Protestant Reformed Church. It had as its inspirational speaker the Rev. C. Hanko, pastor of Hudsonville church — and president of the last (1976) Synod. He spoke from God's Word found in Rev. 3:11 — and admonished also our Synod to "Hold Fast That Thou Hast." It was surely a fitting Word for Synod which had to treat many important matters. And the physical needs of the Synod were

adequately met when the wonderful ladies of the Hudsonville congregation prepared outstanding meals for the delegates and visitors. They surely deserve a word of thanks and appreciation from all those who enjoyed these meals.

The first day of Synod involves the appointment of four committees which then meet the rest of that day and evening to study the material assigned to them and prepare advice for the Synod. On Thursday and



Friday, the larger portion of the days were devoted to the examination of Mr. K. Koole. Those who witness such an examination for the first time might regard it somewhat as a "third degree" treatment. Perhaps the student thinks so, too. At least, one of the students who expect, D.V., to graduate two years hence, was heard to remark, "I'm glad we'll have five examined together so that each will have many less questions to answer." At any rate, student Koole gave an excellent account of himself, passed the examination, and was approved as candidate in the churches. He is eligible for call after July 3, 1977.

Graduation exercises were held in our Hudsonville church the following Tuesday. Prof. H. Hanko addressed the three graduates (two from the Free Reformed Church), reminding them of the importance of the truth of predestination in the preaching of the gospel.

A few items were treated by Synod the first week of its meeting, but most of the business of Synod was conducted the second week, from Monday until Friday, 10:00 a.m.

The work of missions occupied much of the time of Synod. There were reports of the foreign mission committee which is attempting to make contacts in several areas overseas. The mission labors of our home missionary were also treated. Rev. R. Harbach has completed his work at Houston, Texas, where a congregation was organized. The Synod extended its thanks to the Rev. Harbach for his labors, and welcomed this new congregation into our fellowship of churches. It was also reported that Rev. Harbach is presently investigating a possible new field of labor in western Canada.

The Synod noted with gratitude the decision of our Hope, Grand Rapids congregation to contribute \$750 per month towards the support of our home missionary (from which congregation he has also been called). This contribution is in addition to the payment of their regular assessment. Hope is surely to be commended for their willingness and desire to assume such a share of the cost of the work of our missionary.

The mission labors of our churches in Jamaica were also reported before Synod. Two emissaries, Rev. J. Heys and elder J.M. Faber, reported on their work this past year. They had discovered that it was *not* impossible to send missionaries yet to Jamaica (as had been reported to our Synod of the year before). They and the mission committee recommended the calling of another missionary to labor in Jamaica — with Holland congregation the calling church. The Synod was not ready to have a missionary called at this time, particularly because it was uncertain as to the type of labor he would have to perform there. Synod did

decide to send two more emissaries to Jamaica for further evaluation of the field. It also decided to continue to give financial assistance as in the past. The reports suggested that the fund for the living and travel expenses of the ministers on the island has a sizable deficit. (A total annual contribution of only some \$5.00 per family will meet the need. Perhaps all the churches can see to this.)

The Synod treated a protest of Mr. T. Feenstra who objected to the fact that last year the Synod gave tacit approval to our emissaries to New Zealand and Australia preaching in the various churches they visited. The Synod rejected this protest, pointing out to Mr. Feenstra that the ministers in our churches have done this frequently throughout our history — preaching in other churches while clearly not placing themselves under the jurisdiction of the consistories of these churches. In this, the emissaries did nothing more than the Synod of 1974 mandated them to do.

That which received the greatest share of Synod's attention was the report presented first to the Synod of 1976, and referred back to the churches for a year's study, treating baptism on the mission field. This interesting report can be found in the Acts of 1976. Various churches submitted their own responses to this report to the Synod. Briefly, the report advocated the position that preaching and baptism go together on the mission field, and that when one is converted, the missionary must also baptize him — with a view to the organization of the church (however, perhaps at some very distant time). A most interesting discussion took place. It is a pity that all of our people could not have been present to hear. Finally, on the last session of Synod, the decision was taken which voted down the advice of the study committee. In effect, this decision means that we continue the practice we have in the past — no baptism on the mission field until a congregation is organized or in order to make possible such organization.

The Synod considered at length also our Theological School — always an important part of the agenda of Synod. The T.S.C. report recorded the withdrawal of two pre-seminary students and the addition of another, Mr. Barry Gritters. It was also informally reported on the floor of Synod that a third student also intended to withdraw and there is the probability of two additional students enrolling.

Synod considered also the need of providing some relief to the professors with their heavy work schedule. The Rev. C. Hanko was appointed by Synod to teach the two Dutch courses — which will surely give a measure of relief.

The question of the housing of the professors was considered. At present, Synod gives a "rental allow-



ance” to the professors — while they use this in the purchasing of their own homes. There was raised the question of the wisdom of Synod’s owning these homes. A study committee made a cost comparison of the alternatives. The Synod decided to follow the recommendation of the theological school committee to continue as we have in the past: providing a rental allowance.

The rector’s report stated that five additional students were licensed to preach in our churches: students Ron Cammenga, Carl Haak, Ron Hanko, Steve Houck, and Dave Zandstra.

The committee of contact with other churches presented its report. The Synod decided to instruct the committee to continue to seek contact with the Christian Reformation Church, on a “one-to-one” basis, as that church originally suggested. There were reports of contact with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church of New Zealand. A cablegram of greetings was received from the latter church and read on the floor of Synod. The Synod adopted a budget which requires the assessment of \$10.00 per family per year in the support of a minister who would be called to serve in the Christchurch, N.Z. Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

The Synod approved the recommended changes to the constitution of the mission committee — changes made necessary by the decision of the Synod of 1976 approving the principal elements of an overture from Mr. T. Feenstra. This overture suggested that greater emphasis must be placed upon the calling church in the sending forth of missionaries. The mission committee too will be altered in structure this coming year: with five members from the western section of our country and seven from the eastern section.

Another study committee presented its report in which were collated all of the changes which recent Synods had made in the constitutions of various synodical committees. This report was made with a view to the reprinting of our Church Order book in the near future.

An overture from our Lynden consistory was approved — to write a form for confession of faith. We have at present only three questions which are asked publicly of those confessing their faith. The professors of our seminary were appointed to do this and report to next year’s synod.

Synod was presented a report of the disbanding of our Forbes, N.D. congregation. That congregation, before disbanding, had decided that the funds would be equally divided between the student aid fund and the Seminary library fund. Each received \$5,912.99.

The Stated Clerk presented his report. Synod took this occasion to express our deep appreciation for the “labors performed so efficiently” by the clerk. The Synod was impressed by the speed and quality of his work.

Subsidies to the needy churches were approved: a total of \$66,420. The proposed budget was adopted which requires the assessment of \$230 per family for 1978 (compared to \$243 for the current year).

It was decided to meet next year at the Hope Grand Rapids church.

The sessions of Synod were closed in thanksgiving to God by Prof. H. Hanko.

More complete information on the above, and details on other unreported actions, will be found in the Acts of Synod which our efficient clerk will doubtlessly have ready for distribution shortly. Be sure to read your copy!

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## SEMINARY GRADUATION ADDRESS

# Predestination: The Heart of the Gospel

The truth of predestination, as taught in the Scriptures, is rarely heard from the majority of pulpits — even in churches which claim to be Reformed. Dr. James Daane has made a point of this in some of his latest writings. He has said that predestination *is* no longer preached. But he has gone one step further and

insisted that sovereign, double predestination *cannot* be preached. He writes in his book, “The Freedom of God”:

The combination of election and reprobation created considerable intellectual difficulties for theologians, as the long history of Christian thought



reveals. But for those called to preach the gospel, it created an even greater practical problem. How could one preach election?

The difficulty here stems not from election, but from reprobation. (p. 19.)

Referring especially to the doctrine of sovereign, double predestination as taught by Rev. H. Hoeksema, Daane writes:

Can the gospel of Hoeksema's theology be preached? Hardly . . . . Such a gospel can be announced . . . but it cannot be preached . . . .

Hoeksema brought election and reprobation into the pulpit and in the process, theologically speaking, lost the gospel and came up with a form of the gospel that the pulpit could not preach. (pp. 27, 28.)

It is my thesis tonight that predestination not only *can* be preached, but that it *must* be preached. The argument is very simple. The doctrine of sovereign predestination is taught in Scripture, and a faithful minister of the Word must preach the whole counsel of God. Furthermore, the truth of predestination is the heart of the gospel. If predestination is not preached, or is preached in a corrupted form, the gospel is not preached. When one cuts the heart out, the whole organism dies.

What do we mean when we speak of sovereign and double predestination?

While it is not our purpose to enter into detail on the question of predestination, we notice the following points.

In the first place, it is the decree of God according to which God determines the final destiny of all his rational creatures. Thus Calvin writes in his *Institutes*:

Predestination is the eternal decree of God by which he has determined in himself, what he would have to become of every individual of mankind. For they are not all created with a similar destiny; but eternal life is foreordained for some, and eternal damnation for others. Every man, therefore, being created for one or the other of these ends, we say, he is predestinated either to life or to death. (III, xxi, 5).

In the second place, because predestination belongs to the counsel of God, all that Scripture says concerning that counsel applies also to the decree of predestination. Scripture tells us that God's counsel is eternal. Predestination as a part of that counsel is also eternal. But because God's counsel and the decree of predestination are eternal, they are also unchangeable. What God has determined to do from all eternity remains unchangeably His purpose and will. Nothing can alter this; no human choice, no human decision, no contingency unanticipated can change in the minutest degree God's own counsel and His decree of predestination. It is in this sense of the word that Scripture speaks of our election in Christ

"before the foundation of the world." (Eph. 1:4)

In the third place, God's decree of predestination is sovereign. It is sovereign in that, first of all, it is in no sense dependent upon man. It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. And, secondly, it is sovereign because it is God's decree which He executes by His own power and according to His own will. He is the Lord; He does all His good pleasure. Predestination is eternal because God ordained the destiny of all men before the foundation of the world, before men were born, and, therefore, before they had done good or evil.

Finally, predestination is double because it includes both election and reprobation. It includes the loving of Jacob and the hating of Esau.

It is this predestination which is the heart of the gospel.

Our Reformed fathers have spoken of predestination as *cor ecclesiae*, the heart of the church. But repeatedly the expression was also used: predestination is the heart of the gospel. Hoeksema used this as a title of a series of radio sermons, e.g., on Romans 9.

By the gospel we mean particularly, the preaching of the Word. It is the authoritative proclamation of the Scriptures by the called and ordained clergy in the Church of Christ and on the mission field. It is emphatically the ministry of the Word. This ought to be emphasized in our day when within the Church there are all kinds of ministries: ministry of education, ministry of youth, ministry of music, etc. The ministry is in the service of the Word of God. It is the gospel which is the power of God unto salvation. It is the ministry in which you, graduates, will be engaged, the Lord willing, the rest of your life.

Of the gospel predestination is the heart.

This is, of course, a figure of speech. The reference is to the human heart. From both a physical and a spiritual point of view, the heart is the source of all life. From the heart are the issues of life. The heart is the deepest center of the life of the organism. From it life flows into the whole of man. A man is dead when his heart ceases to beat. And indeed, a man is dead spiritually when his heart is dead and when from it are only issues of death. Thus if the heart is gone or does not function, the whole organism dies.

So it is with predestination. This precious doctrine is the heart of the gospel. If the truth of predestination weakens, i.e., if this truth is not maintained in all its purity and power, the gospel which is preached weakens correspondingly. If the truth of predestination is lost, the gospel no longer is the gospel which is the power of God unto salvation. It is a lifeless, powerless word of man which accomplishes nothing



— except the death of a church which has become apostate.

But how is predestination the heart of the gospel?

It is important to notice first of all that predestination is the heart of the Scriptures. The Scriptures are the written record, infallibly inspired, of God's revelation of Himself in Christ. Christ stands at the very center of Scripture. All Scripture speaks only of Christ Who reveals God in all His works and ways. But predestination is in Christ. This is true in more than one sense of the word. First of all, election is in Christ. We are chosen in Christ from before the foundation of the world. But, more than this, Christ, as it were, is precisely the great dividing line in human history. His cross stands on Calvary as the separation between the elect and the reprobate thief who were crucified with Him. And so it is in all time. The cross is the rock of offense and the stone of stumbling. But to this stumbling, the wicked are, according to Peter, appointed. Yet, on the other hand, that same cross of Christ is the Rock of Ages to all who believe. Through the cross, Christ is exalted to the position of King of kings and Lord of lords. From that position in glory He rules over all things in such a way that all the purpose of God is accomplished through Him. He executes the sovereign will of God. He does so efficaciously and universally. Election is in Christ. Reprobation is also accomplished through Christ.

This is the teaching of Scripture. Predestination is at the heart of Scripture. It is explicitly taught in many places throughout Holy Writ; but is impossible to understand any part of Scripture apart from this doctrine. All the history of the ante-flood world; all the development of man from the flood to Abraham; all the efforts exerted at Babel; the sovereign choice of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Israel; the constant distinction between the faithful and the carnal seed in the nation; the very small remnant according to the election of grace which God left Israel — all these and all Scripture remain a puzzle without solution apart from the truth of sovereign predestination. It is impossible to understand any part of God's Word except against the background of God's sovereign decrees.

And the content of the gospel which is preached is this Scripture.

Daane argues in his book (*The Freedom of God*) that the problem with preaching predestination does not lie with the doctrine of election, but lies with the doctrine of reprobation. "The difficulty here stems not from election, but from reprobation." (p. 19) But Daane not only repudiates the Scriptural doctrine of reprobation; but in his repudiation of this doctrine, he corrupts the truth of sovereign election. How could it be any different?

But predestination is the heart of the gospel. The

gospel preaches Christ and Him crucified. It preaches Christ, not abstractly, but Christ as the Head of His people who were given to Him eternally. It preaches Christ in Whom the elect are saved and apart from Whom the reprobate perish. The preaching always includes this truth. That is to say, the truth of predestination must also include specifically both election and reprobation; and preaching must be instruction — explicit instruction — in this truth.

But the preaching, though not always explicitly directing itself to this doctrine, nevertheless always implies and presupposes it. It has been said, in malice, that within the Protestant Reformed Churches all that is ever preached is the doctrine of election. I plead guilty to this charge. A sermon which does not have this truth at its center is not a sermon at all. A sermon which does not have the life of predestination in Christ flowing through it, has no life at all.

There is good reason for this. The contents of the gospel include all the promises of God. But these promises are always very particular. They are promises made to those who are weary and heavy laden; to those who hunger and thirst; to those who are bowed down beneath the burden of their sin; to those who come to Christ. Along with these promises is always the command to repent of sin and believe in Christ. And the warning is very serious: God will punish in His wrath all those who will not obey.

It is because of this very particular character of the gospel that predestination stands at its very heart. And it is only because this gospel is so particular that it is the power of God unto salvation and a savor of life unto life. But it is also this particular character of the gospel which makes it the power of hardening and a savor of death unto death.

But the question must be answered: how is reprobation to be preached? Can it be said that reprobation, standing by itself, is the heart of the gospel? This is obviously not true.

It must be understood in the first place, that reprobation stands in closest possible connection with the doctrine of election. Even as it is true that election implies the truth of reprobation, so it is also true that reprobation is, so to speak, the opposite side of the coin of election. It cannot and may not be preached apart from election. And this, in turn, is true because according to God's sovereign decree reprobation does not stand alone, but rather serves the purpose of election. "For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honorable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life." (Isaiah 43:3,4)

Election shines forth from the dark background of



reprobation. It is the light which shines all the brighter against the darkness of reprobation and God's sovereign decree with respect to the lost.

This is specifically and emphatically true in the preaching. The decree of predestination is always comfort to God's people. It teaches them that God is the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth. It teaches them that though the kings of earth rise up and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His anointed, yet Christ sits on the holy hill of Zion. The wicked do not run rampant and uncontrolled in opposition to God. God carries out His decree. He has the right to vindicate His Name – also in the destruction of the wicked.

This, I say, is comfort for the people of God; for it is the assurance that all that God sovereignly does in time is for their sakes that they may be brought to everlasting glory.

And it teaches, at the same time, that the decree of election is of pure grace and sovereign mercy. They have no reason to boast. All their glorying must be in the Lord.

The truth of predestination is also the heart of the gospel because in this way alone God is maintained as God.

As soon as predestination is abandoned or toned down, the gospel becomes humanistic and man-centered. And thus God no longer receives all the glory. Paul emphasizes this sharply when he contrasts salvation by grace alone with salvation by works. It is not of works lest any man should boast. If salvation is of works, then it is no more grace. But if it be of grace, then it is no more of works. Predestination alone assures that salvation is of grace alone. For in this way God's absolute sovereignty is maintained in all *His* work. Predestination then holds fast to the truth that the salvation of the elect and the everlasting damnation of the reprobate is determined solely by God. It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. And thus, let him that glorieth, glory in the Lord.

Predestination must be preached. Our Canons have no problem here. After defining the truth of election, our fathers write:

As the doctrine of divine election by the most wise counsel of God, was declared by the prophets, by Christ himself, and by the apostles, and is clearly revealed in the Scriptures, both of the Old and New Testament, so it is still to be published in due time and place in the Church of God, for which it was peculiarly designed. (I, 14.)

And if it be argued that reprobation cannot be preached, our fathers in the Canons assert that it can. In article 16 they presuppose that it is preached when they say:

Those who do not yet experience a lively faith in Christ, an assured confidence of soul, . . . ought not to be alarmed at the mention of reprobation . . . Much less cause have they to be terrified by the doctrine of reprobation . . . But this doctrine is justly terrible to those, who, . . . have wholly given themselves up to the cares of the world . . . so long as they are not seriously converted to God.

It must be explicitly taught so that God's people may be instructed in it and know it, for on its basis they find a sure refuge and hiding place in the God of their salvation. It must be, in a real sense, the heartbeat of every sermon. It must be the heartbeat so that the gospel is always sharply particular, sharply antithetical, emphasizing God and the glory of His Name. It must be a God-centered gospel, for of Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him is the glory forever and ever.

It must be preached in humble dependence upon God Who works all things according to the good pleasure of His will. It must be preached so that it is a source of comfort to God's elect. It must be preached so that it stirs up in them humility and reverence and awe, and so that it works in them the assurance of their faith. Or, to express what the Canons themselves say:

It must be done with reverence, in the spirit of discretion and piety, for the glory of God's most holy name, and for enlivening and comforting his people, without vainly attempting to investigate the secret ways of the Most High. (I, 14.)

We can do no better than to conclude with a statement from the Conclusion of the Canons:

Finally, this Synod exhorts all their brethren in the gospel of Christ, to conduct themselves piously and religiously in handling this doctrine, both in the universities and churches; to direct it, as well in discourse, as in writing, to the glory of the Divine Name, to holiness of life, and to the consolation of afflicted souls; to regulate, by Scripture, according to the analogy of faith, not only their sentiments, but also their language; and, to abstain from all those phrases which exceed the limits necessary to be observed in ascertaining the genuine sense of the holy Scriptures; and may furnish insolent sophists with a just pretext for violently assailing, or even vilifying, the doctrine of the Reformed Churches.

May God keep you faithful in your ministry of the Word!



## THE DAY OF SHADOWS

# A Painful Parting

Rev. John A. Heys

For a richer and more definite understanding of the mockery which Ishmael inflicted upon Isaac, we are indebted to the Apostle Paul and to what he wrote to the Galatians. He explains this mockery to have been persecution when he writes in Galatians 4:29, "But as then he that was born of the flesh persecuted him that was born of the Spirit, even so is it now."

Now the word Moses uses in Genesis 21:9 means to make sport of, to laugh at, as well as to mock. But lest we call this simply some childish teasing we should take into consideration the word Paul uses. For he was guided infallibly by the same Spirit Who moved Moses to use the word mocking. What is more, we ought to take into consideration the whole verse and the whole passage wherein these words of Paul appear. We will then find that this act of Ishmael had a spiritual significance and was a manifestation of what those who are born after the flesh always do to those born after the Spirit.

Ishmael was a young lad of more than fourteen years of age. Isaac was a little boy, of whom we read that he was weaned. Ishmael was thirteen years old when he was circumcised, and that year God appeared to Abraham and Sarah and promised according to the time of life to give them a son, Isaac. That year had gone by, and to this must be added the years before the child was weaned; and so we understand that Ishmael was now a teenager in his mid if not later teenage years. He was fully capable of performing deeds with spiritual implications and of persecuting the church of God. And the word Paul uses when he speaks of Ishmael's persecuting Isaac is not a mild word at all. It is the word Jesus uses in His Sermon on the Kingdom in Matthew 5:11 when He says, "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you." It is the same word that is used of the devil in Revelation 12:13 where we read, "And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child." And the word means to pursue, to follow after, to press towards.

It was not, then, some childish prank of poking fun

of, ridiculing and teasing. It was not a thoughtless deed that could have spiritual implications *read into it*. God's Word forbids such interpretations. It was deliberate, conscious persecution. The exact nature of it we do not know, and yet that word chosen by Paul does indicate that he was following Isaac, was pursuing him, putting pressure upon him. What is more, God's own answer to Abraham indicates that it had to do with the covenant promise. Notice in Genesis 21:12 that God said unto Abraham, "Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called." There can be no doubt about it that Ishmael himself mocked Isaac in regard to that covenant. He was pursuing Isaac, following him, putting pressure on him in regard to the covenant promise. Was he not, after all, Abraham's first born? Could Isaac or anyone ever change that? Isaac was born some thirteen years too late for that. And the mockery of Ishmael must have been conducted along such lines.

We ought not to be harsh, then, with Sarah. Circumstantial evidence would build a strong case for carnal, motherly love to be the cause for all this commotion which she stirred up before Abraham. Of course, this was her son, her only son, her son born in such a miraculous and wonderful way, her son born to her in very, very old age and without any hope of receiving another son after this date. And it was her God-given duty to love that child as her own flesh and blood. Of course she must defend her child, even in childish mockery, to say nothing of persecution. But it was far more than that. Sarah the believer is speaking here. Sarah the helpmeet for Abraham is helping him in a very difficult situation.

How marvellous the ways of God, so that from eternity He has chosen the man and his wife, and the wife to be an helpmeet (that is, fit, suitable) for the man. Under great stress and trial was Abraham now that he had sons of two different women, one his lawful wife, and the other a bondwoman his wife had given him for the purpose of raising up seed for her.



He needed expert advice. He needed good counsel in this sticky situation. He needed help; and God provided it in the woman He had given him for an helpmeet for him. She is a spiritual help. She saw things clearly and correctly: Ishmael must go! This is not to say that her flesh did not creep in; but it must be maintained that she acted here out of faith. God said so when He told Abraham to hearken to her because in Isaac would his seed be called.

Try to appreciate the position of Abraham. And then bear in mind that Ishmael is as much his son as Isaac is. In fact we may even say that Ishmael was his son more than Isaac was. He had enjoyed this son for thirteen years before Isaac even appeared on the scene. Abraham had learned to love this stalwart, promising young man. He was, as a father of flesh, mighty proud of this young lad. He had visions of him that were bright. He expected much from him. And when he thought of God's covenant he could see Ishmael fitting beautifully in the picture and being the one through whom Abraham would become a father of nations. We may also take the words of God as a reminder which Abraham needed. "In Isaac shall thy seed be called" is not a truth that Abraham hears for the first time. Before Isaac was born, and after Abraham had pleaded with God in the words, "O that Ishmael might live before thee!" God had said, "Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him." Genesis 17:19. Of that truth he must be reminded. Sarah remembered it and therefore said to Abraham, "Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac."

We do well to note that Sarah is not simply speaking of the mockery and persecution but of being heir with Isaac in the covenant of God. She does not say, "Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman is sinning against my son and making life miserable for us." She has her eye on the covenant promises of God and by faith holds fast to that promise that "Sarah thy wife shall have a son . . . thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish My covenant with him." Ishmael must not pursue Isaac to strive to take from him that place in God's covenant that God has promised. Instead of following after, pursuing, and exerting pressure on Isaac in regard to the covenant, Ishmael must be sent away! "Cast out the bondwoman and her son," she demands of Abraham, who had no intention whatsoever of doing so. And had God not come and underscored Sarah's words and given Abraham unequivocal instructions to send Hagar and Ishmael away, Abraham would not have done so, no matter how much he loved Sarah and Isaac.

There, exactly there, is the painful element in the incident! Abraham loved Isaac and he loved Ishmael. A father can love both or all of his children equally and not want to part with any one of them. And Abraham had no more desire to send Isaac away than he had to send Ishmael away. It was not a case of not loving Isaac or of not wanting him to have a place in that covenant of God. Nothing is farther from the truth. He wanted both, he wanted all his sons in that covenant with its blessings. And after all, would not God's covenant promise be fulfilled more easily if both his sons remained there in the promised land and begat children for him? Would he not more easily be a father of nations through two sons, and surely with one so promising and so many years ahead as Ishmael? Parents with one or more wayward children can understand Abraham's position. These are thankful before God for the children who walk in the way of God, but O how they long to see these others also in the sphere of that covenant and heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ alongside of the believing children. Neither Sarah nor Hagar can understand that, except that both want the best for their own child. Abraham has to decide between two children that have different mothers.

It might be added at this point that there is no trace of any evidence of love on Abraham's part for Hagar or of Hagar for Abraham. It is not love for Hagar that makes it so painful for Abraham to send her away. It is true that God does say to him, "Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman." There was indeed something grievous to Abraham in sending Hagar away. But we may note that God still calls her his bondwoman and not his wife. And God's reason for it all is not that she is not his wife, but that in Isaac shall his seed be called. The whole issue revolves around two sons, not two wives. And God commands Abraham to cast out Hagar and Ishmael, not because Sarah is his wife, but because Isaac is the seed wherein God will continue His covenant line.

This was, quite naturally, also painful for Hagar and Ishmael. Ishmael was at the point of death for lack of water in a hot and dry desert. Hagar had the grief of expecting him to die before her very eyes. O, that work of unbelief whereby Sarah gave Hagar to Abraham to bring forth the promised seed without consulting God and in an attempt to help (?) the Almighty still has some painful repercussions. A sin may be forgiven and yet in years to come still bring its pain and sufferings. Even Ishmael, whom in this instance we may call the innocent party, for he had nothing to do with this illegitimate conception and birth, suffers not only this physical discomfort and desperate need of water, but also the knowledge of the truth that in Isaac shall God call Abraham's seed,



and that he shall not be heir with Isaac.

There is, however, a beautiful truth that is woven into the fabric of this incident, one unspoken yet shining with gracious brilliancy. It is this: Our God keeps His Word! Men have petty quarrels and bitter wars that continue for years. Men are moved by their flesh, and jealousy is a wide stream that floods the land and rushes down the corridors of history. Men strong in their faith weaken and succumb to the dictates of their flesh. Mockeries and persecutions have been known in the world since the days of Abel. All these make life painful to man and bring him much sorrow. And yet through it all *and using it* God maintains His cause, works out His counsel, protects His Church and allows no one not written in the

Lamb's book of life to be heir with those He gave to His Son from all eternity.

Did He not use the jealousy of the chief priests and elders, the flesh of the carnal Jews, and the mockery and persecution of His own Son to bring us all the blessings of the cross of that Son? Did He ever fail to keep one word of what He promised us in His Son? Neither will He in days to come alter one letter of one word of the promises He has given us in that Son.

And, lo, the promise in regard to Ishmael — though he is driven away — is repeated, "I will make him a great nation." Be it prediction or promise, God's word is always kept. Trust in Him at all times. Upon Him you can depend.

## STUDIES IN ISAIAH

# The Call of Isaiah to His Prophetic Office

Rev. Robert C. Harbach

### Isaiah 6

I. *The Awe-Inspiring Vision* (1-4). "In the year of the death of the king, Uzziah, then I saw Adonai sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple." A. *The Year*. "In the year of the death of the king, Uzziah," so while that king was still living, but with death near — in that year! The call of Isaiah then occurred at the close of Uzziah's life. The historical reference is not made to indicate chronological connection. There is a deeper reason. The Lord, rather, reveals from the gloom of Judah's departing glory the True Light — the lasting glory. It was when the sun of the theocracy was setting and the sun of the Roman world-power was on the rise. King Uzziah died under a cloud, but Isaiah then saw the King, Jehovah Tsebhaath, to whom both darkness and light are alike. It was a time of prosperity, peace, and reform in which the king strengthened the kingdom, but not to the extent of recovering its lost Solomonic splendor. For even with any reformation under any of the Judean kings, there was, nevertheless, the inevitable declining of Judah's glory. Now with the end of a reign that was like the final bright flash and the sudden extinction of an expiring in-

candescent lamp, God appears to Isaiah. Through the dimness (9:1), he saw the King of Glory in the splendor of His sovereignty. In connection with the vision the Lord reveals to His prophet his mission, commission, and the painful revelation of the reproof to be denounced against the people of Judah issuing in the unavoidable ruin of the theocracy.

B. *The Lord*. "Then I saw the Lord," not God's essence — "whom no man hath seen, nor can see" (I Tim. 6:16), for in that manner "no man hath seen God at any time" (Jn. 1:18). But he saw God in His manifested glory, in a theophany, a Christophany, as John tells us in John 12:41, "Isaiah . . . saw His glory, and spoke of Him." It was a vision seen when awake, in the sense of, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8); or, more especially and more uniquely, by the divine direct and real historical revelation of God himself to the prophet. (Cp. Jer. 1 and Ezek. 1-3). Real, but certainly not a physical reality, since with physical eyes these things are not seen. Spiritual insight must be given to see them (2 K. 6:17).



Isaiah had lost his king, his liege lord, but now he sees another *adonai*, indeed, One the Master and Ruler of the universe, who is supreme above all, having all subjected to Him, One who sovereignly has mercy on whom He will, and who just as sovereignly hardens whom He will. So verses 9 and 10 teach, as the New Testament interpretation of them bears out. Isaiah, with spiritual eye, saw more than just one divine person (vv. 3, 8), for Adonai, in some places, includes the three persons of the Godhead. Take, for example, Genesis 18, where we have the theophany at Mamre, where God appeared to (let himself be seen by) Abraham, and where we find Abraham greeting the true and triune God.

In Gen. 18:3, Abraham used this name of God. He "said, My Lord, if now I have found favor in Thy sight . . ." In this way he greeted all three men who stood by him, applying to them a name he had used in faith, before, of God, the name Adonai, a plural divine name, literally, "My Lords," (as in 19:18, "Oh, not so, my Lord!"). This shows that he recognized Them as They were revealed, i.e., as Jehovah. Abraham was then conscious of the Divine Being appearing to him. Notice the context more closely. He saw the three men, ran to meet Them, then addressed Them, saying, "My Lords," and proceeds to refer to them with *singular* pronouns. "If (even as) now I have found favor in *Thy* sight, pass not away, I pray *Thee*, from *Thy* servant." Therefore, Abraham understood this appearance of Jehovah to be an appearance of *Adonai* (My Lords). Yet in the following verses, Moses, in recording the account under the infallible inspiration of the Holy Spirit, uses *plural* pronouns in referring to Them: "Let a little water, I pray *You*, be fetched, and wash *Your* feet, and rest *Yourselves*," and, "comfort *Ye Your* hearts," and, further, "*Ye* are come to *Your* servant." In verse 3, Abraham addressed all three as Adonai (My Lords), yet referred to himself with the singular as "*Thy* servant," the servant of one (the one addressed); whereas, in verse 5, he addresses Them as three persons, referring to himself with the plural as "*Your* servant," the servant of all three. He recognizes all three to be Adonai. Notice, in verse 3, singular pronouns refer to the plural noun, Adonai (My Lord), and in verses 4 and 5, plural pronouns, are made to refer back to that plural proper noun, My Lord. Here is a reference to the unity and trinity of God.

These three persons appearing to Abraham are proved to be God, Adonai. They recognize Abraham as Their servant: "And *They* said, 'So do . . .'" (v. 5). In verse 9, *They* ask for Sarah. When Abraham answers, we read that "*He* said, 'I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life.'" This pronoun "*He*" refers back to its antecedent, "Lord," in v. 3, or even as far back as "Jehovah" in v. 1. The

"They" (v. 9) and the "He" (v. 10) both refer to God. "He said, . . ." Sarah thy wife shall have a son. Only God can make such a promise. "And Sarah heard it in the tent door, which was behind *Him*." That is, one of the three men, the speaker, was facing Abraham outside, but had his back to the tent door, so that Sarah was actually behind *Him*. It is *He* (v. 13) who checked Abraham about Sarah's laughter: "And the Lord (Jehovah) said, . . . 'Wherefore did Sarah laugh?'" This means that the speakers in verses 5 and 9, and the speaker in verses 10 and 15 of Genesis 18 are *Jehovah*! So Isaiah 6 reveals the three persons of the trinity, as will be further shown.

C. *The Throne and Temple*. "Adonai sitting upon a throne." His vision of the triune Adonai was a vision of Him as King. Isaiah himself is here greatly disturbed, but the high and mighty Ruler of the universe sits calm and serene, imperturbable on His throne, not agitated, nor frustrated by the confusion on earth. As world sovereign, He rules all men and all their actions. His throne is envisioned not in the temple, but outside the temple, high and lifted up, far higher and greater. It is His pendulous train which fills the temple. He on His throne is the Most High God above all. The heaven of heavens, including the temple in heaven, cannot contain him. Heaven is His throne, the earth His footstool. God is ascended, or transcendent, far above all heavens, while His temple or church (His royal train, i.e., His royal attendants) fills the earth.

D. *The Seraphim*. "Standing (not above, but) from above with (an eye, or) respect to it (i.e., the throne). Six wings: six wings to each. With two he covers his face, with two he covers his feet, and with two he was flying." (v. 2). Each covers his face, as they cannot look at the blazing sun of divine glory. (We would not conclude from this, and from Matt. 18:10, that they are not angels.) Luther said, "The Jews on the contrary stood with head held high and neck stiff, that it would almost be up to God to fear them." They cover their feet in deep consciousness of their position of servitude to the Holiest of all. For they know that "He puts no trust in His saints" (cp. Dt. 32:2 with Gal. 3:19), that as compared to His infinite wisdom, He charges His angels with folly (Job 4:18). For in their unspotted sanctity they still have an unworthiness in their own nature to appear before the throne of God. Their holiness compared to His is as dim as a glowworm before the sun. They know that "the heavens are not clean in His sight" (Job 15:15). They also thus cover themselves (we see no other part of their appearance) to screen out from human view the full splendor of their own blazing brightness. They fly in instant, constant obedience to the will of God. Interesting to note it is that "this is the only passage in the Scriptures in which the seraphim are



mentioned" (Delitzsch). Seraphim and cherubim are heavenly, personal, moral spirit beings, probably of different kinds, rather than of the same kind. They both are described as having hands, feet, beautiful, striking faces, Acts 6:15, speech and understanding, which are all used in the praise and adoration of God. Seraphim are also described as standing, covering, and hovering.

From "this to this" or "the one to the other," it is not certain whether there were only two seraphim, or two banks of choirs of them chanting antiphonally. (Cp. Heb. 12:22, "an innumerable company of angels," with Isa. 6:3, 5, Jehovah of *hosts*. But see Rev. 4:6, 8). The seraphim and the prophet Isaiah together have a sense of the majesty and holiness of Jehovah with trembling, the former alone with no sin. For the prophet, a sinful being, senses the majestic holiness of God with a keenness not experienced by a sinless one. Isaiah's reaction to God's holiness is one of a deep consciousness of the misery of sin. The seraphim appear here as champions and guardians of Jehovah's holiness, making the profane and unclean keep their distance while they purge from defilement that which is to be consecrated to God's service. These

pure beings reveal that our God is a consuming fire (Heb. 12:29).

E. *The Trihagia*. "And the one to the other (lit., this to this) was calling, and he (it) said, holy! holy! holy! Jehovah Tsebhaoth! the filling of all the earth: His glory!" (v. 3). The triune God is referred to here not because of the thrice repeated *holy*, but because one part of the chapter, v. 9, 10, is quoted in Jn. 12:40-41 as referring to Christ, while in Ac. 28:25, 26 it is referred to the Holy Spirit, and in Rom. 11:8 it is referred to God. So they sing praise to the holy Father, to the holy Son, and to the Holy Spirit. God in himself is the Holy One, the spotlessly perfect pure One. His holiness (the attribute revealing His distinctive, all embracing and infinite perfection) is, by the seraphim, praised in God's very essence. His glory, His presence, as in the cloud, is filling not just the temple, but the whole earth. The finite cannot infinitely love God, but the seraphim love and glorify Him to the intensest degree of their power. They cannot love Him with the measure of His own covenant love for Himself and for His people. But they love and praise Him as much as they can, to a finite perfection, and so never as much as He deserves!

(To be continued, D.V.)

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## STRENGTH OF YOUTH

# Our Appeal to Scripture (1)

*Rev. J. Kortering*

From time to time our faith is put to the test.

It comes in many different ways.

You may encounter the Moonies, Krishnas, E.S.P.s in an airport terminal, shopping mall, or just walking down the street. In their smooth warm-hearted approach they may ask you whether you have any problems, are afraid or mixed up with life. What young person doesn't have these things to some degree? They offer to rap a bit and before you know it you are involved in a rather heavy conversation

about truth, faith, God, the Bible. You probably leave a little confused and carrying a handful of reading material.

Other times it may come your way from friends who are brought up in the Christian church, but are questioning the fundamentals of the Christian faith. This is especially true on the college level. There you are encouraged to do your own thinking, to examine every aspect of what you believe, often in a questioning way. Included in this examination is your attitude



toward Scripture itself. What is the Bible? Is it a collection of writings given us by the Holy Spirit, thereby consisting of divine truth? Or does the content of the Bible become the Word of God in us when we believe it and receive it by faith?

Then again, you may get into a discussion with other young people concerning what you believe and what you consider to be right and wrong in your Christian conduct. All such discussions ultimately lead, or at least ought to lead, to the Word of God.

You have learned from your own experience as a Christian young person how important the Bible is to you. Two important things stand out concerning the Scripture. The first thing is that it is the source of all truth. We believe in the inspiration of the Bible, that God so revealed to the authors and guided them by the Holy Spirit that what they wrote is in truth the very Word of God. Hence, we conclude that there are no errors in the Bible, that it is truth. The second thing that is derived from this is that we can therefore trust the Bible in the sense that we can trust God the Author. This is important to us. Often we are surrounded by a sea of relativism; questions are raised from those who hate the Christian religion; questions are raised from those that seem to hold to the Christian religion. Questions, questions, questions!! What is truth? Who can we trust? What is right? Where do we go?

Out of our Christian faith, we appeal to Scripture. If we lose this, we are lost forever; if we maintain this, we have an anchor for our faith.

### THE BIBLE IS THE WORD OF GOD

I'm sure that certain disturbing thoughts pass through your mind from time to time. Eventually, you may begin to think like this: why do I really believe what the Bible teaches? We have the Bible; there are so many other religions that claim to have books that are inspired and form the basis for their faith: the Koran, the writings of Ellen G. White, the New World Translation of the Jehovah's Witness, the Book of Mormon, etc. Is it so that we believe the Bible simply because we were taught to do so and that is the only reason? The graduation from childhood to youth involves just such a change. You struggle to come to a point in your life when you conclude that what you have been taught is true and you believe it is true not simply because you were taught it, but you believe it because it is true.

This includes the Bible.

Why do you appeal to the Bible as the standard of truth? Why do you conform the whole of your faith and life to its teachings?

How would you answer this?

Let me try to help you think this question through to your own satisfaction.

In general, we can point out some wonderful things about the Bible that cannot be said of any other book. The author of the Bible is God; this can be said of no other book. God did not write any other book, and the proof of this is that no other book is like the Bible. You can compare all of them that claim to be Bibles, or divinely written, but your conclusion will be that they are different from the Bible. A careful examination will make this plain to you. Besides this, just think about the Bible for a moment. How else can we explain the fact that the Bible was written over a period of some two thousand years, through the agency of some twenty authors, who do not contradict each other but rather compliment each other in contributing to the one glorious theme of salvation in Jesus Christ to the glory of God! Only divine authorship can explain this wonder.

God through revelation communicated to the authors what He wanted them to write. These men were moved to write it down and in the process of such writing were guided by the same Holy Spirit to do so accurately. The benefit of such activity is that the church may have perfect faith. Luke explains all this in the prologue to His gospel: "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word; it seemed good to me also having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order most excellent Theophilus that thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed," Luke 1:1-4. See also I Thess. 2:13.

In addition to this, careful Bible study will also show that there are no errors in the Bible. Oh, I know some critics jump up and down and say that this is an empty boast and immediately produce a few passages to show that scientifically or historically it cannot be true. Be careful of those who boast that they have found errors in God's Word. We had better tremble lest we be wiser than God and be so presumptuous to lay such a charge at the feet of the Almighty. Yes, I'm aware of certain passages (amazingly enough, so very few, compared to all the passages of the Bible) that seem to be incorrect. Don't forget, we do not have the original writings. We have copies, and by careful comparison of these copies, we can come to a correct understanding of these seeming errors. These "errors" were not there in the original; they crept in by the process of transmission. As the Spirit guides us in our Bible study, we may be sure that the message of God comes to us clearly.



Add to this evidence the fact that God providentially preserved this book throughout the ages of history. All the inspired writings were selected by the church and kept for reading and study. This is a thrilling narrative in itself. Jehoiakim cut it up and threw it into the fire, Jeremiah 36:23ff. During the Dark Ages it collected dust in libraries. During the Inquisition, men were burned at the stake for reading it. And today it is mutilated by perverse paraphrases, and dissected by higher critics. Yet, through it all, we have the Bible, and true believers are strengthened in their faith by it. God preserved His Word for us.

### THE BIBLE CLAIMS FOR ITSELF DIVINE AUTHORSHIP

This is a different approach to our question, how can we be sure that the Bible is the Word of God. We can begin to examine it and see whether its contents tell us that it is so. Now, I know many other books written by men claim this to be true for their writing, too; but can it actually stand the test of faith? I know that a skeptic will not be persuaded, for he will base all his belief on the criteria of human reason; but I'm concerned with you covenant young people. Does the Bible speak to your faith, and does it put your mind at ease concerning the fact that it is the Word of God?

First, the theme of Scripture is different from that of any other book. From the mighty display of divine glory in Genesis 1, "In the beginning, God!" to the exalted crescendo in Revelation 22, "Surely I come quickly, even so come Lord Jesus," the one message elevates the weary saint by focusing His eyes upon Jehovah, the God of our salvation. Every page testifies to this glorious theme. Old Testament and New Testament blend in perfect harmony in extolling God as saving us in Jesus Christ. No man could ever dream up such a message. It is a revelation from God.

Secondly, on the pages of the Bible God explains to us how He gave the Bible to us. Let me refer briefly to the two passages most often quoted. "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, thoroughly furnished unto all good works," II Tim. 3:16. "We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in our hearts; knowing this first that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation, for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," II Peter 1:19-21. God assures us that He gave the Bible to us by the wonder of inspiration.

Thirdly, the believers appealed to the Bible in support of what they believed. They set the example for us. In fact, we can turn to our Lord Jesus in this regard. When He was criticized for His teaching concerning marriage and the wrongness of divorce, he appealed to the creation account, "Have ye not *read*, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female," Matt. 19:4. The Apostle Paul did the same thing. In his discussion concerning marriage, he refers to command, "And unto the married, I command, yet not I but the Lord, let not the wife depart from her husband," I Cor. 7:10. This is a reference to Christ's teaching recorded in Matt. 19. In the other part where he states that he writes, not the Lord, he is conscious that the Holy Spirit is guiding him in an area that is without precedent. He can't quote a Bible passage to support his teaching. The Holy Spirit is guiding him that very moment; hence the teaching is not less authoritative, though it is original. If Christ and the apostles referred to the Scriptures, which were more than likely the Greek translation of the Old Testament, we may certainly rely upon our Bibles.

Finally, the Bible contains prophecy that deals with future events that can be explained only on the basis of divine authorship. For one example, Isaiah predicted that Cyrus would allow the captives to return, Isa. 45:1. Only God could have so directed him to record future events.

### A MATTER OF FAITH

Alas, you may say, that all may be debated. The pages of history are filled with infidels who have done their best to discredit all that has been said and written in defense of the faith concerning the Bible. Some of it comes from the "experts" who have become erudite in the linguistics of the Bible, others come from the professionals who know history and are quick to discredit Scripture's accuracy. Others are philosophical and they like to become immersed in the vagaries of epistemology. To add more confusion, hermeneutics seems to be the "in" thing today: how must we interpret the Bible? Maybe we can leave languages alone, history alone, and get our way by emphasizing a new method of interpreting. The simple fact is that all such emphasis leads to the same end — a denial of God's Word.

We close for this time by emphasizing that no matter how we may look at the Bible, no matter what we may emphasize, basically it is a matter of faith.

To this we hope to address ourselves in our next article.

May God give us the faith to see the evidence that the Bible is indeed the Word of God and we do well to appeal to it for all our faith and life.



## GUEST ARTICLE

## The Rich Fool

Rev. Rodney G. Miersma

*"And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: Then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." Luke 12:16-21*

The words of Christ as they were recorded by Luke were spoken at a time when a large multitude and his disciples were gathered about our Lord. Christ warns his disciples with respect to the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. While Christ was discoursing on this subject one of the crowd came to him saying, "Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me." This, of course, had nothing to do with what Christ was saying. The man was tired of the spiritual and wanted attention turned to himself. Christ replied by asking the man a question: "Man, who made me a judge or divider over you?" This then was the immediate occasion for an exhortation against covetousness. "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." To explain what he means, Christ gives his disciples instruction in the form of a parable which is known to most of us as "The Parable of the Rich Fool."

This rich man was a fool. In other words he was deprived of practical wisdom. He evaluated things in a wrong way since he did not know reality practically. To make matters worse he acts according to his wrong judgment. As a result he comes out wrong in the end. Here the rich fool has a wrong estimate of things natural and spiritual, not being able to see the correct relation between the two. The end result is that he has neither riches nor life, for earthly goods cannot satisfy one's soul.

With respect to his treasures the man is a fool because he considers them his own. Notice how many times he uses the words "I" and "my." Eleven times! The significance of these words is that they denote him as the sovereign owner and dispenser of those possessions. However, this is a fundamental mistake on his part. He is a farmer. There is no vocation where it is so plain that one's goods are not his own, as that of a farmer. The ground brings forth. The rain and the sunshine are God's. And the earth brings

forth the Lord's grain and fruit. But this rich fool did not see the relationship between himself and those goods correctly. It was God's farm. It was God's fruit and grain. But what does he say but I, I, I. . No, he did not give God a thought, for he did not care for life itself, of whom it came, and how it must be dedicated to the Lord. A materialist he was, not seeing that he was God's steward.

That he did not mention God is the element of his folly. We must remember that the Lord is giving instruction with respect to covetousness, the breaking of the tenth commandment. By coveting the wrong things, by seeking and striving for things out of a motive of self-love rather than of a love for God, he in reality says that there is no God. "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God," Ps. 53:1. Because life is of God, he who singles God out of his life is a fool, even a rich fool in the possession of the many gifts of the earth.

However, if this man had been wise he would have spoken much differently. He would have said, "I am but a steward of the Lord." He would have recognized that as a man he was created as such, that is, a friend-servant of God. As a servant of the Lord he is bound to give an account. Thus, the practical question of life is not, "What shall I do?" but rather, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

Moreover, not only is he a fool because he considers these treasures his own, but also because he considers them lasting. *For many years* he has laid up much goods, so that in order to hold them all he had to pull down his barns and build greater. Something is wrong here; but what? Is it wrong to build bigger barns when the harvest is large? Certainly not. The fault of the man is rather his spiritual outlook with respect to those barns and all that they contain. Earthly things meant life to him. He has piled them up to suit himself, for him to enjoy. They have become the object of his trust as if his house were to stand for aye.



But the revelation of his folly comes in verse 20 when God comes to him and says, "Thou fool." You see, this man's folly is revealed in that he has come out wrong in the end. That very night his soul is taken, and then to whom shall they be? From the earthly point of view these goods did not serve for many years; no, somebody else got them. God came for the soul of this rich man, thus placing him face to face with his Creator. And he certainly had to give an account of all the goods that the Lord had given him. When placed face to face with God, one sees that nothing really belongs to him. In this light we can see that one who is truly wise takes the attitude that he does not know when his stewardship shall end. The child of God, he who has been given this wisdom, takes the attitude, "I shall be faithful as though I give account this very night." Take, for example, what the Word of God has to say in James 4:13-17:

"Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that. But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil. Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

In the second place, this man is not only a fool with regard to his treasures, but also with regard to his soul. The man in his folly says within himself, "And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou has much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry." What awful folly, revealed already in the fact that he dare not say this aloud. He is still reasoning within himself. By his actions the man who came to Jesus showed the same reasoning, as if these things are the source of life.

We can see why this man was a fool with respect to his soul if we bear in mind just what that soul is. Man was created a living soul with a heart, mind, and will, capable of desiring, thinking, and willing. The soul of man is spiritual, not earthly like an animal whose soul is in his blood. In this respect man is a rational, moral creature in which he stands related to God. An animal is not a person and can will neither good nor evil. Now we must look at the characteristics of man's soul in relation to God as they have bearing in the parable. Man was made in the image of God, in true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. As such he is adapted to God, for life with God is more than meat and drink, but is fellowship with God. This fellowship is a covenant fellowship in which man is friend-servant of God. This fellowship we seek with all our

being. In this relationship we have the love of God, and, thus, peace with God.

The rich man's folly was that he did not see this; he had a wrong estimate of reality. What he believed was the lie. What lie did this man hold with respect to his soul in relation to his goods? He believed that his goods could feed his soul. Imagine that: corn for his soul! Reality is that there is no food in goods for one's soul. What he believed was also a lie in that he thought that his goods would serve his soul for many years. But that very night his soul was required of him. One never knows when his time will be up. He left God entirely out of his thinking. But even if he could say that, it would still be a lie, for the soul needs eternal life, not many years. Nevertheless, he took his soul to these things for satisfaction and acted accordingly. But the soul does not find rest in goods; this is covetousness. The soul does not eat and drink food and wine. What the soul needs is righteousness, for the soul cannot rid itself of misery by swallowing earthly joy.

One who sees this has true wisdom in contrast to this fool's folly. The soul adapted to God sees as its fundamental need God's righteousness, favor, and fellowship. Thus, it is only by grace that the soul hungers after God. The implied admonition, then, is, take your soul to God for satisfaction; be not covetous after earthly treasures. We must turn to God and Christ as empty in ourselves, to be filled with the riches of grace. By faith we receive all the spiritual blessings of God through Christ.

Does this description fit us? If we seek self, if we lay up treasure for it, then both it and the treasure will be destroyed. If we seek God, we will have treasures in heaven, and the greatest treasure of them all is eternal life, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom He has sent. Having this treasure we are rich toward God, knowing him, walking with him, and growing like unto him. Our calling is to lay up treasures in heaven. Then we can leave the earthly things when our soul is required of us, for the heavenly and spiritual treasures go with the soul to everlasting joy.

How shall we live so wisely and well? We must fight the good fight of faith. We must do so with respect to ourselves. Righteousness and holiness, that is, Jesus Christ our Lord, must be the food for our souls. With respect to our neighbors we must use them as we use our barns, to the honor and glory of God, for any action against them is action against Christ. With respect to God we must draw closer to Him in sweet communion, become rich in Him. Then when He calls us away, His coming and our going will not be terrible. We will rejoice in that we can become partakers with all the saints in Christ Jesus, of that heavenly joy, together being rich toward God.



## NEWS FEATURE

## Building Project--Covenant Prot. Ref. Church, Wyckoff, N.J.



## TO OUR SISTER CHURCHES OF THE PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCHES

Classis gave to us the permission to ask for collections for our Building Fund in your churches. In light of this forthcoming request we decided it proper and of interest to you that we inform you of our situation and need.

Our earnest desire for some time already has been to build a house of worship of our own. We have this desire as we give thanks unto our God for planting a Protestant Reformed church in our midst and giving us and our children in rich abundance the spiritual blessings of His covenant of grace through a distinctively Reformed preaching of the Word. Because we are such a small congregation we well realize the large undertaking this involves. We are convinced, however, that this matter is of great importance as we look to the Lord our God to continue and preserve His church with us and our children and with all those whom the Lord will gather into His church through the preaching of the glorious gospel of sovereign grace.

It is our desire to praise the name of our God in a house of worship that is suitable for this purpose. We surely know that worshiping and glorifying God is not dependent on a building made with hands. However, we must enhance the worship of our God, as far as He gives the means, with a suitable house of worship.

Since the time of our beginning we have held our worship services in an American Legion Hall. Our two weekly Bible study classes and our catechism classes are presently held in various homes. Many of our churches had such humble beginnings as far as place of worship is concerned, and we surely may not murmur about this. The places of worship were humble, but the wonderful heritage of the Reformed faith which God has delivered unto us is rich and glorious beyond compare. The Legion Hall, although having served our needs temporarily, is at the same



time not very conducive to worship and obviously cannot be our permanent place of worship. Some of you who have visited us on occasion can testify to this. Without going into detail, it is a rather dingy and depressing place. In addition to this, because of the congested area in which it is located, there are problems with parking. As our congregation is getting more young children we are also in need of a place for nursery during the worship services. Presently this is also being held in a home. Although we surely recognize that it is not a church building that gathers the Church of Jesus Christ, it is nevertheless true that our present place of worship does not help in attracting visitors to our worship services.

With a view to realizing our desires and plans, in April of last year we bought a five acre tract of land with a house on it that is presently being used for our parsonage (pictured above). We purchased this property by selling debentures in our congregation. Enough debentures were sold to purchase the property and pay the legal and engineering fees. Our plans are to sell debentures in various series as we progress with each phase of our project. Possibly later we will also make these debentures available in the denomination. These debentures are supported exclusively by our building fund. We hold collections for this building fund on a regular basis in our own midst. All of this, especially in the light of our small size, has been a work of faith. We continue to trust our God that He will continue His church with us and our children and continue to use our church as a witness to the Reformed faith in this community.

Above, you will also see an artist's rendering of our proposed church building. All the plans for our church building are completed. We are waiting to proceed with our plans for final city and county approval and until we can raise sufficient funds.

Rev. A. den Hartog.



## Book Review

*THE ANATOMY OF A HYBRID*, A Study in Church-State Relationships, by Leonard Verduin; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976; 274 pp., \$4.95 (paper). (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko)

The question of the relation between the Church and the secular state is a favorite one with Verduin. His earlier book, "The Reformers and Their Stepchildren," dealt with the same question. Verduin is a champion of the complete separation between church and state and a strong promoter of the free exercise of religion.

This book is divided into four parts. The first part, entitled "The daughters of men," deals with early "sacral" societies where church and state were one. The second part, "The sons of God," deals with the influences of early Judaeo-Christian thought which influenced the separation of church and state. The third part, "The birth of the hybrid," deals with the new union of church and state under Constantine the Great and its resulting sacral society. The fourth part, "And also afterwards," deals primarily with the Reformation and Post-reformation times when all the Protestant Churches favored a union of church and state with the exception of a few, notably William Rogers in this country, who sought a separation. The literary framework of the book is, therefore, dependent upon the passage found in Genesis 6:1-4.

The book is a very convincing argument for the need to keep church and state separate. Especially the author's emphasis on the horrible persecutions which resulted from an effort to promote religion by the sword of the magistrate are convincing proof that when the church and state forge a bond to promote a certain religion, the end is disastrous. Not only the Roman Catholic Church must share the blame for such persecutions, but also the Churches of the Reformation have the blood of men on their hands, especially in their persecution of the Anabaptists. All this makes the book interesting reading.

The main weakness in the book is a serious overstating of the whole case. Verduin sees almost all of history and all the development of doctrine in the history of the Church as explainable from the viewpoint of the struggle to resolve this issue. One gets the impression from the book that there really is no other significant controversy in all history than the controversy over this question.

A few instances to support this thesis will demonstrate the truth of it.

Verduin begins incorrectly when he speaks of the fact that the issue is basically one of grace. He discusses this especially on pp. 33ff.,

although he comes back to it again and again. The point he makes is this. Common grace is preserving grace. This kind of grace belongs to the sphere of the state. Special grace is saving grace and belongs to the sphere of the Church. Preserving (or common) grace is but to aid special grace, as the state is but to create a climate in which the Church can function. When common grace is denied, then grace is made one, and a "sacral" society in which church and state are united is the result. It would have been far more Scriptural to answer honestly the question of whether common grace is also merited through the cross of Christ — a question which Verduin avoids; and to show that, not common grace, but the universal rule of Christ over His people in grace and over the wicked in wrath is the key point.

In the interest of his thesis Verduin faults the returned captives for rebuilding the temple and Jerusalem because they were recreating a sacral society. (p. 47.) The ministry of John the Baptist was the preparation of a composite society in which each man was free to exercise the religion of his choice. (p. 54) Augustine hit upon the idea of predestination in defense of an *ecclesiola in ecclesia*, an idea inherent in the Roman Catholic conception of the relation between church and state. (p. 106) Calvin adopted this view of predestination from Augustine in support of the same notion. (p. 185) Calvin's views show that he never escaped the influence of the pagan philosopher Seneca. (p. 199) The whole conception of infant baptism is closely related to the defense of a union between church and state. So strongly is this point made repeatedly in the book that one begins to wonder whether Verduin actually accepts the doctrine of infant baptism. Verduin also rejects the distinction between a visible and an invisible church on the same grounds; i.e., as an invention intended to support a union of the church and state.

Throughout the book there is a glorification of dissenting groups in the history of the Church, while the faithful defenders of the truth are scorned and mocked. The Donatists, Cathari, Waldensians, Anabaptists, etc. are extolled for their efforts to fight against a sacral society, while Augustine, Luther, Calvin, the Reformers, and many others are derided because they sought a union of church and state. While it may be true that dissenting sects did stand for such a separation between church and state, and while it may also be true that many defenders of the truth did not, nevertheless the fact remains that some of the dissenting groups were heretical, and one ought not to ignore the fact that the truth was preserved through the labors of faithful men of God who may have erred on this point.



Verduin's style is always somewhat distasteful to me. He writes in such a way that solemn and sacred matters are treated offhandedly and in a light and facetious manner.

And, finally, Verduin never faces foursquare the vexing question of whether or not the magistracy, ordained by God, has the responsibility to enforce both tables of the law. It is obvious that Verduin does

not believe that the magistracy has any responsibility to enforce the first table of the law. But this is the central question; and Verduin should support his position with proof which shows why this is not true. It is possible, I think, to take the position that the magistracy must enforce the first table of the law and still avoid entanglements with the Church. But this is another question involving another discussion.

### NOTICE TO THE CHURCHES

The 1977 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches, having approved the examination of seminarian Kenneth Koole, declares him a candidate for the Ministry of the Gospel in our churches. Candidate Koole will be eligible for a call after July 3, 1977.

Mr. Kenneth Koole  
4938 Ivanrest, S.W., Apt. C  
Grandville, Mich. 49418  
Rev. M. Joostens, Stated Clerk

### NOTICE

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in Pella, Iowa on September 7, 1977 at 8:30 AM, the Lord willing. Material for the agenda should be in the hands of the stated clerk thirty days prior to Classis. Delegates in need of lodging should inform the clerk of the Pella consistory.

Rev. David Engelsma, Stated Clerk  
Classis West

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On July 28, the Lord willing, our parents, MR. AND MRS. DICK KOOIENGA, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. We, their children, are thankful to God for them and are grateful for the Christian home and the Christian education they have provided for us. Our prayer is that the Lord may continue to bless them in their remaining years.

Mr. and Mrs. Robert Miedema  
Mr. and Mrs. Earl Dykstra  
Mr. and Mrs. Roger Kooienga  
Mr. and Mrs. Arnold Dykstra  
Mr. and Mrs. Donald Sall  
Mr. and Mrs. Donald Kooienga  
Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Dykstra  
33 grandchildren  
6 great-grandchildren

Grand Rapids, Michigan

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On July 10, 1977, D.V., our beloved parents MR. AND MRS. GEORGE JOOSTENS will celebrate their 30th wedding anniversary. We, their grateful children, thank the Lord for having kept them for each other and us and pray that the Lord may continue to bless them.

Rev. and Mrs. Meindert Joostens  
William Joostens  
and three grandchildren

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On June 20, 1977, our parents, MR. AND MRS. STUART LOOYENGA celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary. We, their grateful children, thank God for the many years of love and Christian instruction they have given us. Our sincere prayer is that God may continue to bless them in the future as He has done in the past.

Mr. & Mrs. Russell Dykstra  
Heather, Heidi  
Mr. & Mrs. David Looyenga  
Lisabeth  
Jane  
Kathy

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On May 25th our dear parents, MR. AND MRS. JOHN FLIKKEMA, of South Holland celebrated their 35th wedding anniversary. We, their children, are thankful to our covenant God that He has held them in His keeping for each of those years. It is our prayer that God will bless them in their future years together. We also thank them for being the wonderful parents they are.

their children,  
Mr. and Mrs. Charles Bult  
Lois Flikkema  
Mary Flikkema  
and their grandchildren:  
Julia and Jonathan.

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On June 26, 1977, our parents, MR. AND MRS. JOEL TALSMA celebrated their 30th wedding anniversary. We, their children, are thankful to God for their many years together and our Christian home and training through them. It is our prayer that God will continue to bless them as they go through life's pathway together.

their children,  
Mr. and Mrs. Ray Talsma  
and Jeffrey  
Bonnie Talsma  
Kenneth Talsma

### APOLOGY

We regret the blunder for which we were responsible in Rev. Hoeksema's editorial last month and wish to apologize for it.

Photo Composition Service

## News From Our Churches

Of a trio consisting of Revs. Wayne Bekkering, George Lubbers, and James Slopsema, our Houston, Texas, congregation has called Rev. Bekkering of Randolph, Wisconsin.

The first full week in June was graduation week in the Grand Rapids area. On Tuesday, June 7, Seminary Graduation was held in our Hudsonville Church. Professor Hanko gave an address on "Predestination, the Heart of the Gospel." Three graduates received



their diplomas: Mr. Kenneth Koole of our churches and two students from the Free Reformed Churches. Mr. Koole will be eligible for a call in early July. On Wednesday evening Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School held their graduation in Hudsonville Church also. Rev. B. Woudenberg was the speaker. On Thursday evening in First Church, Adams St. Christian School held their graduation exercises. Prof. R. Decker gave the address. And, on Friday evening, also in First Church, Covenant Christian High School scheduled their graduation. Rev. M. Schipper was the speaker.

This note concerning Rev. Harbach's work as missionary was in Hope's bulletin: "Rev. and Mrs. Harbach are planning to leave Thursday, May 26, on an investigative trip in the area north of Lynden, Washington. The Mission Committee has received information of some interest in Victoria, Vancouver, and Abbotsford, British Columbia. The Harbachs plan to stay in Lynden during this month of work. We wish them God's blessing and pray that the Lord may yield fruit to their labors."

The following news from our Faith Church in Jenison, Michigan, concerning their building program was in their bulletin: "A good spirit prevailed at the congregational meeting held last week Monday evening. (May 9) By an almost unanimous vote the congregation decided to proceed with the drawing up of final plans for phase one, which will consist of a \$200,000 sanctuary. May the Lord prosper us in this work toward the building of His house."

Our Southwest Church in Wyoming, Michigan is also looking forward to the time when they too can occupy a new church 'home.' Their "Permanent Building Committee" has been busy with the questions of 'how and when.' The results of a questionnaire distributed to the congregation by the committee indicate that 80% of the congregation is in favor of a church building program in light of the continued growth of the congregation. However, 50% of the congregation indicated they were "able or willing" to meet the financial obligations outlined by the committee necessary to build a new church. Based on their survey information, the committee decided to continue to investigate ways and means to proceed with the directive of the council to "study the problems and costs involved in construction of a new church building on our Ivanrest Ave. property."

The church ushers in our South Holland Church have scheduled a class in emergency medical training. That sounds like a good idea.

The Sunday School Teachers' Mass Meeting was held in Southwest Church on May 2. Mr. D. Boone was scheduled to speak on the topic, "Sunday School — Is It a Valuable Tool In Covenant Instruction?"

The Sunday School teachers in our Redlands, California church scheduled their 'annual wienie bake' for their Sunday School students on May 27. This event seems to be a little unique in our churches.

Also in Redlands, Rev. Kortering has moved his study into the parsonage at 902 E. Brockton. The trailer which had been used as a study was vacated and will be returned.

The Young People's Societies of our churches across the land scheduled their Spring Banquets during May. The Michigan area banquet was held in Hudsonville Church on May 20. Rev. David Engelsma of South Holland, Illinois, was the speaker. In the Edgerton — Northwest Iowa area, the Young People's Banquet was held on May 4. Rev. M. Kamps spoke on "Seek Ye the Lord While He May Be Found."

Rev. Kamps also was the speaker at a public lecture in our church in Isabel, South Dakota, on April 22. His topic was, "THE OLD CREEDS: Are They Still Right For The Last Days?" Lunch was served in the church basement after the lecture so those attending could visit with Rev. and Mrs. Kamps.

Rev. Miersma of Isabel spent the Sundays of May 15 and 22 on classical appointment in Forbes, North Dakota. These were the last services in the Forbes church as the congregation was dissolved after the service on May 22. The members of the small congregation in Forbes are moving to other cities where they can continue their membership in our churches.

The following reminder from the Isabel bulletin is something we can all take to heart: "Now that the society season is over there is a danger that we forget about studying the Bible or related writings. Try through the summer months to continue reading or studying the Bible itself, commentaries, or Church History — something to keep our minds active in order that we continue to grow in the knowledge of the truth and of God's way for us."

K.G.V.