

# The STANDARD BEARER

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

As time marches on, the admonition of Paul speaks to us with every “tick” of the clock. There is no escape. And God is no respecter of persons or situations. Whether we are young or old, housewife or factory worker, professional or student, rich or poor, title or no, our calling is one and the same: Redeem the time God has given unto us. God keeps a log of every moment of our life; and that log will be opened on that day of days when Christ returns in glory. Of this we must be conscious as we walk our pilgrim’s trek here below. Then the real question that faces us each moment is, “Am I buying this moment to the glory of God?” We often compartmentalize our lives. We speak of study time, work time, play and leisure, recreation time. But God doesn’t care about our neat little distinctions. He demands every moment.

See “Time” — Page 332

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## THE STANDARD BEARER

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## MEDITATION

## An Easter Prayer

Rev. M. Schipper

*"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,*

*Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."*

Hebrews 13:20,21.

That the words of this text constitute a prayer, there can be no doubt. It is not merely a wish which the writer expresses, being deeply concerned about the spiritual well-being of his readers. Rather, all the ingredients of a legitimate prayer are clearly indicated in this text. It speaks of the One to Whom the prayer is addressed. It contains the petition which forms the

body of the prayer. And it contains the doxology with which the prayer is concluded.

That this is an Easter Prayer, we gather from the fact that in the address of the prayer the writer of this epistle speaks to God as the God of the resurrection, the God Who raised our Lord Jesus from the



dead. Because Christ Jesus our Lord was raised from the dead as proof of our justification before God, and because on this basis a peace relation has been established between God and us, the writer makes his petition, that we may be made perfect in every good work, that is, that the work of sanctification may follow, whereby we may be made wellpleasing in God's sight, unto Whom all the glory and praise is due for ever.

Having just celebrated the glorious fact of Christ's resurrection, it is well that we also pay attention to this prayer in all its beauteous expression and in all its parts.

Significant address!

The God of peace!

That God is the God of peace, describes Him as living His own divine life in tranquility. It means, negatively, that there is never any conflict, any disturbance within the life of the divine family of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And, positively, it means that God lives within His perfect being the most harmonious covenant fellowship.

More particularly, however, this address signifies that God is the source of peace. And this means that He not only makes peace but gives it. Peace is that state or condition in which war and enmity and all forms of opposition have been abolished. Positively, it describes that state in which we stand in perfect reconciliation with God. And this means that if there is to be any amendment of our natural state in which we stand in enmity against God, if we are to be reconciled unto God, this reconciliation can never proceed from us, but from God alone, Who, in Christ, was reconciling us unto Himself, and so making peace. Not only does He realize this peace through the blood of Christ's cross, but He gives this peace to us in such a way that in our hearts all enmity is removed, and the peace which surpasseth all understanding comes over our hearts and into them in such a way that we know we stand in perfect harmony with Him and He with us. And to this address the writer adds:

Who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus . . .

Literally the text says, "Who led out of the dead again our Lord Jesus." This implies, so it would seem, that He first led Him into death.

The death of the cross!

As we have so many times written unto you, the death of Christ on the cross was no accident — though the enemies of Christ on many occasions and in several different ways sought to kill Him. And though at last they brought Him to Pilate in order that he might pronounce upon Him the sentence of

death by crucifixion. It must never be our conception that as a last resort the death of the cross was conceived of to dispose of Him. For, while He was crucified by wicked hands, it was God by His determinate counsel and foreknowledge Who had delivered Christ over into these wicked hands in order that they might do to Him whatsoever it pleased God should be done unto Him. (Acts 2:23)

All the way from the bosom of the Father into the abyss of hell it was God leading His Son in the flesh into the accursed death, where He suffered the pains of hell as the forsaken and accursed of God. He had made Him to be sin for us, Who knew no sin, in order that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

While the death of the cross was the accursed death, it was at the same time the justifying death. And only after God had led Him into this justifying, atoning death, would He lead Him out again in His glorious resurrection.

Jesus, our Lord!

Jesus, Who saves His people from their sins, Who being raised from the dead is crowned with power, glory, and dominion — Lord is He over all things in heaven and earth; but especially is He Lord over His people who stand in relation to Him as servants who will serve Him in gratitude for the great redemption He has wrought.

That great Shepherd of the sheep!

Many were the shepherds whom God raised up to lead and to feed His people Israel. All were only shadows, pointing to the Shepherd to come. And the writer of this epistle, repeatedly having drawn by comparison the portrait of the Christ overagainst those who cast His shadow, again designates Him the great Shepherd of His people. No doubt mindful is he of Jesus' own designation of Himself: "I am the good Shepherd . . . I lay down my life for my sheep."

In (not through) the blood of the everlasting covenant!

In the blood which the Shepherd laid down for His sheep, God sealed and ratified His everlasting covenant. Not only was God in Christ reconciling His people unto Himself, so making peace; but He certifies forever the covenant of friendship and perfects it. Now His people may dwell with Him in an unbreakable bond of friendship, and serve Him in that relationship as His covenant friends.

No wonder that the prayer of our text is directed to Him!

He is the God of our salvation in Christ Jesus!

He is the God Who through Christ has laid the very foundation of our eternal salvation!



He is the God Who through Christ must yet perfect that salvation in us!

Based upon the atoning, justifying, peace-making sacrifice of the great Shepherd, our Lord Jesus Christ, the perfection of which is attested to in His glorious resurrection, the prayer now makes its plea.

A prayer for the Shepherd's sheep!

Sheep they were which had been given to Him of the Father in sovereign and eternal election, sheep for whom He laid down His life and took it up again in His resurrection when the God of peace led Him out of death. His sheep, who died with Him and rose again in newness of life, and therefore are enabled to hear His voice and follow Him whithersoever He leads them. For them is the prayer made, and not for the world.

A prayer for God's covenant people!

Incorporated they were in an insoluble bond of friendship with the living God from all eternity. Cleansed they were by the blood of the covenant, and made fit in principle to dwell with God in the house of His covenant.

Concerning that people the writer presents in this Easter prayer his petition.

That He make you perfect in every good work to the end that you may do His will!

Not so is it that God in Christ merely makes salvation possible for us, and then leaves it up to us to be saved. If this were so, the sheep would again go astray, and be lost. No! He saves them unto the uttermost! The expression in the translation, "make you perfect . . ." means literally, "qualifying you fully." That means that He must give us all the spiritual gifts whereby we are enabled to respond to His will, and to walk in all good works which the apostle Paul tells us were from everlasting prepared by God and given to us to perform. (Eph. 2:10). The situation is not so, that like good Boy Scouts we sit down and figure out what good deeds we may perform each day. The truth is, that even our good works are prepared and given to us. The prayer is that these works may constantly come to us, and that we be given the qualifying grace to perform them, to the end that in our lives God's will may be done.

This is borne out in the rest of the petition: "working in you what is wellpleasing in His sight through Jesus Christ."

God is the subject of this work of grace, and Christ Jesus is the Mediator! So, and so only, is all of our salvation unto its final perfection of the Lord. It is in no sense of us.

Small wonder then that the petitioner concludes his prayer with a doxology.

To Whom be glory unto the ages of the ages!

Quite naturally the question arises: To Whom do the words "To Whom" refer? Is it to the God of peace Who brought again our Lord Jesus from the dead? Or, is it Jesus Christ Whom the writer mentions last as the Mediator through Whom the prayer will be realized?

This is an exegetical question. When we consider that the prayer is directed to the God of peace, it would seem most fitting that the doxology should also be raised to Him. On the other hand, from an exegetical point of view, since the doxology is most closely affixed to Jesus Christ, it can also be ascribed to Him.

The question is solved when we consider that Jesus Christ, Who is the Mediator of our salvation, is at the same time the God of our salvation, Who in His human nature is exalted with glory and honor, Whose is the glory unto endless ages; then our difficulty ceases. The glorious God, Who has all glory, to Whom no glory can be given that He does not already possess, is pleased to receive glory and have all glory ascribed to Him as He pleases to reveal Himself in Christ Jesus our Lord. O, indeed, God will be glorified, world without end! For unto this end has He created all things, and unto this end has He performed the work of recreation. Fact of the matter is, that He so works out the realization of His counsel that not the creature, but God Himself receives all the glory and praise. No creature shall be able to glory in himself; but all creation, redeemed through the way of sin and grace, shall ascribe all glory to God for ever. And all this glory shall come to Him through the Mediator Christ Jesus, Who is the God of our salvation.

Amen!

And you know that this little word which concludes the prayer is not intended merely to place a dot at the end of the sentence. As always in Scripture, so also here, it attests to the truth expressed in the prayer, that it shall surely be fulfilled. The good work which God in Christ has begun, will be finished in everlasting glory. The people whom He in Christ has justified in the cross and resurrection, shall be led through the way of sanctification into heavenly perfection and glory. The prayer which is uttered in faith, shall surely be heard and answered.

Amen, and Amen!

**Know the standard and follow it. Read THE STANDARD BEAR.**



## EDITORIALS

Prof. H.C. Hoeksema

### Baptism on the Mission Field (8)

The last paragraph of Section III (The Church Order) of the Study Report we have not yet discussed. Actually, this paragraph is only partially concerned with the Church Order. The latter indeed has something to say on the subject: Article 59 states that "Adults are through Baptism incorporated into the Christian Church, and are accepted as members of the Church." And this in itself rules out the position of the Study Report, which in effect proposes a baptism which is not incorporation into the Christian Church and which does not involve acceptance as members of the Church. As I said, this is important enough in itself: for it surely means that the Study Report is proposing a *new kind of baptism*, which Reformed churches have never before recognized and practiced.

But more importantly, this part of the Study Report involves our *confessions*. Before I call attention to this, let me quote the pertinent paragraph:

Nor does baptism on the mission field weaken the truth that baptism signifies incorporation into the instituted church. It must be recognized, first, that one is baptized into Christ Himself, into His death (Rom. 6:3ff). Secondly, one is baptized into the visible, catholic Body of Christ (I Cor. 12:12, 13; Belgic Confession, Art. 34). But the missionary's instruction of those who present themselves for baptism must include the teaching that, exactly for these reasons, the end of baptism is the formation of and the individual's membership in an instituted congregation. If God does not bless the missionary's labors with the establishing of a congregation, the baptized are bound to join a congregation that has the marks of the true church.

I will pass by, at least for the time being, the fact that the Study Report produces absolutely no exegesis of Romans 6:3, ff. and I Corinthians 12:12, 13, but simply *assumes* a certain meaning and application of these passages. This is no way to use texts. My very first question would be: has the Report demonstrated that these texts are indeed speaking of the *sacrament*, rather than only of the *reality* of baptism? Understand, I am only raising the question at this point. But it is an important question. A second important question would be: has the Report demonstrated that I Cor. 12 is speaking indeed of "the

visible, catholic Body of Christ?" Do we simply assume such important items, and then adopt new stands and new practices on the basis of assumptions? This, to me, is not proper church style. But for the present I will pass this by: this is really not the Scriptural section of the Study Report.

What I want to point out is that this is the *only point* in the entire Study Report where there is even a reference to the confessions. And then the subject receives quick and easy treatment.

Now I am not blaming the Study Committee for this. The blame rests squarely upon the Synod of 1975, which made absolutely no reference to the confessions in the mandate given to the committee. To me, this is preposterous! One would think we had no confessions, or that the confessions have nothing to say about baptism and about the relation between baptism and church membership. And yet this is not the case. Fact is that almost all Reformed confessions, because of their historical orientation, pay a disproportionate amount of attention to the subject of the sacraments and the church. And surely, whatever is decided on this issue of baptism on the mission field must be in full harmony with what our confessions have to say about baptism and the church. Let our Protestant Reformed Churches at their Synod make certain about that!

What is wrong with the position set forth in this paragraph of the Study Report? I find the following items:

1. The Report establishes no connection between being baptized into Christ and being baptized into the visible, catholic Body of Christ. It simply places the two next to each other.
2. The Report as it stands speaks of a "visible, catholic Body of Christ" which is an *abstraction*. One can indeed distinguish between the organic and the institutional aspect of the visibility of the church. But surely, when we speak of the sacraments, according to all our confessions, we are squarely in the realm of the *institutional* aspect and manifestation of the "visible, catholic Body of Christ." What is the importance of this? It means: a) That the only way in which this "visible, catholic Body of Christ" becomes manifest, i.e., visible, is through concrete, visible,



local, instituted congregations. And, b) That the only way a person can be baptized into that “visible, catholic Body of Christ” is through his, by baptism (a holy, visible sign and seal), being incorporated into the institutionally visible congregation.

It is of the utmost importance that we understand this and maintain it. Otherwise we can no longer maintain that the church as institutionally visible in the local congregation is indispensably necessary. If I can be baptized somehow into a visible, catholic Body of Christ without being a member of any local congregation and without becoming a member through my very baptism, then I have no principal need of that local congregation. After all, my membership in the Body of Christ is the important thing, the all-important thing. If the latter can be separated from my membership in the local church, then I can forget about that local church membership. Oh, perhaps there are practical reasons for such membership, but there is no *principal* need. And remember: if this is true, it is as true at home as it is on the mission field.

3. Yet this is exactly what the Study Report proposes and allows. It forgets that we *are incorporated* into the church by baptism. And it proposes that the missionary must instruct people that they *must become* members in an instituted congregation. And if a congregation is not established on the mission field, then the baptized persons must go elsewhere. But remember: all this time (whether 3 months, 6 months, a year, two years) they are already members of the *VISIBLE*, catholic Body of Christ! And I ask: if this is possible for six months or a year, then what *principal* reason is there why it should not be possible for ten years or a lifetime? To put it bluntly, such a person, once he has been baptized, doesn’t need the instituted church; he “has it made.”

I warn you: follow this line to its logical and ultimate conclusion, and there will not even be an instituted church left to do any baptizing!

But now let us turn to our confessions.

There are two places in our confessions which speak of baptism in terms of church membership. One is the Heidelberg Catechism, Question and Answer 74, which speaks of infant baptism. Speaking of infants of believers, it says that “since they, as well as the adult, *are included* in the covenant and church of God . . . they must therefore *by baptism*, as a sign of the covenant, *be also admitted into the christian church*. . .” (italics added) The other was referred to by the Study Report, but not quoted. In Article 34 of the Belgic Confession we read: “We believe and confess that Jesus Christ . . . having abolished circumcision . . . hath instituted the sacrament of baptism instead thereof; *by which we are received into*

*the Church of God*, and separated from all other people and strange religions, that we may wholly belong to him, whose ensign and banner we bear. . . .”

Here, therefore, we find baptism described as the sacrament by which we are admitted into, received into, incorporated into what the Study Report calls the “visible, catholic Body of Christ.” This expression, by the way, is found in the Westminster Confession in connection with baptism. We may note, too, that there is general agreement among other Reformed confessions on this significance of baptism. Similar language can be found in the Westminster creeds, the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England, the Irish Articles of Religion, the Scotch Confession of Faith, and the French Confession of Faith.

Now the very language of Article 34 as well as the context of the preceding articles (30 to 32), all of which refer to the church as instituted, ought to warn us already that this so-called visible, catholic Body of Christ is not a mere abstraction, existing “out there somewhere” without concrete form in local congregations.

But let us allow the Confession itself to tell us what is meant.

First of all, go back with me to Article 27, “Of the Catholic Christian Church.” There you read: “We believe and profess, one catholic or universal Church, which is an holy congregation of true Christian believers, all expecting their salvation in Jesus Christ, being washed by his blood, sanctified and sealed by the Holy Ghost.” But when you read on in this article, you discover that this article is speaking of this holy catholic church as it exists in and is visible in this present world. This is very plain from the following: “And this holy Church is preserved or supported by God, against the rage of the whole world; though she sometimes (for a while) *appears* very small, and *in the eyes of men*, to be reduced to nothing: as during the perilous reign of Ahab, the Lord reserved unto him seven thousand men, who had not bowed the knees to Baal. Furthermore, this holy Church is not confined, bound, or limited to a certain place or to certain persons, but is *spread and dispersed over the whole world*. . . .” (italics added)

This is the church (visible and catholic) to which Article 34 refers.

But now read on in Article 28, where the subject is this same church; under the title, “That every one is bound to join himself to the true Church,” this article states:

“We believe, since this holy congregation (notice: the same church as in Art. 27, HCH) is an assembly of



those who are saved, and that out of it there is no salvation, that no person of whatsoever state or condition he may be, ought to withdraw himself, to live in a separate state from it; but that all men are in duty bound to join and unite themselves with it; maintaining the unity of the Church; submitting themselves to the doctrine and discipline thereof; bowing their necks under the yoke of Jesus Christ; and as mutual members of the same body, serving to the edification of the brethren, according to the talents God has given them." We interrupt our quotation at this point to ask the question: how is this to be done, this joining one's self to this holy congregation, this "visible, catholic Body of Christ?" Here is the answer of Art. 28: "And that this may be the more effectually observed, it is the duty of all believers, according to the word of God, to separate themselves from all those who do not belong to the Church, and to join themselves to *this congregation, wheresoever God hath established it*, even though the magistrates and edicts of princes were against it, yea, though they should suffer death or any other corporal punishment. Therefore all those, who separate themselves from the same, or do not join themselves to it, act contrary to the ordinance of God." (italics added)

It is very plain that when our Confession speaks of joining the visible, catholic Body of Christ, therefore, it does so in terms of joining it *as manifested in the locally constituted congregation*. No prince or magistrate will ever punish you and kill you for joining an *abstract* visible, catholic Body of Christ. But if you joined this church *concretely*, as manifested in a Reformed congregation, in the days when our Confession was written, Philip II would have you killed!

And it is this church, *the visible, catholic church as manifested in the local congregation*, into which you are admitted, received, incorporated by baptism, according to Article 34 of the Confession and Qu. & A. 74 of the Heidelberg Catechism, as well as many other Reformed creeds. Mind you, you do not by baptism become *obligated* to join it. Your membership in it is not merely "the end of baptism" — sometime in the future, if and when a congregation is established. No, baptism IS your incorporation into the church. *By baptism* you ARE ADMITTED, RECEIVED into that church.

This is the teaching of our confessions. By this we must abide.

Let me conclude this part of my critique by quoting from some old catechism notes on Article 28 by Rev. H. Hoeksema. They are notes for his "Wednesday Evening Class" of some 30 to 40 years ago. My eye happened to fall on them when I was studying another subject, and I noticed the mention of baptism — though not, of course, in the context of our current discussion whatsoever. But notice:

"1. The subject of this article: a. Everyone is bound to join himself to the true church: 1) What is meant is not that one makes himself a member of the true spiritual body of Christ. 2) But that one is in duty bound to unite himself with the manifestation of that body in the church in the world. b. This takes place: 1) Through the outward sign of baptism, whether of children or of adults. 2) Through confession of faith. 3) Through the union in public worship, celebration of the Lord's Supper, and in general, participation in the organic life of the church."

## Friend or Foe?

If a man stabbed your beloved bride in the heart, what would your reaction be? What would your evaluation of that man be?

Would you classify him as a friend? Or as a foe?

Or would you classify him as partly friend and partly foe?

Of questions like these I was reminded by the feature article in *The Outlook* of March, 1977. In the example above, the answers are perfectly obvious. If you classified such a man as a friend, it could only mean that you were at heart a foe of your bride. If you attempted to evaluate such a man as partly friend and partly foe, you yourself could only be classified as a blundering fool. If you classified him as a foe, only then could you be commended for right thinking and for having your heart in the right place. Any-

one can understand this. It seems strange, however, that when it comes to Reformed theology and the Reformed faith, men cannot seem to engage in the same kind of consistent thinking and clear evaluation.

Before I proceed, however, let me make it plain that my criticism is not directed primarily at the author of the article under discussion, a Dr. Alvin L. Baker; but it is directed at *The Outlook*, which highly recommends the article to its readers as "very timely and informative."

The article about which I am concerned is entitled "Berkouwer on Election." Actually the article is the final chapter of a doctoral dissertation on *A Critical Evaluation of G.C. Berkouwer's Doctrine of Election*.

The article itself is a mixture of favorable and un-



favorable comments. It may even be said that the points of negative criticism outnumber the favorable comments. Let me list a few of the important comments on each side of the ledger without, however, expressing my agreement or disagreement with the comments.

On the positive side one finds such comments as:

1. "Berkouwer challenges the lazy pastor or theologian to think through propositions which have previously been repeated in parrot-like fashion. He drives the serious student to the Word to discover or re-discover the teaching of revelation in connection with election."
2. "Berkouwer is also to be praised for injecting sound thoughts and opinions from historical theology into the contemporary discussion of election."
3. "The Dutch doctor is to be applauded for his insistence that election should be preached and used pastorally."
4. "Berkouwer is always the sworn enemy of arid theological abstractions, and this is probably more evident in his treatment of election than in any other area of theology."

On the negative side one finds such serious charges as:

1. "In Berkouwer, historical reality seems to have swallowed up the eternal. True, he speaks consistently of God's love being the *a priori* of election, but he is usually silent about the eternal aspect of election."
2. "Berkouwer has led in the rebellion among conservative Reformed thinkers against the traditional concept of the all-comprehensive decree of God. Berkouwer can no longer accept reprobation, and he believes that the church should no longer preach that the reason for men having different spiritual conditions is due to God's good pleasure." And again: "However, Berkouwer is wrong, for the message of the church must include both God's absolute sovereignty and the gospel of grace. In fact, if God's absolute sovereignty is not strictly maintained, then grace will invariably be perverted by attributing too much to the activity of men." Further: "Again, it must be said that Berkouwer's greatest failure is his reluctance to set forth consistently the biblical and Reformed view of the absolute sovereignty of God."
3. "Berkouwer, unfortunately, has criticized the orthodox doctrine of absolute sovereignty, as set forth in such symbols as the Canons of Dort and the Westminster Confession." And after stating that Berkouwer has followed Barth and Woelderink, the writer states: "His rejection of 'causality' as a means of explaining unbelief, and his neglect of the eternal and fixed aspect of God's decree make his view of election a deviant from the Reformed tradition."

4. Criticizing Berkouwer's view of the relation between the will of God and sin, the writer states: "Berkouwer has oversimplified the will of God." At the end of this section he writes: "Berkouwer's theology falls short of this total testimony of the Word. Berkouwer dislikes equal ultimacy. He envisions absolute sovereignty as being the sixteenth century's rationalistic deduction. However, election and reprobation are equally ultimate in the sense that God has willed the final destiny of all men. This is not a naked deduction made from some 'starting point' arrived at from outside of Scripture. On the contrary, this is a conclusion made from within all of Scripture's teaching concerning God, man, and salvation."

It is evident, therefore, that some heavy criticism is aimed at Berkouwer here. And I surely have no quarrel with this. For the most part I agree with it, though there are things which I would probably state differently.

But what do we get at the end of this article? For the most part, a favorable conclusion:

"It is not easy to criticize a man of Berkouwer's theological acumen. He has produced much that will enrich the church until the Lord returns. His treatment of the issues connected with election are (sic) usually thoroughly and fairly done."

Then, after a word of criticism about Berkouwer's tendency toward the subjective, the praise continues:

"Still, there is much to commend in Berkouwer. Theologians and preachers should be thankful that Berkouwer has shown such an interest in demonstrating the fallacies of those caricatures which have made election such a foreboding doctrine to some men. Berkouwer continually exhibits a pastor's heart while dealing with the difficult questions related to election. For example, his insistence that the gospel offer is serious . . . remains as a needed corrective for any men who would follow their logic beyond Scripture."

And what is the last word?

"In many ways, such as this, G.C. Berkouwer has done a work, in connection with election, that will strengthen the ever deteriorating marrow of theology."

Now I am not interested at this time in analysing the motives behind this kind of criticism. I suppose there are various possibilities.

And I repeat: my primary concern is not with the author of this article, but rather with those who enthusiastically recommend it, namely, *The Outlook*.

Consider, in the first place, that the truth of sovereign election (and with it, sovereign reprobation) has rightly been called the *cor ecclesiae*, the heart of the church.



Consider, in the second place, that it is not only true that discussion of election and reprobation is not only very much alive, as *The Outlook* states, but that in the churches to the constituency of which *The Outlook* is chiefly addressed the doctrine of sovereign predestination is being openly denied by men like Harry Boer and James Daane. In fact, I dare say these men are disciples of Berkouwer and follow and agree with him in this regard.

Consider, in the third place, that Dr. Berkouwer in his work on *Divine Election*, with all his erudition and theological acumen, stabs at this *cor ecclesiae*, this heart of the church. For remember: this is precisely what Berkouwer and his disciples do! Their doctrine of election and reprobation is not the doctrine taught in our Reformed creeds and in Scripture. And even the criticism offered in Dr. Baker's article makes this plain.

And then consider, finally, that *The Outlook* can after all say, in effect: *Berkouwer is both friend and*

*foe!* Yes, yes, there are points to be criticized; even points subject to rather heavy criticism. He is a foe of the Reformed doctrine of predestination. He stabs at the very heart of the church. But at the same time, he is a friend! For he "has produced much that will enrich the church until the Lord returns." Besides, "there is much to commend in Berkouwer." And though he stabs at the heart of the church, nevertheless "in many ways . . . Berkouwer has done a work, in connection with election, that will strengthen the ever deteriorating marrow of theology."

I like to believe that there are still men in Reformed Fellowship and in the Christian Reformed Church — however inconsistent they may be because of the First Point of 1924 — who do not want to see their church follow the teachings of Berkouwer and his disciples.

But then I want to warn against the bland kind of criticism described above. You must recognize the foe for what he is, and sound an alarm in Zion. For with friends like Dr. Berkouwer, you don't need enemies!

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## TRANSLATED TREASURES

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# Acts of the Synod of Dordrecht (8)

(Connection: In the previous installment we learned: 1) That the Remonstrants were pushing for the appointment of Vorstius as the replacement for Arminius at Leiden. 2) That the Remonstrants gained a certain legal standing for their Five Points, so that candidates for the ministry could not be questioned about these. 3) That in this process the document called the Remonstrance finally came into the possession of the Reformed party. 4) That all of this led to the Conference at the Hague in 1611. At this Conference the two parties are in the process of debating the doctrinal issues when the Conference is interrupted by the issue concerning the appointment of Conrad Vorstius.)

While the Ministers were occupied in this Conference, Conradus Vorstius returned from Westphalia to Holland; and the States saw fit that he should be heard in the presence of all the Conferees. When he appeared on April 27, he made a long speech in which he tried to purge himself of the alleged errors. Thereupon the Conferees were asked by the States whether they had any objections on account of which they judged that the calling of Vorstius to the Theological Ministry in the Academy of Leiden should not take place. The Remonstrants plainly declared that they had nothing against Vorstius, also that they found nothing in his writings which was in conflict with the truth or with godliness. The other Ministers furnished their reasons in writing why they judged that this call

of Vorstius would be very damaging and offensive to the Holland Churches. They pointed out his chief errors, both from the book of Socinus concerning the authority of Holy Scripture, which Vorstius had published, and also from the book concerning God and concerning the Divine Attributes which Vorstius had recently written and published. Concerning this they held Conference for some days between the Remonstrants and Festus Hommius, in the gathering of the States and in the presence of the Conferees. When this was finished, May 6, the Ministers from both sides were ordered by the States to declare forthrightly whether Vorstius had satisfied them with his answers. The Remonstrants answered that they were fully satisfied, and therefore judged that it would be highly profitable for the Churches and the Academy if his call went through. The other Ministers declared in writing that the answers of Vorstius were so far from changing their first opinions that, on the contrary, they were more and more convinced by his answers that his call would work great harm both to the Churches and to the Academy and would be accompanied by marked danger of more disturbance



if it went through. And on this account they submissively petitioned the States that the Churches should not be placed in that danger by this call.

After Vorstius had departed again, they returned to the Conference concerning the Five Articles. This was continued for some days and then brought to an end. Thereupon the States ordered the Conferees from both sides that that which had been treated orally and that which they judged was still necessary for a complete answer should be put in writing by both sides and turned over to the States by Uitenbogaard and Festus Hommius. And they ordered that meanwhile the Ministers should not boast over against one another concerning the victory that they had gained, but that they should modestly teach concerning the various Articles with edification, and should live in peace and love with one another. They also ordained that these Articles should continue in the same position (or standing) as before the Conference. In the case of Vorstius nothing was decided at that time. But when, not long thereafter, the esteemed Magistracy of the city of Dordrecht through their Deputies (the honorable Hugo Muys van Holy, Knight, Jakob de Witt, Adriaan Repelaar, and Johannes Berk, Pensionaris) requested the States, that his call might either be dropped or at least postponed, seeing that the rumors and errors and heresy of Vorstius were becoming stronger and stronger, the States ordered the Curators of the Academy that they should not proceed with his call.

When the report of this call reached his Majesty, the King of Great Britain, James I, protector of the faith, September 21, who according to his great and, especially in a king, wonderful experience in Theological matters, and according to his special zeal for the Reformed Religion, had himself read the book of Vorstius, "Concerning God," and with his hand had indicated the chief errors, he had thought it good to admonish the States-General both by letters and an Ambassador (the honorable Lord Rodolf Winwood). He admonished them that they should not admit to public office a person besmirched with so many serious errors and reproaches and allow him to teach the youth in the Academy, but should rather make him leave their boundaries, so that the youth would not be corrupted by him with his evil and accursed errors, and so that the state of the country also should not be weakened, seeing that also the welfare of the Republic was dependent on the uprightness of the Reformed doctrine and on the preservation thereof, in which the Netherlands Churches had until now maintained a lovely unity with the English Churches. And when there was postponement by reason of the fact that the Remonstrants worked against this, and especially because Vortius excused his errors with various explanations, responses, provisions, modest and

complete answers, then his Royal Majesty nevertheless did not neglect, through repeated admonitions, yea also with earnest protestation, to insist that they should let him depart.

While these things were going on, certain students of Sacred Theology, who, having come from the home and school of Vorstius, did their best to besmudge the Academy of Franeker with Socinian errors, published in print a certain little book (of Faustus Socinus, "About The Office Of A Christian," in which it was advised that all who seek the salvation of their souls should forsake the teachings and gatherings of the Reformed Churches and accept the views of the Photinians and the Ebionites) along with a foreword in which this little book was strongly recommended to the Churches. The States of Friesland were made aware of this, and also obtained certain familiar letters of these students in which they declared with what practices the common cause of Socinianism (which, so these letters plainly stated, was also promulgated by Vorstius, Uitenbogaard, and others in Holland) was to be secretly advanced. After they had burned many copies of those little books and had forced these students to leave their boundaries, admonished and petitioned the States themselves, first through missives of the Magistrates of the chief cities of Holland, but thereafter through the honorable Lord Kemp of Donia, that, seeing that upright agreement in the Reformed doctrine was the chief bond and the foundation of unity and union between the United Provinces, they would not tolerate having this agreement weakened through the calling of a person who was thus suspected of public heresy, and would not allow themselves to be misled by such deceptions by which they knew that these people were trying to bring about this call. Besides, the Ministers of Leeuwaarden, publishing the aforementioned letters of the students along with necessary notes, earnestly admonished all the churches to beware of such deceitful attempts of heretics, and especially of Vorstius. The States of the Principality of Gelderland and of the Duchy of Zutphen also warned the States of Holland about this. And the latter answered them that there was nothing of more concern to them than to preserve unbroken the unity with the other United Provinces in the common cause of Religion. They requested, November 15, that their neighboring comrades would hold themselves assured of this, their firm intention, declaring that meanwhile they would give their attention to this admonition and would order Vorstius to leave the City of Leiden and to take up residence at Gouda, and to purge himself of the errors laid to his charge by public writings.

The States of Holland and West-Friesland thereafter ordered that the participants in the Hague Conference from both sides should hand over in



writing the differences of position, and should add to this their advice as to the manner in which they thought that these differences could be ironed out in the best way for the peace of the churches and the profit of the Republic. The Remonstrants, assuming the standpoint of the Hague Conference, judged that they could apply no more certain means of unity than that of mutual tolerance, namely, that both parties be permitted freely to teach and to promulgate their views concerning these Articles. The other Ministers declared that they could point to no more proper way than that a National Synod would be prescribed by the authority of the States-General, and that at this National Synod these and all other differences would be declared and investigated, and judgment would be rendered as to which view was in harmony with God's Word and with the common opinion of the Reformed Churches, and consequently ought to be taught openly, in order that the cause of the truth should not be injured by the maintenance of various views, and in order that the peace of the churches should not be disturbed. With regard to this advice, the votes of the States were divergent: some

approved the advice of the Remonstrants, and others approved the advice of the other Ministers. The result was that in the whole matter nothing was decided with a view to bringing about an end to these differences.

When, further, the States had understood that, besides these Five Articles, there were many other disputes which were of no small importance and which were the cause of upheaval, then they decreed that in order to preserve the purity of doctrine, and in order at the same time to prevent innovations, the doctrine of the Holy Gospel in its purest form should be presented both in the Churches and in the public schools of this land. Accordingly they decreed that in the Churches and public schools of Holland and West-Friesland nothing else should be taught concerning the perfect salvation of our Savior Jesus Christ for our sins, concerning the justification of men before God, concerning saving faith, concerning original sin, concerning the certainty of salvation, and concerning the perfection of man in this life than that which was always taught in the Reformed Churches and had been taught in these Provinces until now.

## FROM HOLY WRIT

# Exposition of the Book of Galatians

*Rev. G. Lubbers*

## PAUL LEAVES DAMASCUS FOR JERUSALEM (Gal. 1:18-20)

Paul is not giving us merely a history of his itineraries, a sort of catalogue of his travel-experiences, but he is clinching an argument with historical evidence. He lets the facts speak for his holy affirmation that he did not receive the gospel of Christ from man, neither by men, but from God by revelation.

That we must constantly keep in mind!

He will now relate his experiences in Jerusalem. He returns to Jerusalem "three years" after he has left Jerusalem. That he leaves Damascus at this time is due to the persecution of the Jews. Paul had returned from Arabia to Damascus and had stayed in Damascus for quite some time. He had gone forth from strength to strength in the Lord as a preacher. He had spoken to the Jews there confounding them, and proving that this Jesus is the very Christ! (Acts 9:22) He was a preacher for quite a while before he even met one of the apostles in Jerusalem. The Jews would waylay Paul and kill him. They had influenced the

governor under Aretas the King to apprehend Paul with soldiers (II Cor. 11:32). And his friends outwitted these soldiers by letting Paul down by the wall in a basket. Thus he escaped their hands and went to Jerusalem.

He went there as a very active and actual preacher of the Gospel. He is called to be a minister to the Gentiles. And he must pass through Jerusalem to make the acquaintance of Peter and James, the Lord's brother. He goes merely to make an acquaintance, and not at all to receive knowledge of the Gospel or to receive preaching-credentials. The latter he had received directly from Christ. He had received in Arabia revelations concerning his preaching to the Gentiles on the infinite riches of Christ. He did not meet the churches here in Judea, churches where he had actually killed and brought to court the saints of God. They only heard ("were hearing from time to time") that the one who had formerly persecuted them now was preaching the faith in Christ. He was actually preaching this way of salvation and finding peace of conscience in this Christ.



These churches in Judea received this news concerning Paul each time with great joy and thankfulness. They were glorifying God in Paul. Each new information concerning what God had done to Paul was received with humble acknowledgement that God had done it and no one else.

That Paul stresses that he was only fifteen days with Peter is perhaps to underscore that surely Peter could not have given him a training for the ministry during that short visit. He also met James, the brother of the Lord.

While Paul was in Jerusalem he did try to preach. He did not attempt to preach to the churches there, but he tried to convince the leaders of the Jews that Jesus is the Christ. His preaching fell upon deaf and hateful ears. The Lord Jesus himself intervenes by coming to Paul in the temple while he is praying. Paul falls into a trance and the Lord tells him that these Jews will never listen to him. Paul is trying to convince people whom Christ never knew as His own. Paul's motive is that he would have them be saved. He recalls his cooperation with the Jews in the murdering, the stoning of Stephen. He held the coats of the murderers. (Acts 22:17-20) But the Lord says, "Depart, for I will send thee far hence to the Gentiles." Paul's leaving Jerusalem for Syria and Cilicia was not by private initiative, but by the Lord's command and direction. Christ himself ended Paul's stay with Peter, limiting it to fifteen days! He leaves somewhat feared by the churches, and hated by the enemies! Barnabas needed to intervene for Paul to Peter!

#### **PAUL'S RETURN TO JERUSALEM AFTER FOURTEEN YEARS (Gal. 2:1-10)**

Paul is still defending his case as an independent apostle next to the brethren who were apostles before him. What a grand and convincing apology! Paul is not here relating every visit to Jerusalem. He omits the visit recorded in Acts 27-30. This latter visit was merely to bring relief to the brethren which dwelt in Jerusalem. But Paul is here selecting this visit because of the things which happened there in connection with "the truth of the Gospel". (Gal. 2:5) The Judaizers in the church, false brethren, would take away the liberty in Christ, and they denied that the Gentiles were free in Christ Jesus from the laws and ordinances of the Old Testament. They would put the Gentiles under the law of circumcision. He mentions this visit because here had been the show-down case of Titus, who was a Greek. The Judaizers had insisted that this Greek christian, believer in Christ, be submitted to circumcision.

The situation was as follows. This is the meeting of Paul with Peter, John, and James in Jerusalem in connection with the teaching of certain men from Jeru-

salem, who had come down to Antioch, insisting that except "ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses ye cannot be saved." (Acts 15:1) They went on the pulpit in Antioch and taught these things and there was a crisis in the church, a doctrinal issue pure and simple. And prior to the meeting and the decision, spoken of in Acts 15:6-29, there was a private meeting of Paul with the apostles Peter and John and with James. (Gal. 2:2) Paul met privately with those who were of reputation. And the pressure was on. Paul stood gallantly in that fight. The Galatian christians must know that the battle was decisive for the truth of the Gospel, justification by faith. Paul would have the Gospel truth stand for all the Gentiles, including the Galatians. (Gal. 2:2b) The Gospel-truth in Christ Jesus had won the day in court.

The test-case was what to do with Titus, whom Paul had taken with him to Jerusalem. Must he be circumcised to be saved, or not? If the latter, then it would be decided that the Gentiles need not submit to circumcision ever again, in all the world and in all ages! The very sentence construction here testifies of a great struggle which was held here before Peter, James, and John. Paul must have stood in the battle, as a great advocate. The men who were pillars in the church stood firm. Titus was not "compelled to be circumcised." Yes, he was Greek, a pure case of being one of the Gentiles who are blessed with faithful Abraham. And the matter is forever established in the church!

Incidentally, it became evident at this confrontation and adjudication that these who were held in esteem by all the churches, men with good and solid credentials from the Lord, that they really meant nothing in the battle. They did not contribute to the argumentation. God does not accept the persons of anyone. He establishes his own work by whomsoever He chooses. In this case it was through Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles.

It is equally evident that we do not have here a fundamental difference in teaching. The Jews as well as the Greeks are basically free from the law of circumcision. The Jewish christians still circumcised their children until God removed the temple-worship in the next generation. Even Paul will participate in the Nazarite vow of the brethren in the temple at Jerusalem many years later. (Acts 21:2-27) He will circumcise Timothy lest the Jewish people be offended. (Acts 16:1-3) But if it is a matter for the truth of the Gospel then he will not yield an inch, no not for a moment!! (Gal. 2:5)

This is powerful apology for the truth of the Gospel, and that Paul is an apostle in his own right, yea, second to none. And this was tacitly admitted and confirmed at this private meeting in Jerusalem.



Two things became clear at this meeting, both concerning the ministry of Paul and of Peter. It was how the mighty God was using Peter and using Paul. God was making the ministry of both effectual, only in different parts of his Church. Peter is the Apostle to the circumcision; God chose him to work effectually in them. And Paul is the Apostle to the uncircumcision; God works effectually in them even though they be not circumcised. Each has his place in the church as a steward of the mysteries of Christ.

This was seen and acknowledged by the brethren Peter, James, and John. And they saw how God was working powerfully through the preaching of Paul among the Gentiles. They have nothing else to do now but to give Paul the right hand of fellowship. It is here definitely decided that each has his own sphere of work. They both preach the same Gospel — the liberty which is for both Jews and Greeks in Christ Jesus. The Gospel is a power of God unto salvation for both. *Both* are under grace and not under law. They are of the same body and are fellow-heirs in Christ Jesus.

In the providence of God the saints in Jerusalem are poor. Paul is requested to remember the poor. The mercy of Christ will become evident in these saints. And so there will be a great benefit in Christ, proving that they are saints in one body, and Paul will write rejoicingly: “For the ministration of this service not only supplieth the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God. Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the Gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them and unto

all men, and by their prayer for you which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you. Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.” (II Cor. 9:15)

Small wonder that at the meeting in Jerusalem proper, after Paul has rehearsed what God has done, and Peter has rehearsed what God did through him among the Gentiles, that James unfolds the prophecy of Amos 9:11,12, and interprets that prophecy concerning the rebuilding of the temple of David as referring to the bringing of the Gentiles into the church, so that they are one church and one people, both in the Old and New Testament. (Acts 15:16-18) And the sentence of this gathering at Jerusalem is that they place no other burden on the church, the Gentiles who have turned to God, but “that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.” (Acts 15:20,28,29) See also Rev. 2:14,20.

Thus the freedom which we have in Christ Jesus remains; the truth of the Gospel continues with the church of all ages.

Stand in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free!

Thus the truth of the Gospel remains with the church forever. When certain men came to spy out the liberty which is ours in Christ Jesus they were weighed in God’s balances and were found wanting. The gates of hell would not prevail against the church, but Christ will build His church upon the solid rock of the righteousness of the Cross of Christ in Whom all promises are yea, and Amen, to the glory of God, the Father.

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## THE DAY OF SHADOWS

# Human Defection and Divine Protection

*Rev. John A. Heys*

In the Form for the Confirmation of Marriage used in our churches there is a clause that states that our Lord Jesus Christ “will aid and protect married persons even when they are least deserving of it.” And this truth comes to mind when one reads the twentieth chapter of the book of Genesis where we have the account of Abraham and Sarah in the land of Gerar.

We might be tempted to state that Abraham fell back again into a sin from which God had saved him once before. When there was a famine in the land of

Canaan shortly after Abraham and his wife, Sarah, came there from Haran, he urged her to tell all the people that she was his sister, and thus to hide the fact that she was his wife. God saved him, and her, from the hand of Pharaoh, and Abraham returned to Canaan wealthier than he was when he left. For Pharaoh gave him gifts before he sent him away to his own land. But there is a verse in this chapter, verse 13, which declares that even before that famine, and when Abraham left his father’s house, he and Sarah had agreed to tell this half-truth wherever they went.



It was a trick devised to protect Abraham among those who did not fear God. It was falling back into the same sin, in the sense that another occasion arose for them to practice this deception. But actually all during the intervening years between these two incidents they could be said to be walking in that sin. The point is that Abraham and Sarah did not condemn and root out of their souls that sin after God saved them from the hand of Pharaoh; and they are therefore ready to resort to that lie again because the occasion has risen. It all goes to show that we do not get rid of our corrupt nature in this life. It also clearly indicates that we have a constant fight to put down the sin that resides in our flesh. We have a daily battle to fight. We have not one moment of lull in the battle. And when we think that there is a lull, the moment we think that it is safe to rest and take off that heavy, cumbersome armour of God that cramps our style and takes the pleasantness out of life for us, we are in our most dangerous moment. For that lulling into complacency and that sense of absence of danger is also a tool of the enemy.

Admittedly, Sarah was still a beautiful woman. Abraham saw that. Abimelech, king of Gerar, saw that. And we may be sure that Sarah herself was aware of it. Without our modern, highly polished, flawless mirrors she had seen her own reflection in the still waters of a pool. And hers was not a beauty that comes out of a jar and comes in various hues and shades that must be applied regularly. Hers was a true beauty given to her of God. And having a wife like that, Abraham knows also the dangers in a society such as the one in the world at that time. Abraham himself describes it as being a society wherein there is no fear of God.

Even as his grandson, Jacob, some years later was constantly seeking to "help" God — was this trait in Jacob inherited from his grandfather, and do we see sins of the fathers carried down through to the grandchildren? — and this by a lie. Jacob's lie to his father that he was Esau is a more glaring lie, a blatant lie; and Abraham's is what man would call a half-truth. But to speak correctly we must call both of them sin before the face of God. Both were a bearing of false witness against the neighbour. Sarah was his sister. Abraham was her brother. But very plainly the meaning in both instances was the implied lie: He is not my husband but my brother, and, she is not my wife but only my sister. Abraham admits this when later on he told Abimelech that he was afraid that "they will slay me for my wife's sake." Genesis 20:11. "He is my brother" means, "Do not kill him as though he were my husband. He is *only* my brother, and nothing more."

Quite plainly they were not being loyal to each other in their marriage relationship. O, they still loved

each other, and there was no thought of divorce or desire for it. But, as the incident unfolds, it becomes clear that they — not simply Abraham — were walking in a way that could and did separate them as husband and wife. In our sinfulness we may make careful plans which deceive men, but the God in heaven cannot be tricked into miscalculations, or for that matter be caused to be unfaithful to His covenant promises, as we shall see. Sarah is taken into Abimelech's house. Husband and wife are not living together any more. Husband and wife are not confessing each other to be one flesh till death parts them. They are denying that God has joined them together so that no man may put them asunder and treat them as brother and sister.

Things have gotten out of hand. Abraham and Sarah have lost control of the situation. Their "help" devised *for* God has brought them where they now are desperately in need of help *from* God. It must not be assumed that, when they through the years had planned this little trick of deception, they would ever allow anything to come between them as husband and wife. Abraham would not idly stand by and let someone else take his wife away. Sarah would not agree to any man's taking Abraham's place in her life as her husband. No, when the men of a city or land would show their interest in Sarah, "the sister of Abraham," he would demand so great a dowry that no one could afford to take her from him to be his wife. Or Sarah herself would make such demands that all would be discouraged from seeking to take her as wife. And then soon enough they, Abraham and Sarah, would, when matters got too hot, move away again. They did not — though they had experiences along this line in Egypt — reckon with the king, who simply took Sarah after hearing their half-truth lie.

Now the help of God is needed; and it is furnished without a prayer on the part of Sarah or of Abraham. When least deserving of this interference, and even without a prayer for it yet being presented to Him, God reaches down and touches the whole house of Abimelech and appeared to him in a dream. He Who is our help in ages past and hope for years to come, Who needs no help from us, nor even requests for help from us, in covenant faithfulness rescued Abraham and Sarah, *and the whole church*, out of this bad situation into which sinners got themselves. We said, the whole church because we must not so quickly forget that God had just informed Abraham and Sarah that the covenant seed would come in the line of Abraham's and Sarah's seed. And not simply Isaac's existence is at stake here (Was he already conceived and in that house of Abimelech; and was Abimelech holding the covenant line captive in his house? And is that why God intervenes so quickly and releases Sarah from his house?) and the well-



being of Sarah and Abraham. Yea, there is more at stake here than Isaac as the covenant seed which had been promised. Christ, Who “took on Him the seed of Abraham (Hebrews 2:16) is represented; there in Sarah, and for His birth she must be gotten out of Abimelech’s house and be reunited with Abraham with whom God had established His covenant. For your and my sake and for the whole church of God divine help is given to Abraham and Sarah. They lied and got into trouble. God never lies; and He keeps His covenant promises no matter how undeserving we are of them. Indeed, we are saved by grace and not by works. It does not depend on our covenant faithfulness, even though we have a calling to be faithful in that covenant. It does depend — and safely so — upon God’s covenant faithfulness.

Were this not the case we could have no hope in the midst of our own sins. We do not duplicate the sin of Abraham and Sarah, because we have little or no occasion to do it that way. But how often is it not that we by word and deed get ourselves into dangerous situations because we resort to similar deeds? We refer to the fact that we hide our relationship to Christ as His bride before the world in which there is no fear of God. We go Abraham and Sarah a step further and even deny that He is our brother! By word not always, but so often by deed we say with Peter, “I know not the man!”

At work we do that. We can work in a shop or office, a store or in the field, and months — and perhaps years — go by wherein those who do not fear God judge us to be one of them. We reveal no principles. We, as Queen Esther, hide our religion because it would cause us monetary loss. We join in the acts of rebellion of the worldly organizations, or silently condone their evil business practices and for another dollar stay in or join their organizations. Our young people do that and suddenly find themselves married to an unbeliever who is amazed to find that they were being courted by, or had courted, a member of the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the whirlwind romance the things spiritual were not mentioned. Future mates were picked up and first met in places where the fear of God is not to be found. “I am a citizen of this world or of this nation” is confessed, but the fact that one is a member of the Church of Christ, though not denied, is not mentioned or made evident.

This same thing tragically happens even within the church world. O, membership in such a church is

confessed. And they meet at church gatherings. Yes, it is made plain that they are “brothers and sisters in Christ.” But that is only half of the story; and the important part of the story is not made known until it is too late. There are wide doctrinal differences in the two churches involved. The same God actually is not confessed. In the one He is an almighty, sovereign, unchangeable God Who hates both sin and the sinner and eternally chose His people in Christ. He is the God of the Scriptures. In the other He is a being who in time, depending on circumstances, makes his way through this world, has enemies who can frustrate him, delay his actions; He is one who cannot save until man gives the “green light,” and can love Himself as an holy one, and at the same time love sinners whom he may ultimately put in hell if he cannot get them to accept his kind offers. He is not almighty but the mightiest, and therefore ultimately wins, but only after a long struggle — mind you, *with the creature*. And when these young people are so wrapped up emotionally (not spiritually) with each other, and the young man is ready to take the young woman into his house — or maybe he has already done so as Abimelech — the differences become manifest. Then it takes the grace of God, and divine help to salvage such a marriage and a life of faithful and peaceful training of the covenant seed in the way of the one true and only God.

It does please God at times to unite spiritually a family that is so divided on the most important aspect of life as husband and wife. But we ought to be aware of the dangers of such silence on matters spiritual, and not expect God to do that in every instance. He has given no such promise to us. If He does, it is sovereign, unchangeable mercy and grace in Christ. And we are saved by grace, not by works.

Abraham and Sarah defected. They did not walk by faith. Their trust in God they failed to exercise. Their married life suffered a defect. Sarah, the wife of Abraham, was in the house of Abimelech, the king of Gerar. But Abraham and Sarah were elect, covenant children of God; and he protected them even when they least deserved it, after a similar sin and experience in Egypt. For God never defects and never fails to protect His Church; and the bride of Christ will be kept for Christ, even when she fails to keep herself for Him. It is divine grace and faithfulness that explains and assures us of the wedding feast of the Lamb that soon will be realized, dark as the days may be that are before us.

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makes an ideal gift for any occasion.



## GUEST ARTICLE

# Canons of Dordrecht: An Historical Perspective

*Rev. M. Kamps*

Politically, a measure of peace and stability had come to the Netherlands in 1581 and it grew until the end of the Eighty Years War in 1648. The seven northern provinces had declared independence from Spain by the Act of Abjuration in 1581 and were united to defend themselves as an independent republic. Religiously, the Reformed Church became the official state religion in the Netherlands. However, not even in the seven provinces, to which Reformed believers from the southern provinces had fled, was the majority of the populace Reformed. But the truth of God's Word was publicly preached, believed, and even supported by the State. The Reformed church prospered, at least outwardly.

As usual, however, there were enemies within the church. These enemies of the truth would again occasion a bitter struggle for the faith. The second generation of Reformed believers would be called upon to defend their heritage for which their fathers had died. The struggle to *maintain* the Reformed faith, which is the truth of the gospel of Christ, was long, bitter, and agonizing. For the church was being corrupted by the lie, and the truth denied by colleagues and fellow ministers . . . by the "brethren." What would the faithful do? They did only what those who love the truth of God's Word could do? The battle for the faith had to be waged. If one loves the truth he will not allow anyone, not even the "brother," to suppress it and corrupt it. The love of God's Word captivates a man and makes him a slave of Christ! Psychologically and spiritually the man who loves the Reformed faith is helpless to do anything but proclaim and defend it. In times of special crisis in the Church God raises up leaders to defend and teach the truth. Among the thousands of foot soldiers in that army of saints who love the truth of God's Word are found, by God's grace, outstanding leaders like Augustine, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Franciscus Gomarus, Abraham Kuiper, and, if you will forgive me, Herman Hoeksema. Franciscus Gomarus, professor at Leiden and later at the University of Groningen, opposed the teachings of Jacobus

Arminius every step of the way till Dordrecht could have her say.

Jacobus Arminius was the enemy within the Reformed church. There were others such as Herman Herbertz, Taco Sybrantz, Cornelius Wiggerts, and the layman Dirk Volkertszoon Coornhert. All these men were forerunners of Arminianism and who only outwardly and not principally had broken with the Semi-Pelagianism of Roman Catholicism. Jacobus Arminius was especially influenced by Coornhert.

In 1560 Jacobus was born and soon lost his father. Consequently he was reared by two stepfathers. He was educated at the Academy of Leiden. Later, he studied under Theodore Beza, the successor of Calvin, in Geneva, where Arminius became very well acquainted with Calvin's teachings. On August 11, 1588, Arminius was ordained as pastor of the Reformed congregation of Amsterdam. At first things went well. But in 1591 after Arminius had preached on Rom. 7:14ff, Petrus Plancius, a fellow pastor of the congregation, brought charges of heresy to the consistory against Arminius. Jacobus Arminius had taught that Paul in this passage ("... to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not") was not speaking of himself as regenerated but of himself while yet unregenerate and apart from God's grace in Christ. Plancius rightly recognized in Arminius' teaching Pelagianism and free-willism. Arminius later, when preaching on Romans 13, expressed his opposition to the Reformed view of church government and implicitly taught Erastianism, i.e., he gave to the State government more authority in ecclesiastical matters than the Reformed would grant.<sup>1</sup>

In 1603 Arminius was called to serve as professor by the curators of the University of Leiden. Johannes Uitenbogaart, former fellow student and friend of Arminius and ardent supporter, had gained this call to professorship for Arminius. The Deputies of the church opposed this nomination of Arminius but were helpless to stop the appointment, since the State



and the curators ruled the University. But Arminius was not appointed until after he promised to teach nothing but what was in harmony with the Confession and Catechism of the Church. Franciscus Gomarus, who at this time was the lone professor at Leiden because of the untimely death of the other two professors, also opposed Arminius' appointment, for Gomarus was well aware of the appointee's unbiblical teachings and had often in the past opposed Arminius and his teachings. However, Jacobus Arminius was not going to allow anyone to deny him this golden opportunity to teach aspiring ministers his views and thereby rapidly spread them throughout the Reformed church of the Netherlands. Thus, through subtlety, deceit, and a worthless promise to teach nothing but what was in harmony with the creeds, Arminius was installed as professor at Leiden.

It was not long before Arminius revealed his rebellious attitude toward the authority of the Creeds. He was a subjectivist. Or rather, he was a law unto himself. When *publicly* interpreting God's Word he refused to be bound by what the church confessed in her Creeds. Instead of quietly bringing his differences with the Creeds to the proper authorities in the church as was his right and duty, he publicly contradicted and opposed the Reformed faith. At first, Arminius secretly taught his heretical views to an inner circle of students in his home. Later, he publicly attacked the doctrine of predestination. On February 7, 1604, Arminius taught his students that "Predestination is a decree of the good pleasure of God in Christ, through which God of himself from eternity had decided that, believers, whom he intended to endow with faith, he would justify and take to himself as children, and would grant to them eternal life to the praise of his grace." "The rejection or reprobation is a decision of God's wrath, of the severe will of God, through which God from eternity had intended that, the unbeliever, who through his own guilt and the righteous judgment of God would not believe; as one who stands outside the fellowship of Christ, to refer them to eternal death, in order to reveal His wrath and power."<sup>2</sup> (translation from the Holland by M.K.) Gomarus and others saw in these carefully and subtly worded statements conditional election and reprobation. God elects those who would believe and God reprobates those who would not believe was the teaching of Arminius. Predestination in its effect would then come after the fact of faith or unbelief. The decisive decision in salvation is not God's, then, but man's. Gomarus wrote against these unbiblical views of his colleague. Many conferences had been held between Arminius and his followers and representatives of the Reformed Church. New conferences were held; but nothing conclusive could be gained, because of the subtleties and deceit of the enemy of the truth, Jacobus Arminius. The Devil is wily, and so

are his spiritual children. Jacobus Arminius would not come clean. As often as he was begged to be forthright in the expression of his views, he resorted to deceit.

After Arminius died in 1609 at the age of forty-nine, forty-two of his followers secretly held a conference at Gouda on January 14, 1610. Here was drawn up the five Articles of the Remonstrance. In these five articles is to be found, under a lot of Reformed-sounding expressions, the Arminian ideas of conditional predestination, the free-will of man, universal atonement, man's ability to resist the operation of God's grace, and the notion that one can fall from the state of grace and perish. These articles were through Uitenbogaart, brought to the attention of the States of Holland for its approval and support. The States of Holland comprised two of the seven provinces of the Republic, these were South and North Holland. Jan Van Oldenbarnevelt, who was the leading statesman of the States of Holland, accepted these Articles of the Remonstrants (Arminians) and gave his considerable support to the Arminian party. In March of 1611 the Reformed leaders countered with the Articles of the Counter-Remonstrants. These were drawn up by Petrus Plancius, F. Hommius, and others.

The Church as a whole longed to put an end to this controversy by calling a National Synod and allowing the Church to speak. But the Arminians did not want a Synod to meet; nor did Oldenbarnevelt.

The Reformed church had a problem. It was this. Each province had its own separate government; but the seven provinces of the Republic met in a States-General to decide matters that pertained to the Republic as a whole. No National Synod could be convened without the permission and cooperation of each province in the States-General. Every time the church would attempt to convene a National Synod to deal with this controversy in a decisive way, Oldenbarnevelt would lead the States Holland to reject the request.

By 1611 the controversy was raging throughout the Netherlands. The church was no longer united. At least two hundred ministers were addicted to Arminianism. The precious truth of the Reformed faith was corrupted and denied. The battle raged on. Provincial Synods spoke out but with little or no effect.

Especially in the States Holland was the struggle for the truth bitter. The Arminians were ardently supported by Oldenbarnevelt, political leader of these provinces. Reformed ministers were suspended from office by order of the provincial government. Reformed believers, however, remained faithful to these oppressed ministers and consequently separate



churches over against Arminian congregations were organized. These small and despised congregations of Reformed believers met in one another's houses or in barns and called themselves the "Gereformeerde Kerken in doleantie." Many of these "doleerende kerken" were organized in the States of Holland. In Rotterdam laws were passed forbidding the assembling of these doleerende congregations. Those persons who opened their homes to hold these Reformed worship services were heavily fined, lost right of citizenship, and were sometimes deported. The houses, barns, ships wherein the Reformed had gathered were confiscated. At a conference these doleerende churches in 1617 adopted an "Act of Separation" wherein was set forth their separation from the Remonstrant or Arminian churches.

Oldenbarnevelt attempted to force submission to the "sharp resolutions" of the States Holland and to the States supposed authority in these ecclesiastical matters. The threat of civil war lingered in the land as Franciscus Gomarus had warned it would. Oldenbarnevelt inquired of the Stadhouder, Prince Maurice, if the military would support him in this struggle against the Reformed doleerende congregations. But Maurice had already in 1615 openly thrown his support with these hated doleerende congregations by openly worshipping with them.

After Prince Maurice, son of William of Orange, had openly supported the doleerende congregations of Reformed believers, the majority of the cities of the States Holland withdrew their support from Oldenbarnevelt and gave to Prince Maurice on Aug. 28, 1618, the power to do what he thought best to attain the rest and well-being of the provinces.<sup>4</sup> Well-nigh dictatorial power was given to Prince Maurice.

The next day the Prince imprisoned Oldenbarnevelt and others who had opposed the calling of a National Synod. The power of the union of the Remonstrants (Arminians) and the Oldenbarnevelt

government was broken. A National Synod was called and convened on November 13, 1618.

No National Synod had met for thirty-two years prior to the Synod of Dordrecht in 1618 and no National Synod would meet again for another two hundred years. This great Synod which met in the city of Dordrecht was God's instrument through which the Reformed church of the Netherlands gave to us the confession of her heart, which she had been taught by the Spirit of Christ. In the love of the truth she composed the beautiful Canons wherein is set forth clearly and faithfully doctrines of Scripture concerning sovereign irresistible grace, particular atonement, the depravity of the fallen sinner, unconditional predestination, and the perseverance of the saints. At Dordrecht Arminianism was condemned and the Word of God confessed by the Church which had gained and maintained the truth only through suffering, bloodshed, and death.

The Canons of Dordrecht are a beautiful heritage and they occasion for us a weighty responsibility, for they embody what the Spirit of God testified to our believing fathers concerning the Christ, Who has redeemed His own and infallibly draws them unto salvation.

Let us by God's grace hold fast to the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

Remember brethren: no generation can expect its children to stand for the truth of God's Word, for which they themselves were not willing to suffer whatever may be required of them.

"For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake." Philipians 1:29

<sup>1</sup>Bouwman, Dr. H.; *De Dordtsche Synode Van 1618-1619*, Published by the Gereformeerde Traktaatgenootschap, 1918; p. 11

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 13

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 23

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 31

## SIGNS OF THE TIMES

# Form Without Power

Rev. Mark Hoeksema

The words of this title are taken from II Timothy 3:5, where the apostle Paul speaks of men who shall manifest themselves in the last times. In the first verse of the chapter he warns the church that "in the last days perilous times shall come." He goes on to describe various characteristics of the world in those

last times, saying in verse 5 that the wicked will have a form of godliness but will deny the power thereof. In brief the meaning is that there will be a certain outward, formal godliness, service of God; but the content, the power, the ability of God through the Word of Christ to save His people, will be denied. The



wicked in the last days will attempt to realize and establish and maintain a kingdom which is outwardly and formally the kingdom of God; it will bear a resemblance to the kingdom of God as it is pictured in the Scriptures. Certainly the devil and the powers of evil will use this form of godliness to deceive many, to gain the support of the world for the kingdom of antichrist. That this is true is evident from a study of the prophecies of Daniel and of John in the book of Revelation. But this kingdom will not be the true kingdom of God which is heavenly, the kingdom which is characterized by the power of godliness. Those who belong to the kingdom of Christ have a godliness which has power to make them the citizens of that kingdom. But the wicked who shall become manifested in the last days will have but a form of it, an empty and powerless godliness, which is no real godliness at all, but mere deception and fakery.

But the church must not be lulled into thinking that all of this shall take place only immediately before the end of all things. It is true that this form without power shall reach its clearest manifestation shortly before the final end in the kingdom of antichrist. But Paul is speaking here of the last days, according to the first verse of the chapter. This must mean the days of the new dispensation, which according to Scripture are the last days. This means therefore that those who have this form without power are always present in the world, and are increasingly manifested as the end approaches. Therefore, the teaching of Scripture is that this form without power is already present in the world in which we live, and that we are to recognize this as a sign of the coming of Christ's kingdom.

This phenomenon described in Scripture is strikingly evident in an article entitled "Life After Life," which appeared in the January issue of *Reader's Digest* magazine. In this condensation of his book the author, Dr. Raymond Moody, claims to be objective in his investigations of the experiences of people who have "died" in the medical sense of the word, but who have been revived and brought back to this life to tell of their experiences during the period of time in which they were "dead." He is careful to emphasize that the experiences that he has chronicled do not constitute proof in the scientific sense for life after death, but that they have left him with "feelings, questions, analogies, puzzling facts to be explained" (p. 215). It is to our benefit to examine some of his findings and to attempt to draw conclusions from them, bearing in mind what Paul says about the form of godliness without the power thereof.

The form of godliness evident in the experiences recounted in this article is amazingly parallel to the testimony of the Scriptures regarding the whole

matter of death, resurrection, and appearance for judgment. There are several aspects to this experience of "death" and resuscitation, most or all of which are present in the accounts of all with whom Dr. Moody talked. For one thing, immediately at the time of clinical death, there was a loud ringing or buzzing sound heard by those who died. Immediately they entered a sort of long, dark tunnel or valley; as one man expressed it:

Suddenly I was in a very dark, very deep valley. It was as though there was a pathway, almost a road, through the valley, and I was going down the path. Later, after I was well, the thought came to me: "Well, now I know what the Bible means by the 'valley of the shadow of death.'"

Many of those who have had these experiences could also describe what it was like to be dead, outside of their physical bodies. They were detached from their physical bodies, and seemed to float freely as objective observers of attempts to revive their physical bodies, attempts which later they were able to describe with astounding accuracy. The author terms these "spiritual bodies." In these spiritual bodies they are unable to communicate with others, are invisible, and not bound by physical barriers, being able to move rapidly from one place to another. Those in this state do not hear in the usual sense, but were able to understand the thoughts of others even before they were spoken.

But perhaps the most striking element of all in this life after life is the "being of light" which those who have died encountered. Says the author: "Typically, at its first appearance this light is dim, but it rapidly gets brighter until it reaches an unearthly brilliance. Not one person has expressed any doubt whatsoever that it was a being. It has, moreover, a very definite 'personality,' which the author goes on to describe in terms of love and warmth. This being immediately begins to question those involved, asking what they have done with their lives. 'All insist,' writes Moody (p. 204), 'that this question is not asked in condemnation, to accuse or threaten them. They still feel total love and acceptance coming from the light, no matter what their answer may be.' Then follows what is described as a panoramic review of the person's life, though not for the information of the being. 'It is obvious that the being can see the individual's whole life displayed, and that he himself doesn't need information. His only intention is to provoke reflection,' p. 204. A further description of this being of light is given:

"It was beautiful and so bright, so radiant, but it didn't hurt my eyes. It's not any kind of light you can describe on earth. I didn't actually see a person in this light, and yet it has a special identity, it definitely does. It is a light of perfect understanding and perfect love." (p. 204)



Though there is certainly more detail that could be given and is given in this article, the above is sufficient indication of the form of godliness which characterizes the accounts of this life after life. But what must we say about all of this? Surely there is here a form of godliness. In fact, the resemblance between the accounts given of such experiences and the expressions of Scripture is startlingly close. Think, as did one person who had such an experience, of the valley of the shadow of death of Psalm 23. Think, in connection with the descriptions of the kind of body possessed by these persons after physical death, of the spiritual nature of the resurrection body of I Corinthians 15. In connection with the "being of light," consider the descriptions of God and Christ given in Revelation 1 and 4. In connection with the "light of perfect understanding and love," call to mind the Scriptural picture of perfect covenant fellowship and communion in the life hereafter. And, although Scripture does not specifically tell us how the judgment according to works will be carried out from a very practical point of view, is it not possible that the experiences of these persons shed some light on this question? In this light, we as Christians can and may learn something from such experiences and accounts, in the right sense of the word; not as proof of what Scripture says, for Scripture needs no proof, but requires faith; but in the sense of added light and understanding. We need not totally reject all that is said in this article.

But yet the truth of the matter is that there is evidenced here form without substance and power. Instead of acknowledging the sovereign God of heaven and earth, there are references to a "being of

light," or by Jews to "an angel." Never is there a correlation drawn between the testimony of Scripture and these experiences, so that the latter are properly interpreted in terms of the former. But perhaps the clearest evidence of the lack of the power of godliness is the following:

In most cases, the reward-punishment model of the afterlife is abandoned and disavowed, even by many who had been accustomed to thinking in those terms. They found, much to their amazement, that even when their most apparently sinful deeds were made manifest before the being of light, that being responded not with anger and rage but rather with understanding and even humor. (These sins, of course, were not of a particularly grievous nature). (p. 207)

Add to this that there were no really negative experiences in the afterlife, and the result is a denial of election and reprobation, of eternal reward and punishment according to the works done in the flesh.

From those who have this form without power, Timothy admonishes, we are to "turn away." We must not be partaker in their sins, for then our end is the same as theirs. But we must remain faithful to the Scriptures and their testimony concerning the things which take place after this life. And we must recognize these things for what they are: signs of the end times, indicating that our Lord is soon coming back. When he does, those who have disavowed the idea of reward and punishment will surely be surprised, for God is not mocked. But God's people, believing the Scriptures, can look forward without fear to the life hereafter in the confidence that we belong to our faithful Savior Jesus Christ, both in life and in death.

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## IN HIS FEAR

# Time

*Rev. M. Joostens*

"I've got to run now; I'll close and you can finish without me." This is altogether too common a statement in the day and age in which we live. It is a statement indicative of the manner of our life. Families are increasingly becoming aware of the fact that they are enveloped in the race against the clock. And I know that many parents have become alarmed with this situation. There are serious attempts to rectify this common problem. Yet it seems that the more we battle against it, the more our schedule becomes compounded. Fathers as heads of households

find themselves in smoky meeting rooms instead of safely tucking their children in bed after a favorite Bible story. Sunday afternoon has a closer resemblance to rush hour than the day of rest. As a last resort, after desperately trying to work out a suitable schedule, we begin to eliminate on the basis of priority. It becomes clear to us that we cannot overextend ourselves, for in doing so we inflict injury and detriment in another aspect of our life. We desire in this little essay to evaluate that little driving force we



call time and to come to some agreement as to our calling regarding it.

Time is not new. It is as old and basic as creation itself. In fact, God Himself set time in motion at the very beginning of creation. This very idea is comprehended in the words, "In the beginning . . ." Time is an integral part of creation. It is part and parcel of the creation of God. This is easily understood. God is the eternal One. He is always the same, having no beginning or ending of days. This God has purposed and determined in His own timeless conception to glorify Himself in and through a people in heavenly glory forever. And this eternal purpose He has chosen to fulfill along the lines of sin and grace within the realm of time. Time, therefore, is subservient to His eternal purpose and plan. Time is never an end in itself. This means that time cannot be endless but has to come to its completion. Thus when God created a beginning and formed out of the dust of the ground Adam, He implied in that beginning the end when the last member of the church of His good pleasure would be gathered in. In other words, the only purpose of history is to bring forth and gather the church of Jesus Christ, that has been eternally predestinated toward the glory of God. When this is completed, Christ will make His appearance.

Understanding this, there is added a new dimension to the relentless ticking of the clock. For time and its effects so often seem so futile to us. Many a time we harbor the secret desire to be able to stop the world on its axis so that the end of the day does not draw nigh. We see our children grow up; and all too quickly they try the strength in their own wings and fly from the nest. Each time we face ourselves in the mirror another wrinkle appears. Children can't wait to become teenagers, and when they get there they soon realize that these years have slipped away and thrust upon them the responsibilities of job, marriage, and covenant families. The Psalmist has often since of old told us about it: "Time like an ever rolling stream bears all her sons away!" We become aware that there is a time and season for all things, a time to be born and a time to die. Then we know that the passing of time has the higher purpose of fulfilling the will of God in us and in all of His creation. That's why the hands of the clock continue in seemingly perpetual motion. They are hastening towards the end and final purpose of God.

But this revelation prods us on in our quest of time! We can, as we have done, speak about time as the passing of moments. We have come to an understanding as to why we ourselves and the entire creation are continually in motion and progress. But all we have done so far is to address ourselves to time from the angle of its being a succession of moments. But there is more. It was with this additional element

that we began our discussion and subsequently became a little sidetracked with the issue of the motion of the hands of the clock. The original problem had to do with spending time or, maybe better, with that which transpires as the clock moves along. Time has a dimension which goes far beyond the mere characteristic that one moment gives way to the next, never to return. We mean, time has content! Our daily life is a constant witness of this fact. When we have a certain appointment, the subsequent question is not, "Did it go?" Of course it went, for time marches on. The question rather is, "*How* did it go?" The question is never, "Did you spend the day or week on whatever it might be?" for this is self-evident. Rather we ask, "What did we accomplish in a certain allotted time?" What we did at this or that moment, you see, gives time content. It is precisely here that our interests lie. We do not care simply to peruse time from an abstract viewpoint, but we desire to delve into it from a practical, purposeful point of view. We want to consider time as it is a particular vehicle of activity and function.

There is a particular text in the Scriptures that comes to mind. Fact is, the study of this text in society inspired the subject we are presently treating. We read in Ephesians 5:15 & 16, "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil." In this passage Paul makes clear to us our calling with regard to time. Specifically, Paul admonishes us as to what we must do with our time. That is, as we live each day and moment we are responsible for our time. For God gives unto each of us an allotted period, a certain number of years in which we must live to the glory and honor of His name. Now when we speak of our lifetime, the question at hand seems somewhat remote and distant. And this is true because we often set for ourselves distant goals and accomplishments that are in the realm of the future. But we desire to accentuate our responsibility, as far as time is concerned, by reducing years to days, hours, even minutes. Then generalities turn into specifics and the admonition of Paul seems more pointed.

Now, our specific calling is, that we must always be "redeeming the time." Though the language seems at first glance somewhat obscure, let us be assured that it is not only very clear but also powerful. This verb "redeem" is the same word that the N.T. Scriptures use for the redemption of the people of God through Christ. We read of this redemption, for example, in Gal. 3:13: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." We can use the latter to illustrate the former. We know what our redemption by Christ involved. Christ ransomed us from the curse of the law. This redemption required the ultimate sacrifice of Himself. It is through the



blood of the Lamb of God that we are set free from the power of sin which is death. We are bought with Christ's blood! Exactly this idea Paul wants to bring across to us in this admonition regarding time. Time must be redeemed even as we are redeemed by Christ. This means, then, that we must buy time. But this does not make sense, for time is already ours! Oh, but let us get back to time from the aspect of its content. This is the point. With regard to every moment, we have the choice to let it slip by, never to return again, or to utilize it toward a certain purpose. Now it has become clear! To buy out the time means that we take hold of time and purchase it unto ourselves for a particular usage and purpose.

We are touching upon a very serious question in our lives. This seriousness lies in the fact that this is a recurring question that requires a continual strain of decisive answers. As time marches on, the admonition of Paul speaks to us with every "tick" of the clock. There is no escape. And God is no respecter of persons or situations. Whether we are young or old, housewife or factory worker, professional or student, rich or poor, title or no, our calling is one and the same: Redeem the time God has given unto us. God keeps a log of every moment of our life; and that log will be opened on that day of days when Christ returns in glory. Of this we must be conscious as we walk our pilgrim's trek here below. Then the real question that faces us each moment is, "Am I buying this moment to the glory of God?" We often compartmentalize our lives. We speak of study time, work time, play and leisure, recreation time. But God doesn't care about our neat little distinctions. He demands every moment. How much idle time that is merely a passing of moments do we let slip by? How much time do we spend on ourselves, seeking our own glory and material advancement?

And let us not be ignorant, there are many things that vie for our time, while God alone is entitled to it. First of all, we have to struggle against our own flesh, because, even though we seek after God with sincerity each moment of our life, according to the new

man in Jesus Christ, this is but a small beginning. My carnal flesh also seeks to utilize each moment to the fullest. However, my flesh seeks to have for itself the pleasures, excitements, and sins of this world rather than the glory of God. And to complicate this, in the second place, we must realize that Satan, through the instrumentality of the world, entices and tempts us. He knows that his avenue of approach cannot be through the heart, and he therefore appeals to the flesh. He makes indulgence in sin, immorality, worldly pleasures, everything but the Kingdom of Christ, look so very good to us. All the wickedness and corruption that abounds round about us is, in the hands of Satan, a powerful weapon for the destruction of a godly life and walk. How easy it is for us to neglect this command of Paul, yea, of God! For, it seems more appealing to labor for earthly things than for the treasures of heaven. It seems, for example, more appealing to rest the flesh on Sunday morning than to walk unto God's house. More appealing, it seems, to read a "good" novel than to study the Bible and prepare for society or catechism. Need we go on? How do you and I spend our time?

Let us then walk in the fear of God, not as fools but as those who are wise! A fool is out of touch with reality. If a man plans to throw himself from the precipice of the Grand Canyon and says he will live, we call him a fool, for he is not in touch with the facts. He will dash himself to pieces on the canyon floor. So are those who are spiritual fools. They disregard reality as God has revealed it in His Word. They gainsay the Word of the Almighty. They eat, drink, and are merry for, so they say, tomorrow we die. But we are wise through the enlightenment of the Spirit. We have been shown the reality of heaven and earth, this life and the one to come. We know that time must give way to eternity. More, that time must serve God's eternal purpose. Let us buy out, utilize our every moment given by God to the furtherance of God's glory and the coming of the kingdom of Christ in which we have a part for aye. Then we walk in His fear.

## Book Review

*GOSPEL CHARACTERS*, The Personalities Around Jesus; by Leonard Griffith; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976; 192 pp., \$3.95 (paper).

The author, a member of the clergy staff at St. Paul's Church in Toronto, originally published this book in England in 1920. The book gives character sketches of sixteen of the most important people

whose lives were connected with the life of Christ while on earth. The book is sometimes interesting reading, sometimes incorrect, sometimes speculative, sometimes theologically unsound. It is always a danger when writing character sketches of Biblical people to engage in speculation and to go beyond what Scripture has chosen to reveal to us. This book has not avoided that danger.



## R.F.P.A. PUBLICATIONS

<b>Mysteries of the Kingdom</b> <i>by Herman Hanko</i> (An exposition of the parables of Christ)	<b>\$5.95</b>	<b>Behold, He Cometh!</b> <i>by Herman Hoeksema</i> (An exposition of the book of Revelation)	<b>\$9.95</b>
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### NOTICE

The Hull Protestant Reformed Christian School, Hull, Iowa, will be in need of a teacher for the third, fourth and fifth grades, for the 1977-78 school year. Application can be made by calling Mr. Alvin Kooiker — 712-725-2491, or writing to the Hull Protestant Reformed Christian School, 218 - 2nd Street, Hull, Iowa 51239.

### ATTENTION TEACHERS!!!

The Loveland Protestant Reformed Christian School is in need of two teachers for the 1977-78 school year. Those interested should contact the Loveland School Board, c/o Mr. Leon Griess, 2281 North Garfield, Loveland, Colo. 80537.

### NOTICE OF LECTURE

On April 21, 1977 at 8:00 in Hudsonville Church, our Annual Spring Lecture will be given. Rev. David Engelsma will speak on "Reprobation — Is It Reformed?" Plan to attend and urge others also to hear this interesting and timely lecture.

Note: In the April 1 issue there appeared an R.F.P.A. Publications Special Offer, the expiration date of which was January 1, 1977. The date was correct; it's the whole ad (an old offer) which should not have appeared. If, however, you would like to take advantage of the offer, please do so by May 15, 1977.



## News From Our Churches

Our newly organized congregation in Houston, Texas has published the following trio: Rev. George Lubbers, Rev. Ronald Van Overloop, and Rev. David Engelsma.

The Synodical Committee for Contact with other Churches has submitted a slate of nominees to the congregation of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church of Christchurch, New Zealand. They will call a minister on loan from the slate of Rev. Engelsma, Rev. Van Baren, Rev. Van Overloop, Rev. Bekkering, and Rev. Joostens. The basis for this action can be found in the decisions taken in the 1976 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

Most of the information found on this page concerns events which have already taken place. Once in a while enough advance notice is received to give information about a worthwhile event which is still to happen. So, with the co-operation of the editor, the typesetter, the printer, the mailing crew, and your postman, you may receive this issue before April 21. The evening of Thursday, April 21, is the day scheduled by our West Michigan churches for our Annual Spring Lecture. Rev. David Engelsma, pastor of our church in South Holland, Illinois is scheduled to speak on "Reprobation — Is It Reformed?" The lecture will be held in the new church building recently occupied by our Hudsonville congregation. A new church building is not exactly a common thing. In recognition of this, many denominational events have been scheduled in Hudsonville this spring, including League meetings, Classis East, lectures, and the 1977 Synod of our Churches.

In a recent issue of the little paper published by our church in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, Rev. Moore writes "By now many of you have heard that the undersigned and his wife have been blessed by our faithful covenant God in the birth of twin girls. Stacie and Stephanie are healthy and growing and Mom is doing well. For the Church what a blessed event is the birth of children in her midst! 'Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward.' Ps. 127:3. This is the Word of God that sounds forth in a day when the birth of children is frowned upon. God through His people brings forth His heritage, the church of Christ. With each of His covenant seed born Christ makes complete His body,

and the day of glory draweth near. Blessed be the name of our God."

Various organizations in our South Holland church have been quite active of late. The Ladies' Auxiliary sponsored a Beef Stew Supper on March 18th. The Men's Society sponsored a public lecture on March 21st. Rev. Bernard Woudenberg, pastor of our church in Kalamazoo, Michigan, was scheduled to speak on the topic, "The Missionary Calling of the Local Church." The Choral Society planned a Singspiration for Sunday evening, April 3rd, after the worship service. Special numbers were scheduled by the quartet and the school choir.

Judging from the amount of information in the February 20th and 27th bulletins of our newly organized congregation in Houston, the new church has enjoyed a rather busy schedule. Three children were baptized on the 27th, the consistory was organized on the 16th, delegates to the Classis West meeting on March 2 were selected, and the consistory was scheduled to hear the confession of faith of two young people of the congregation on March 8. Sunday services are scheduled at 10:30 A.M. and 3:30 P.M. Sunday School is at 9:30 A.M. Catechism classes meet on Monday afternoon and a mid-week Bible study meeting is scheduled for Thursday evenings. The book of I Timothy is being considered.

Our people in Hull, Iowa enjoyed a Hostess Supper on February 7th. Rev. Hoeksema spoke on "The Authority-Relation of the Home and the School."

Hull 'made' the Isabel bulletin. Rev. Miersma concluded an account of the recent Classis West meeting with this note, "On the lighter side we can say that Hull did it again. It somehow managed to arrange Classis to be held in the middle of a snowstorm keeping all the delegates in town for the night. Instead of automobile travel many of the delegates had their first snowmobile ride. Lodging was doubled up and some of the delegates came the next day a little rumpled and unshaven. I guess these are the things that make such meetings live in our memories for years." It seems this is not the first time that Classis West and a terrific snowstorm have met in Hull on the same day.

K.G.V.