

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

... though all the critics in the world agree on a theory which can explain the data of the resurrection in a way other than that Christ bodily arose, and can make the theory so plausible that all the world should believe it, I still believe with all my heart that Christ arose bodily from the dead by the power of God. I believe this because God says, in His Word, that it is true!

... Would that evangelical scholars would be much less frightened by the charges of lack of scholarship raised by higher critics and would be somewhat more frightened by an angry God Who will not leave unpunished those who will not believe His Word.

See "Book Review" — page 358

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THE STANDARD BEARER

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

Department Editors: Prof. Robert D. Decker, Rev. David J. Engelsma,
Rev. Cornelius Hanko, Prof. Herman Hanko, Rev. Robert C. Harbach,
Rev. John A. Heys, Rev. Jay Korterling, Rev. M. Hoeksema, Rev.
George C. Lubbers, Rev. Meindert Joostens, Rev. Marinus Schipper,
Rev. Gise J. Van Baren, Rev. Herman Veldman, Mr. Kenneth G. Vink.

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

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

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

Australian Business Office: Reformed Literature Centre,
P.O. Box 849,
Rockhampton 4700,
Queensland, Australia

New Zealand Business Office: The Standard Bearer,
c/o OPC Bookshop,
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MEDITATION

Fully Armed

Rev. H. Veldman

“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.” Eph. 6:13

How fierce is the struggle in which the people of God are involved throughout the ages! Are we acquainted with it? This is a spiritual conflict. It is not against flesh and blood and it is not waged with flesh and blood. It is a struggle, according to verse 12, against principalities and powers. . . . It is a struggle which involves forces of light and darkness, which knows of no compromise, a conflict to the death.

Besides, it is a battle which assumes greater significance because this power of darkness has an ally in our own flesh and blood, a struggle in which the people of God are hopelessly outnumbered and out-classed.

Wherefore, because of this, take unto you the armour of God, the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to resist and stand in the evil day.

WHY NECESSARY

How necessary is our being fully armed! The apostle speaks of the "evil day." Does the apostle here refer to a special day, a special attack upon the church by the forces of darkness? This cannot be true. First of all, this explanation coincides with another thought, namely that the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ was regarded at the time of the apostles as imminent, also by the apostles. However, whatever may have been the personal opinion of the apostles, and we do not believe that they entertained this error, it is surely a question of the meaning of the Holy Spirit, and He surely was not of this opinion. Secondly, however, if this "evil day" be a special day, how must we understand the admonitory character of this text and its context? This admonition surely applies to the church of God throughout the ages. And this also appears from Eph. 5:15-16.

This "evil day" must refer to the entire New Dispensation. O, this does not mean that there are not moments when the attack of the wicked is more violent than at other times. However, this evil day is always present. The New Dispensation is surely *the* evil day in distinction from the Old Dispensation. This is the day when, according to Rev. 12, the devil, frustrated because the Christ-Child was snatched from him, now concentrates his attack more furiously than ever upon the woman of Rev. 12, the church of the glorified Christ.

This is the day of evil. It is a day full of hardships and trouble. This word, "evil," does not emphasize only one's personal corruption, but also that one would corrupt others as well as himself. In this sense we speak of evil songs. Ravening beasts are designated by this word. And when the devil is called *the* Evil One this word is used.

We live in an evil day. Do we understand? Do we experience this? Life oftentimes is so enjoyable; the only thing which now and then seems to disturb us and mar our enjoyments is when some unforeseen misery crosses our path. Life appears so often to be serene and quiet. The call of the apostle unto the conflict, his exhortation to put on the whole armour of God seems, then, so unreal to us. In fact, the church today dreams of disarmament rather than armament; it speaks of a universal brotherhood of man rather than of two opposing parties. And the word of the apostle, that we live in a very evil world (as in his epistle to the Galatians where he speaks of this present evil world) appears to fall upon deaf ears.

Indeed, let us not be deceived. Have we fallen asleep; and is it extremely difficult for us to be aroused from this slumber? Whatever armistice may have been declared between the church and the world surely did not proceed from him who is the liar from

the beginning. This spiritual conflict, be it in greater or lesser degree, is always with us.

What an evil day! This struggle is exclusively spiritual. On the one hand, it is not against flesh and blood. Yes, it does occur upon the plane of "flesh and blood." Do we not read that we must hate father and mother and brothers and sisters for Jesus' sake? Are we not admonished to go out from among them and be separate? This conflict surely affects every phase of our life and existence. Nevertheless, this battle is not against flesh and blood. We cannot fight this battle with tanks and airplanes and atomic bombs, etc. It is not a battle of this world, for this world, by this world. It does not aim at worldly power or possessions or honor or glory. This is not the purpose of the Christian; neither is it the purpose of the kingdom of darkness and of this world. This conflict is exclusively spiritual. It aims at spiritual realities: the truth, righteousness, the glory of the living God and of His Christ. It is the question of the Cause of the living God and of His Christ or the maintaining of the kingdom of sin and of darkness; it is the battle for or against Christ; it is not interested in our gold and silver but in the life that is in us.

And what a struggle it is! Can you conceive, humanly speaking, of a more hopeless situation than that of the church of God in the midst of the world? Compare, if you will, the parties involved, the church and the world . . .

WHAT IT MEANS

We must take unto ourselves the whole armour of God, as recorded in the verses 14-17. We cannot, of course, treat this rich passage in detail at this time. First of all, it is not difficult to see that all the parts of this armour are concentrated in the Word of God. We read in this passage of the girdle of truth and of the gospel of peace. Besides, this girdle of truth is mentioned first.

Secondly, how beautifully striking these various parts of the Christian's armour have been arranged by the apostle, namely: truth, righteousness, peace, faith, eternal salvation, the sword of the Spirit! The truth, the truth of the Scriptures, is first. We must be founded upon the Word of God. This righteousness is our justification which we possess in Christ, the blessed assurance that all our sins are paid and forgiven and that we are heirs of everlasting life and glory. The fruit of this righteousness is peace, and peace is our blessed reconciliation with God, the assurance that God is for us and nothing is and can be against us. And this assurance we have through faith. Let these evil powers now hurl their fiery darts; let them accuse me, together with my evil conscience, of sin and evil. Through faith I take hold of Jesus, know that I belong to Him, even eternally, and through that

faith in Christ Jesus, I, having been justified through the blood of the cross, have peace toward God forevermore. And now, thus at peace with God through Jesus Christ, my Lord, I can put on the helmet of salvation. Here the apostle surely refers to salvation from the viewpoint of its eternal fulfillment and consummation. Whereas there is now no condemnation for me in Christ Jesus, I, being an heir of everlasting life, may well lift up my head and be assured of everlasting glory. And then the apostle mentions the only offensive weapon in this arsenal of the Christian: the sword of the Spirit. With this sword of the Spirit the christian warrior is able to slay all the enemies of darkness.

Now we can also understand why the apostle speaks of this armour as the armour of God. This expression means that this is God's armour, the armour which God alone has provided for us and which, therefore, is of God. And this does not merely mean that the Scriptures are of God. Of course, it is true that this is God's armour in the sense that the Scriptures are the infallibly inspired, unerring Word of God. But this does not exhaust the meaning of the apostle. This entire armour, all these blessings of salvation are of God. He conceived of these blessings, also bestows them upon us. And it is God's armour also because He enables us to fight the good fight of faith, even until the end. God, our blessed Saviour, through Christ Jesus, is our sure defense.

This armour we must now take unto ourselves. This armour is pictured here as lying at the soldier's feet. He must take it up. Indeed, the work of salvation is of God alone. This, of course, the Scriptures teach. God, however, saves us as moral-rational creatures. He causes us to stand in His salvation. We must, therefore, stand consciously in and appropriate unto ourselves this glorious armour of God. Let us put on the girdle of truth, know the Scriptures, embrace them with all our heart and life. Let us put on all these wonderful weapons in the arsenal of the Christian soldier.

Besides, let us put on the *whole* armour of God. We need every part of it. We must not neglect any element of it. Let us use it in its entirety, the whole Word of God, the truth in all its glorious details, the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus but also the hope of everlasting life, the girdle and the breastplate and the shield and the spiked shoes of the preparation of the gospel of peace, and apply them, in all our life and vicissitudes, trusting in the glorious God of our salvation. And, forget it not: we must always put on this armour of God. Do not ever become complacent, feeling yourselves to be safe and secure in yourselves. Know the Scriptures, constantly; believe in Jesus, constantly; always seek the things that are above; pray and be sober, always. May the Lord be our constant help and sure defense.

ITS FRUIT

Doing this, we shall be able to stand. The words, "having done all," surely mean that the Christian warrior has done all required of him in the battle. He has fought unto the end. Having thus done all, he will stand; not having succumbed to the enemy, he has withstood in the day of evil.

Indeed, we have met the enemy. We have resisted his attack. We have warded off all his fiery darts. This, we understand, continues throughout our entire lives. Throughout our earthly involvement with the forces of darkness, we must resist them. They attack us, wave upon wave. But, having resisted the enemy after one attack, we are ready to meet the next onslaught. Succumbing to the onslaught of this mighty, relentless foe, we will be in no position to withstand in the evil day. Then, having resisted these powers of darkness, having "dug in," we shall be able to stand, until that day when all this weary night will be over. Then we shall receive the crown of victory, given to us of divinely sovereign grace, only because of Him Who is the Captain of our salvation and the Finisher of our faith.

Editor's Notes

About Spurgeon. Some months ago we reviewed an abridged version of Spurgeon's *Treasury of David*. At the time we made the erroneous statement that these volumes were, to our knowledge, not available in unabridged form. More than one person later wrote to me that this information is not correct, and that the unabridged *Treasury of David* is indeed available. All of which goes to show that my knowledge on this score was not complete; I'm still learning!

* * * * *

About Dividends and Titles. It isn't really gremlins that cause our occasional bloopers, but carelessness at the typesetter's shop. In the April 1 issue, Rev. Slopsema's article was indeed a "dividend," but the title was "A House Divided," not, "A House Dividend," as indicated in large letters on the front cover. Yes, and that book offer on page 311, said to expire on January 1, 1977, was not supposed to be printed. I dare say, though, that if you responded to the offer, our book department did not turn you down. And in the

March 15 issue, I did have two editorials even though the second title did not appear in its proper place. In case you had trouble discerning, the second editorial ("Reformed Thought On Baptism") began on page 270, the second column, with the words "A very interesting..." My editorial assistant, Mr. Donald Doezeema, and I did not find the mistake to be very interesting, however.

* * * * *

About Pulpit Supply. Requests for pulpit supply from the seminary — and we are thinking especially about vacation supply during the summer months — should be sent to my address: 4975 Ivanrest Ave., S.W., Grandville, Michigan 49418. Phone (616) 534-7308. We would appreciate it greatly if you could get your summer requests in early (we already have one request!), so that we can set up a schedule for the whole summer period.

EDITORIALS

Prof. H.C. Hoeksema

"When I Survey...." – Pre-Publication Sale

Some of the earliest books written by the late Rev. Herman Hoeksema — and also those which received some of the widest circulation — were his works devoted to Lenten subjects. Books such as *The Amazing Cross*, *The Royal Sufferer*, *The Power of the Cross*, *Rejected of Men*, *And Jesus In The Midst*, and *Man of Sorrows* were all originally series radio Lent sermons. Some of these works reached a larger market than did the first edition of *The Triple Knowledge*.

However, I dare say that many of our readers have never seen these books and probably did not know they existed: for some of them have already been out of print for many years.

To preserve this material for present and future generations, the RFPA Publications Committee is publishing a large Lenten Anthology which will include all six of these books. And what would be more natural than to publish them under the title of what was probably the author's favorite and most often quoted hymn, "When I Survey The Wondrous Cross"?

We are sure that you will want one or more copies of this book.

And here is how you can help yourself and help us.

In this issue you will find an envelope through which you can order copies of this book at the special pre-publication sale price of \$7.95 plus 45¢ for postage and handling, or a total of \$8.40. The cost of the book after publication will be \$9.95 plus postage. Think of it! Six good books under one cover for only \$8.40! That is how you can help yourself.

At the same time you can help the Publications Committee. We need money! Publication of this book involves a large outlay of cash. And while our Publications Committee is not poor, right now it happens that we are somewhat book-rich (we have a large stock) and cash-poor. It would be wonderful if we could meet the entire cost of this venture from the proceeds of this pre-publication sale. That is how you can help us. Will you — and at the same time help yourself to a bargain? Send in that order NOW!

Baptism on the Mission Field

(9)

We are now ready to comment on the very first section of the Study Report, entitled "The Biblical Doctrine." As stated earlier, we believe that the 1975 Synod gave the Study Committee a seriously mistaken mandate, and that the committee should not have been instructed to turn to Scripture *first*, as though the matter under study had never previously

been studied and decided upon, and as though our Reformed confessions and liturgy and Church Order had nothing to say as to principles and practice with respect to the question under discussion. Personally, I am of the conviction that the direction of the Study Report would have been quite different if their mandate had not been misleading.

Questions might also be raised as to the *meaning* of the first part of Synod's mandate, "taking into account the Biblical doctrine, particularly the New Testament passages." What does it mean? Does it mean that there is an established Biblical doctrine of baptism on the mission field, and that this doctrine is (has been) established as Biblical sometime in the past? Or does it merely mean that the Bible teaches in various passages something about this subject, and that the Study Committee must study these passages? Does it refer in isolation to the subject to baptism on the mission field, or does it mean the entire doctrine of baptism as distilled from Scripture, and the subject of baptism on the mission field in connection therewith? The Study Report does not speak to these questions. But when I look at the Report, I can only come to the conclusion that they understood their mandate as instructing them to study the New Testament passages which seem to speak more or less directly about baptism in connection with missionary labor. And then I must immediately point out, too, that they only studied *part* of the passages. For example, they say nothing in their report about what surely has to have significance for this subject, namely, that the apostle Paul (could we call him the missionary par excellence?) specifically states that Christ sent him not to baptize, but to preach the gospel, I Cor. 1:17. Moreover, although the apostle labored in Corinth for a year and six months, and although "many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized," and although the Lord told Paul, "I have much people in this city," (Acts 18:8-11), yet Paul states specifically in I Corinthians 1:14, 16, "I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius . . . And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other." Now I am not at this point drawing any conclusion from these passages. But I do refer to them in proof of the fact that the Study Report did not pay attention in its report to *all* the pertinent passages, but only to *part* of the New Testament passages.

But now let us present the material of the Study Report first. It is found on pp. 104-106 of the 1976 Acts:

I. The Biblical Doctrine.

Scripture teaches that it belongs to the office and task of the missionary not only to preach the gospel on the mission field, but also to baptize those whom the Spirit brings to repentance and faith through the preaching, as well as their household (children). It is the right and duty of the missionary to baptize, *as a part of his missionary labor*, i.e., before and with a view to the institution of a congregation in a certain place.

This is laid down by the Lord Jesus in the missionary-mandate of Matt. 28:18-20. Jesus charges the apostles to make disciples of all nations. One important aspect of this mission-

labor and one important way in which the nations are made Jesus' disciples is the missionaries' baptism of them, i.e., of those who repent and believe at the preaching. This is substantiated by Mark 16:15, 16. Baptism is joined to the mission-preaching, as the task of the missionary. From the viewpoint of the convert, baptism has an important function, in connection with the faith worked by the preaching, as far as the salvation of the convert is concerned. That is, God uses baptism on the mission field, always in the service of the gospel, to save the elect.

That it is illegitimate to restrict the command of Matthew 28:18-20 to the apostles and their time is plain from the fact that the Lord concludes with, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Calvin correctly remarks that these words show "that this was not spoken to the apostles alone; for the Lord promises His assistance not for a single age only, but even to the end of the world" (commentary on Matt. 28:20).

Exactly how the Lord intended the commands of Matthew 28 and Mark 16 and how the Church understood them, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is clearly indicated in the account of the missionary labor of the Church throughout the Book of Acts. The testimony of Acts is that the missionaries baptized on the mission field; that baptizing, along with the preaching of the gospel, was part of their missionary office; that the apostles and evangelists baptized where there was as yet no church institute and that they did so *with a view* to instituting the church. Passages include: Acts 2:38, 41; Acts 8:12, 13, 16; Acts 8:38; Acts 9:18; Acts 10:47, 48; Acts 16:14, 15; Acts 16:33; Acts 18:8; Acts 19:5.

The practice of the Church of baptizing as part of the missionary task, before the instituting of a congregation, is indisputable. Acts 10:47, 48 teaches that Peter commanded Cornelius and his house to be baptized as soon as they believed and the Spirit was poured out on them. Acts 16:15 and Acts 16:33 teach that Lydia and her household and the Philippian jailor and his household were baptized by the apostles prior to the instituting of a church in Philippi, as an element of the missionary task of gathering a church.

It is necessary that we understand the *reason* for the apostolic practice and for the command of Christ upon which the practice was based. This is brought out in Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; and Acts 22:16, where baptism is attached to the preaching: is related to faith and repentance, and is said to serve unto the remission of sins. With the preaching, to which it is always added, baptism is a means of the Holy Spirit to give the convert the forgiveness of sins and, thus, assurance of salvation. According to Acts 2:38, repentance is to be followed by baptism "unto the remission of sins," and according to Acts 22:16, the effect of Paul's baptism is the washing away of his sins. Thus, baptism is used by the Spirit for the saving of the believer, according to Mark 16:16. The meaning is that the Holy Spirit uses baptism to represent to the repentant sinner and to assure him of the forgiveness of his sins in Jesus' blood. This is, ordinarily, a required means of the Spirit to save the elect in all nations.

Since it has this function, baptism of the convert on the mission field is instrumental in the gathering of a church, i.e., serves to the end of establishing an instituted church in a certain place. It is a means by which the repentant sinner is

brought to the full consciousness and assurance of salvation, so that he *can be* a member of the church institute.

It is well that we be warned against dismissal baptism and its significance in mission work. Christ has joined preaching and baptism together in the missionary task; we may not separate what He has joined. Scripture teaches that baptism is instrumental in one's receiving pardon and the assurance of salvation; we may not argue that the Spirit can, or should, work otherwise.

The Study Report presents a rather orderly chain of reasoning in this section, and we can consider it step by step. As we do so, we must bear in mind that the question is this: does the Study Report *demonstrate conclusively* that the Scripture passages cited *prove* the points made in the Report? Let us understand this clearly. The question is not merely whether these passages do or do not prove certain points. But it is incumbent upon the Study Report *to show us exegetically* that these passages prove these points. The Report must not assume things. It must not merely make claims. It must not engage in mere "proof-texting." It must furnish Scriptural evidence that is the result of careful exegesis of pertinent Scripture passages, and that, too, in connection with the current teaching of Scripture concerning the principles and practice of baptism.

It is this, in my opinion, that the Study Report utterly fails to do.

I am well aware, of course, that the Study Report refers to several passages of Scripture — in many instances only giving the references, not quoting them. I am aware, too, that the Report makes certain *claims* as to what these passages teach. But there is very little exegesis at any point in this section of the Report. There are several unfounded and unproved assumptions. And for certain crucial points no Scriptural evidence which is the fruit of careful exegesis is furnished whatsoever. I certainly do not believe that our churches should make an important change in baptismal practice on such a scant and highly questionable basis.

The first proposition of this section is: "Scripture teaches that it belongs to the office and task of the missionary not only to preach the gospel on the mission field, but also to baptize those whom the Spirit brings to repentance and faith through the preaching, as well as their household (children). It is the right and duty of the missionary, *as a part of his missionary labor*, i.e., before and with a view to the institution of a congregation in a certain place."

In the next paragraph the Study Report claims that this is the teaching of Matt. 28:18-20 and Mark 16:15, 16: "This is laid down by the Lord Jesus in the missionary-mandate of Matt. 28:18-20. . . . This is substantiated by Mark 16:15, 16."

Concerning this section, I wish to point out:

1. That we should keep the proper perspective with regard to the so-called Great Commission. I am well aware that this is commonly understood as the missionary mandate. I am well aware, too, that the work of missions is *part* of this Great Commission. But let us not forget that when we preach and baptize in our established congregations we are also obeying the Great Commission. And I have our confessions to support me in this view of Matthew 28:18-20. Both our Heidelberg Catechism and our Belgic Confession quote this passage as Scriptural basis for baptism *as it is practiced within the church*. Hence, the passages do not *only* — if at all — speak of baptism "before and with a view to the institution of a congregation . . ."

2. I cannot find anywhere in these passages any direct or indirect reference to such an idea as "before and with a view to the institution of a congregation in a certain place." In other words, while the passages may indeed speak of a time-relationship between "making disciples" and baptizing — although this would have to be defined by exegesis — the passages say nothing whatsoever about any relationship between baptism and the institution of a congregation. Neither does the Study Report demonstrate this in its remarks about Matt. 28 and Mark 16. Yet this is a very crucial question for the Study Report.

3. Even apart from the fact that these passages say nothing as such about preaching and baptism in relation to the instituting of a congregation, the great question which is left unanswered in this section and which is not even touched in the one paragraph which the Study Report devotes to these passages is: WHEN? In the first place, in what time-relation, if any, does the term "baptizing" stand to the command, "Disciple all nations," in Matthew 28:19? The same question holds with even greater force for Mark 16:15, 16, which does not even literally connect any mandate to baptize with the command to preach. In the second place, in what exact time-relation does baptism stand to the instituting of a congregation? The Study Report does not formulate its own problem precisely. I have commented on this in connection with Section II of the Report in earlier articles. But remember the real question: whether baptism may be administered under the circumstances of the mission field months and years before the institution of a congregation, and even when there is absolutely no kind of guarantee that a congregation will be established. I repeat: I agree that there is one case when baptism can be administered *before*. That is when a congregation is at the point of organization. Then baptism, especially of adults, and especially on the heathen mission field, serves the formation of the congregation. But this was not the concrete question in Houston which led to this Study Report. And this

is not the position of the Study Report. They must show from Scripture that baptism can be administered *before* in the sense of long before, and even before there is a possibility or a guarantee of instituting a congregation. There is no iota of proof for this in the passages cited; and surely, if there is any proof, the Study Report has not produced any exegetical evidence of it.

4. The Study Report in this section does not place the importance of baptism in the proper perspective. I can agree that baptism is joined to preaching (also mission-preaching). I can agree that baptism has an important function. I cannot, however, *unqualifiedly* agree with the statement that "God uses baptism on the mission field, always in the service of the preaching of the gospel, to save the elect." I want that de-

fined. Our confessions (our adopted interpretation of Scripture) make the sacraments as means of grace *secondary*. They are used to *confirm* faith, never to *work* faith. And as such, the sacraments, though required, are not of the same order as the preaching of the Word. The preaching is indispensable — also on the mission field. Baptism is not indispensable. In fact, exactly in connection with Mark 16:15, 16 John Calvin makes this point in his Commentary. No, I am not claiming that the Report makes baptism indispensable. But I do warn that if this is at all the tendency — to make baptism an indispensable part of missionary activity — then I demur strongly.

My conclusion is that the first proposition of this section has by no means been exegetically proved from Matthew 28 and Mark 16.

TRANSLATED TREASURES

Acts of the Synod of Dordrecht

HISTORICAL FOREWORD

(9)

(Connection: In the preceding section we saw: 1) That Conrad Vorstius, the Socinian nominee to replace Arminius at Leiden, returned to the Netherlands. 2) That King James I, of Great Britain, strongly warned against Vorstius. 3) That the Curators of the Academy were ordered not to proceed with the call of Vorstius. 4) That the Hague Conference resulted in no solution to the problems in the churches.)

Meanwhile, the disunity, uproar, and disturbances in the Churches sadly increased more and more everywhere. For the Remonstrants did their very best, by inciting the Magistrates against them by false accusations, to see to it that especially the Ministers who opposed their purposes not only were driven out of their ministry, but also were driven out of the cities themselves. And everywhere in the Churches which were not supplied with Ministers, such men were forced upon them, even against the desire of the Churches, who were besmirched with their Arminian views. They did this by every means possible and

wherever they could, excluding all other ministers, even though they were gifted with learning, godliness, and the necessary gifts for the ministry, and even though they were lawfully desired and called by the Churches. This was the reason why the right-minded Churches, with respect to those who either had oppressed and driven out their innocent fellow-ministers contrary to all justice and propriety, or who had been forced upon them against their desire and who daily with bitter and venomous sermons very grievously violated the doctrine of the Reformed Churches, could not acknowledge them as their lawful Pastors, could not listen to their sermons, and could not celebrate the Lord's Supper with them. Rather, they went to hear the sermons of sound Pastors in neighboring places, although on this account they had to suffer many reproaches and accusations and mockery. These were the beginnings and the occasions of separations. The first among all the churches which was compelled to make such a

separation was the Church of Alkmaar. For Adolphus Venator, the Minister there, was suspended from his ministry by the North-Holland Churches on account of his unsound life and thoroughly unsound doctrine. But he, appealing to the Magistrate there and despising ecclesiastical censures, nevertheless continued in the office of Minister. Then, when there was a change of Magistrates, as that happened ordinarily every year, and when men were lawfully chosen who did not appear to be very favorable toward his cause and on whose protection he might no longer depend, this Venator incited the common people against the lawful Authority and brought it about that they rebelliously took up arms and were not satisfied until they had deposed the lawful Magistracy and replaced them by others who were alien to the Reformed religion and who sided with the cause of Venator. These, as soon as they were established in the government of the City, through the instigation of Venator, first forced the elders and deacons to lay down their office; then they did the same thing to the two Ministers because they had taken position against the errors of Venator. And when the Ministers had been deposed from their office, they were scandalously driven out of the city. The one was Pieter Cornelissen, who had been minister for some fifty years with great edification; and the other was Cornelius Hillenius, a bright and pious man, both of them earnest defenders of the pure doctrine.

Next it became necessary for the Church of Rotterdam to imitate this separation. For Nicolaus Grevinchovius, seeing that his fellow minister, Cornelius Geselius, a man of singular godliness, uprightness, and propriety, was very pleasing to the Church of Rotterdam and opposed to him in his intention to introduce the doctrine of the Remonstrance, brought it about through the Magistrates of that place, first, that he was deposed from his ministry, and then that he was led out of the city by the city-agents. Also the Ministers of the Classis of Rotterdam who were devoted to purity of doctrine refused to hold Classical gatherings with this Grevinchovius and with others whom he had brought to the views of the Remonstrants. This took place after Grevinchovius, by the authority of the Magistrates of Rotterdam, had forced upon the Church of Bleiswijk, against the advice of the chief Ministers, Simon Episcopius, to whom the Church of Amsterdam, where he had lived, had refused a testimony concerning his life and doctrine.

There were also many churches in the villages on whom, against their will, were imposed Remonstrant Ministers, or Ministers who were favorable toward the Remonstrants. And seeing that they could not without the greatest offense, grief, and unrest listen to those terrible slanders against sound doctrine which were daily heard in their sermons, the people of these

congregations forsook their churches and went to hear the sermons of neighboring sound Ministers; or where they could not obtain the latter, they were taught by other Ministers in their villages or by sound proponents, in separate gatherings. When the Remonstrants sought in vain to prevent this by strict prohibitions by the Magistrates, they aroused no little persecution against those churches.

Meanwhile, the Curators of the Academy of Leiden, on the advice of the Remonstrants, called Simon Episcopius to the Theological Ministry, against the will of Joannes Polyander, who had been called to that ministry in the place of Franciscus Gomarus. This increased the grief and anxiety of the Churches not a little, since it was evident from this that they intended to feed the disputes in that Academy and to establish the doctrine of the Remonstrance. When these evils could no longer remain shut up within the boundaries of the Holland Churches, this corruption finally spread out to the neighboring Provinces, especially to the Churches of Gelderland, of Utrecht, and Overijsel. In the Province of Utrecht, through the neglect of the Ministers, the ecclesiastical order appeared to have fallen away; and under the appearance of re-establishing this, Uitenbogaard, August 24, introduced in the Church certain Remonstrant Ministers, and among these Jacobus Taurinus, a seditious and cruel man. Thereafter, these men were very zealous and diligent that not only in the City but in the entire Province, everywhere where they could, the sound Ministers were driven out and replaced by Remonstrants, so that only the doctrine of the Remonstrance was openly taught. Moreover, in order that their cause might be established in that Province, they framed a new form of Church Order, which was first approved by the Synod, at which Uitenbogaard, Minister of The Hague, presided, and thereafter was also approved by the States of the same Province. In Articles IV and V, chapter 2, toleration of the views of the Remonstrants, for which they had agitated so much in Holland, was publicly established; and the doctrine of the Reformed Churches was also incidentally and hatefully blamed. Further, one finds very many innovations concerning ecclesiastical rule in this Church Order, so that it was to be seen from this that these men intended nothing less than that everything, not only in the doctrine but also in the order and government of the church, should be changed.

The Remonstrants in Gelderland had now also gotten the Ministers of Nijmegen, Bommel, and Tiel on their side; and thereafter they saw to it that no one but men of their views served in the ministry of the neighboring Churches. And, in order that they might make this more sure, Uitenbogaard, Borrius, and Taurinus travelled in Gelderland, when the States were gathered there; and they, with the other

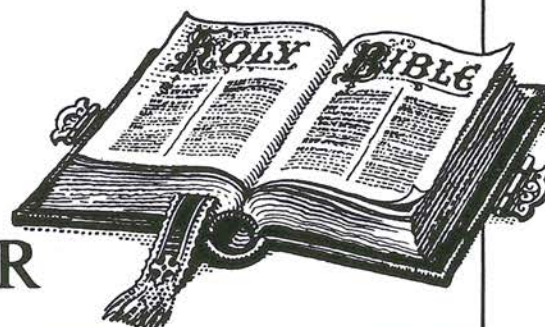
Remonstrants, brought it about that also in that Province the ordinary, annual, Synodical gatherings were prevented. Similarly, in Overijsel, especially in the Church of Kampen and Deventer, which through the help and practices of some had fallen to the Remonstrants, thereafter disturbed the peaceful Churches there with new wranglings.

When the Netherlands Churches saw that this evil was growing and spreading in this manner, also in the other Provinces, they deemed it highly necessary to oppose this. And, without any further postponement, by common consent they sent from each Province two delegates to the States-General: from Gelderland, Johannes Fontanus and Guilielmus Baudartius; from Holland, Libertus Fraximus and Festus Hommius; from Zeeland, Hermannus Faukelius and Guilielmus Telingius (the Utrecht Churches refused to send theirs); from Friesland, Gellius Acronius and Godefridus Sopingius; from Overijsel, Johannes Gofmannus and Johannes Langius; finally, from the City of Groningen and Environs, Cornelius Hillenius and Wolfgang Agricola. These men, together with the Deputies of the Church of Amsterdam, which was Synodical, Petrus Plancius and Joannes Hallius, set forth in detail the difficulties and the dangers of the Churches. They did so in the name of the Churches themselves, and also in the name of the States of their Provinces (whose letters they also showed). Further, they humbly petitioned the States that they would be pleased to sympathize with the thoroughly grievous position of the Churches, and should at once give serious attention to the solution of these evils, and to that end authorize at once a National Synod (which had already for many years been promised). Although many among these States-General judged that this convening of the Synod should no longer be postponed, and clung to this, nevertheless, seeing that the representatives of the Province of Utrecht were absent and that those of Holland and West-Friesland said that they did not have a clear enough mandate for this matter, therefore the matter was postponed until the Representatives of all the Provinces would authorize it by a united vote — something which, through the actions of those friendly to the

Remonstrants from Holland and Utrecht, was further prevented.

Meanwhile, the Remonstrants did not cease to push their cause diligently, to win the favor of the great, to gain the hearts of the Magistrates, and to render suspect and prevent all Synodical gatherings with the Political leaders, to gain the vacant Churches, to spread their views through public sermons and writings, to violate sound doctrine with terrible slanders, to draw the people to their side and more and more to alienate them from the doctrine of the Reformed Churches. To this end they spread abroad booklets among the people, written in the mother language, under such titles as *Firebells*, *Further Information*, *Signpost*, and others. In these they not only upheld their doctrine and enhanced Vorstius, but they also with bitter and shameless eloquence and in a most horrible manner struck at the adopted doctrine of the Netherlands Churches with the most shameless slander and by evilly and faithlessly drawing from that doctrine the most senseless consequences, or conclusions. Because of this, there arose among the people everywhere bitter disputes and quarrels, through which the closest friends and acquaintances were embittered against one another and were frightfully alienated and torn apart from one another, to the great injury of love, to the disturbance of the church and the common peace, and to the great grief and offense of the pious. And, seeing that in many places they had the Magistrates on their side, and through Johannes Uitenbogaard were permitted everything by the Advocate of Holland, they were also haughty and scornful against their Churches and Fellow-Ministers. Meanwhile, all pious lovers of the Fatherland and of the Church mourned and bemoaned pitifully this terrible misery of the Churches. And, seeing that they saw clearly where these upheavals would end if they were not promptly attended to, and seeing that this could not be done thus far by public authority, they began seriously to consider whether this evil could not be removed once and for all in one or another way, or whether at least it might be stemmed.

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TAKING HEED TO THE DOCTRINE

A Reformed Look at Pentecostalism

Rev. David Engelsma

If it is true, as we said in the previous article, that there is but one baptism for every elect child of God, the baptism with the Holy Spirit of which the sign and seal is the sprinkling with water, how is it to be explained that in the book of Acts there obviously were two distinct works of the Holy Spirit upon some of God's people? Jesus' disciples, e.g., were reborn, saved men prior to the day of Pentecost. This, of course, was due to the gracious operation of the Spirit upon their hearts. Still, on the day of Pentecost these men "were all filled with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:4). The Spirit was poured out upon them (Acts 2:16-18). They were then "baptized with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 1:5).

Pent. appeals to this history in Acts as proof for its contention that there must be two distinct works of grace in the life of every Christian: a first work of salvation (regeneration) and a second work of power for life and service (the baptism with the Spirit). The experience of the disciples, and others, in the book of Acts is regarded as normative for every child of God. Pent. insists that Pentecost be repeated, over and over, for every member of the Church. One of the leading Pent. writers, Donald Gee, speaks of "a personal Pentecost" for every Christian (cf. *A New Discovery*).

This betrays a complete misunderstanding of the great event of Pentecost. It is as foolish to demand a personal Pentecost as it would be to demand a personal incarnation of Jesus, or one's own personal death of Christ, or a personal resurrection of our Lord.

Pentecost was the exalted Christ's gift of the Holy Spirit to His Church. The Spirit was given in rich, full measure — He was "poured out." He was given as the One Who brings to the Church the firstfruits of the finished work of Jesus Christ, the benefits of Christ's death and resurrection, i.e., Christ's salvation. In the gift of the Spirit, the gospel-promise of the Old Testament was fulfilled to the Church (Acts 2:38, 39; Gal. 3:14), because the Son of God gave to God's people full salvation, forgiveness of sins and eternal life. He baptized the Church with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5). Being mightier than John the Baptist, He

flooded the Church with the reality, whereas John could only give the sign (Matt. 3:11).

That grand Sunday marked the passing of the old age and the coming of the new; it is the boundary between the Old Dispensation and the New. The distinction between the Old Testament and the New Testament is a matter of the fullness of the Holy Spirit, which is only a matter of the full riches of Christ's accomplished salvation. Such is the teaching of John 7:37-39: ". . . for the Holy Ghost was not yet; because that Jesus was not yet glorified." In the Old Dispensation, the Holy Spirit was not yet. He and His saving work were not absolutely lacking, for He saved God's people under the old covenant, even as He now saves us. But He was not present with the fullness and richness of salvation with which He now dwells in the Church. This was due to the fact that Christ had not yet died and risen, actually to acquire that rich and full salvation. Just as Christmas was the birthday of the Son of God in the flesh, Pentecost was the birthday of the Spirit, as the Spirit of Christ in the Church.

Pentecost, like the incarnation, the crucifixion, the resurrection, and the ascension, was a once-for-all-time event. Fifty days after He arose, Jesus sent His Spirit to His Church. This is never again repeated, anymore than Jesus' death is repeated. It is nonsense, if not heresy, to preach each Christian's "personal Pentecost." This is why it is wrong to expect the reappearance of the signs of Pentecost down through church history. The sound as of a mighty rushing wind, the cloven tongues as of fire, and the disciples' speaking with other tongues were the signs, once-for-all, of the historical event of the outpouring of the Spirit, just as the great earthquake was the sign of the resurrection of Jesus. To be sure, these signs are intended to be *my* signs in 1977 as much as they were intended to be signs for Peter in A.D. 33. But they are mine, not by being repeated in my experience, but by being written down on the pages of Holy Scripture and by being received through faith.

When Pentecostals try to gainsay the once-for-all character of Pentecost (do they really dare to deny this?), they point to the incidents in the book of Acts.

which seemingly are repetitions of Pentecost: the Spirit's falling upon the Samaritan converts (Acts 8:5-24); the pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon Cornelius and his household (Acts 10:44-48. cf. also Acts 11:15-18); and the coming of the Spirit on the disciples of John (Acts 19:1-7). In fact, these incidents are special events, intended by God to demonstrate that the unrepeatable wonder of Pentecost extends to *all* the Church, specifically the half-heathens, the outright heathens, and the disciples of John the Baptist. They are extensions of Pentecost to the full Church, the furthest outworking of that event.

In light of the significance of Pentecost, we can readily understand the fact that, on the day of Pentecost, men and women who had already been saved received the gift of the Holy Spirit, so that they then enjoyed new riches of salvation and hitherto unknown power. This is not indicative of two works of grace in every Christian; this is not normative for all believers, as if we, too, must expect and long to pass from "mere salvation through faith" to the higher level of feeling and power of a "Spirit baptism." The explanation is found in the unique historical position of the saints who lived through Pentecost. They lived through the transition from the Old Dispensation to the New Dispensation, from the Spirit's not being yet to His being, from Christ's not yet being glorified to His being glorified. Before that moment, those saints, e.g., Peter, were saved; now, as the New Dispensation dawns, they receive the gift of the Spirit in His fullness, i.e., the completed salvation of the glorified Christ. At Pentecost, they advanced, not from a first level of grace to a second, higher level of grace, but from the infancy of the Church of the Old Covenant to the maturity of the Church of the New Covenant (Gal. 4:1-7).

We recoil in horror from the suggestion that each of us must repeat the experience of Pentecost. Then, we have to go back for a little while into the Old Dispensation, to live under the law and in the types and shadows, so that, at some point, we can pass into the New Covenant. We would not do this, even if this were possible.

We New Testament saints receive the Spirit of the glorified Christ, with the full Christ and all His benefits, *at once*, as soon as He regenerates us, takes up His abode in us, baptizes us into Christ's Body, the Church, and unites us to Christ by a true and living faith. Certainly, the blessing of Pentecost is ours, every bit as much as it was the blessing of the 120 in the upper room in Jerusalem; certainly, we *share* in Pentecost, as really and fully as if we had been among those 120 believers. This is as necessary as it is that we share in the death and resurrection of Christ. If one does not share in Christ's death and resurrection,

or in Pentecost, he simply is not saved. But I do not share in Christ's death by that death's being repeated somehow in my personal history and experience. I share in Christ's death and resurrection *by faith*; by faith I am crucified with Christ and rise with Him. Just so, by this same faith I share in Pentecost. The blessing of that great day, now almost 2000 years past, becomes mine personally through the faith, worked in me by the Spirit, that unites me to Christ and to His Body, the Church, to whom the Spirit was then given and in whom the Spirit dwells forever. This is the teaching of Galatians 3: "that we might receive the promise of the Spirit *through faith*" (vs. 14).

The other of the two outstanding features of Pent. is their doctrine and alleged practice of extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, especially tongues. For this, too, they claim to find support in Scripture. What is the Reformed answer to this teaching and its appeal to the Bible?

There was, in the time of the apostles, a gift of tongues, whether that gift be explained as the ability to speak foreign languages without having learned them or as the ability to speak totally new, unknown languages. I Corinthians 14 indicates that at least one aspect of the gift of tongues in those days was the ability to speak in an altogether new, unknown language. No one, including the speaker, understood what was said (vss. 2, 14). Interpretation of the tongue was, like the tongue itself, a gift of the Spirit (vs. 13. cf. I Cor. 10:10). The speaker in tongues did not speak to men, but to God (vs. 2). The benefit of it was not the edification of others, but his own edification (vs. 4). "In the spirit," the tongues-speaker "speaketh mysteries" (vs. 2).

There were also other extraordinary gifts of the Spirit in those days. There was the gift of receiving special revelations from God; the gift of casting out devils; the gift of taking up serpents; the gift of drinking deadly things without hurt; the gift of healing the sick by laying on of hands; and the gift of raising the dead (cf. Mark 16:17, 18; I Cor. 12:1-11).

Among these gifts, the gift of tongues was one of only minor importance (cf. I Cor. 12:28-31 — where tongues and interpretation of tongues come at the end of the list and are not among the best gifts which the Corinthians should covet; cp. I Cor. 14:39 — where the Corinthians are to covet prophecy, but merely not to forbid tongues. cf. also all of chapter 14 where tongues are shown to be of only minimal importance, especially in comparison with prophecy.). If was a gift that was not possessed by all the Corinthians or expected to be possessed by all (I Cor. 12:30). It is passing strange, to say the very least, that Pent., with all its bluster of restoring New Testament Christianity, makes tongues the gift of the

Spirit *par excellence*, ascribing to it, both in theory and in practice, a preeminence that it did not have even in the days of the apostles, and that Pent. holds

that *every* Christian should possess this gift — as if Paul had never written, “do all speak with tongues?”
(to be cont.)

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of the Book of Galatians

Rev. G. Lubbers

THE GOSPEL OF FREE GRACE JEOPARDIZED IN ANTIOCH (Gal. 2:11)

Paul and Peter must have been in Antioch of Syria at the same time, shortly after the gathering of the apostles and elders mentioned in Acts 15, where the matter of circumcision was settled for the New Testament believers from the Gentiles. The Gentiles were charged to “abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication.” (Acts 15:29) If they kept themselves from these they would do well. And this decision had been received with great joy and comfort as the decision by the Church and the Holy Ghost. (Acts 15:28) The church at Antioch “rejoiced for the consolation.” (Acts 15:31)

But things had taken a bad turn here in Antioch shortly after this. Peter, the apostle of Christ, had come down to Antioch from Jerusalem to labor here in this church, composed of Gentile and Jewish christians. And the conduct of Peter had been such that all that was gained in the meeting at Jerusalem under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and careful interpretation of the Scriptures, would be lost. The church would once more have lost her liberty in Christ Jesus. This was due to the conduct of Peter in this church. At first, all went well. He ate with the Gentile christians even as he had been instructed by the Lord Himself in the vision at Joppa. Here at Joppa, Peter had to learn that the Old Testament Levitical difference between clean and unclean animals which might be eaten was no longer in force. Christ had nailed these ordinances of the middle wall of the partition to the Cross. (Eph. 2:13, 14) Those who were far off (Gentiles) had been brought nigh by the blood of Christ! And, therefore, Peter’s Old Testament scruples concerning “clean” and “unclean” no longer obtained for him. He could safely go into the house of the Gentile

Cornelius and preach the Gospel, and eat and drink with him and his fellow-believers without asking any questions concerning what might be eaten and might not be eaten. That Peter had done also here in Antioch. He did eat together with the Gentile christians. (Acts 10:14-16; Gal. 2:12a) But things had changed. Certain believers from James, the church in Jerusalem, came who still had Levitical scruples concerning what they ate and with whom they ate. These frowned not a little upon eating with the Gentile christians, and they must have censured Peter’s eating with these Gentile christians. It was then that Peter, who had been such a pillar of strength at the meeting in Jerusalem (see above), weakened. According to the Greek text, he *gradually* withdrew from the Gentile brethren and no longer ate with them; he separated himself from them and did not eat with them. This was hypocritical action on the part of Peter. He dissembled! He did it out of spiritual cowardice. He feared these people from Jerusalem.

Thus it had gone when Peter came to Antioch.

Instead of being a pillar of strength to Paul and to the truth of the Gospel he had become an offense, in the church, of great magnitude!

For this action of Peter had serious and profoundly evil implications, which Paul points out. The implications were such that it meant that, if for conscience sake Peter could not eat what the Old Testament Levitical ordinances forbade, and if he would not eat with the Gentiles, it meant that the middle wall of the partition was rebuilt, which Christ had broken down and nailed to the Cross. Christ’s work was of none effect! The Gentiles were not fellow-heirs and fellow-citizens with the Jewish believers but were still outside of the commonwealth of Israel. They were barred from the temple of God in the Spirit; they were not a part of the habitation of God in the

Spirit. (Eph. 2:22) Christ is then not our "peace" which have made both one by His death on the Cross. (Eph. 2:14; Col. 2:14) Then the grace of God is frustrated! We are still under law and are yet in our sins and condemnation!

Now we must bear in mind that Peter had been eating in christian fellowship with Gentiles for a few years already. He had recognized that it would be tempting God not to eat with Gentiles and place himself under the heavy yoke of the law, which "neither we nor our fathers were able to bear." (Acts 15:10) And, again, Peter knew right well that God put no difference "between them and us, purifying their hearts by faith." (Acts 15:9) Hence, the action was indeed one which jeopardized the truth of the Gospel and the liberty which both Jews and Gentiles, who believe, have in Christ Jesus.

Paul cites this experience and sad relapse of Peter, not to throw contempt on the name of Peter before the eyes of the Galatian churches, but to show that this matter which the Jewish heresy-mongers were trying to instill in the churches as "another gospel" was really an error which had been decided in Jerusalem by the elders and apostles as being repugnant to faith and later condemned even in a "pillar" in the church! Let the Galatians then beware of such lying preachers who would rob them of their liberty in Christ Jesus, yea, even of having a part in Christ.

Peter had by his conduct indeed jeopardized the truth of the Gospel!

PETER PUBLICLY WITHSTOOD TO HIS FACE BY PAUL IN ANTIOCH (Gal. 2:14)

Paul had been the equal of any of the pillars in the church when he met with them in Jerusalem. Peter, John, and James had added nothing to him. They had acknowledged that God had wrought mightily through Paul amongst the uncircumcision, even as He had worked through Peter among the circumcision. (Gal. 2:8) Let it be remembered! They had given Paul the right hand of fellowship and recognized him as their equal in the apostleship of Christ.

However, now Paul will shew that there had been a crisis in the church in the city of Antioch in which he had risen all alone to the defense of the Gospel to which he was called. He had withstood Peter to his face before all the people. Was it a matter of personal vendetta? Not at all! Nor was it a matter of Peter's *preaching* a different Gospel than the Gospel of Christ. Higher critics and unbelievers will try to play out a Pauline gospel over against the Gospel of Peter. Paul then preached a Gospel for the Gentiles, but Peter preached a different Gospel for the Jews. Nothing of this sort is taught or suggested here by the text. This was purely and simply a matter of the

"walk" and "conduct" of Peter as not being compatible and conformable to the teaching of the Gospel, which both Paul and Peter believed and preached. Peter's conduct and walk were deeply offensive to the Gentile saints, and were by implication a denial of the truth of the Gospel. It had been so serious that even Barnabas, Paul's trusted companion on so many occasions, was swept along by Peter's conduct so as to also separate from the Gentiles. Imagine, in a church in which Barnabas had labored, (Acts 11:22, 23) and where Barnabas had brought Paul to labor, going to Tarsus for that very purpose, (Acts 11:25) this same Barnabas is swept off his feet by Peter's conduct, taking with him the Jewish sector of the congregation there in Antioch! Paul had risen to the occasion. He had fearlessly and courageously stepped forward to defend the truth of the Gospel. Paul is, therefore, very true to form here when he once more writes this polemic and apology for the faith in this letter to the Galatians.

Since this matter of Peter's conduct had been done publicly, and it was a very clear and public offense, Paul also makes the rebuke publicly before all. It was not a matter which Paul discussed with others behind the back of Peter, but to his face. He was to be blamed; he had walked in a very reprehensible manner. And this kind of conduct was the more reprehensible in an office-bearer in the church of Christ. Here the rule holds as Peter himself writes, "Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." (I Peter 5:5) Peter did not feel any resentment against Paul for this strong and severe correction. For Paul spoke very strongly to him in the love of Christ, and not in bitterness, but in the zeal of the Lord. And Peter accepted it! Later he writes concerning Paul and says, "even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given him." (II Peter 3:15) How we ought to emulate this example of Peter in the meekness of Christ! This is also true of ministers of the Gospel. All should live according to the Word of God, "and the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets." (I Cor. 14:32) For we must always try the spirits whether they be of God, and we must be willing to be tried by the touchstone of the Word!

PAUL'S VINDICATION OF THE TRUTH OF THE RIGHTEOUSNESS BY FAITH (Gal. 2:15-18)

We suggest very strongly that the reader of these lines read this Scripture passage from his own Bible, and that he keep his Bible at hand.

Here is grand argument on the part of Paul to Peter. The point of departure in this argument is that both Peter and Paul believe the same thing concerning

the Gospel, and that they have both been saved in the same way as those who were born "Jews." Both Peter and Paul are Jewish in their natural parentage. As such they had an advantage over the Gentiles. They were not considered the uncircumcised, who were outside of the Jewish commonwealth. Paul was of the tribe of Benjamin. We do not know Peter's tribe. It may have been of the tribe of Zebulon or Naphthalim. (Matt. 4:15) He belonged to the people which sat in darkness and which saw a great light. (Isaiah 9:1, 2) At least both can say: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given . . ." (Isaiah 9:6)

Such was their background. They were not like the Gentile nations whom God suffered to walk in their own ways for many centuries. That is a very strong point here in the argument of Paul to Peter. It is by implication also a strong argument to the Galatians and to us these many centuries later. If Paul and Peter, who were not sinners like we, need the Christ, how much more do we need to be saved by faith in Christ, we who worshipped dumb idols in our generations: Thor and Woden, and the Sun, Moon and

Stars! If the best needed Jesus as Savior, how much more the worst — the Gentiles.

Yes, Paul and Peter had a very basic knowledge. They had lived under the law of commandments and ordinances. They had learned by sad experience under "law" that *no man* is justified by works of law. They had sung Psalm 143:2 in their synagogue as little boys in both Galilee and in the city of Tarsus, respectively. And they had sung in minor key, "And enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." They had longed for righteousness, for the answer of God in His faithfulness, covenant faithfulness. And Paul says that they knew this. When Jesus multiplies the fish in the sea of Galilee, Peter cries out, "Depart from me for I am a sinful man." (Luke 5:8) Yes, Peter was a "sinner" too, but not like the "sinners" out of the Gentiles. But he could not find peace under law. It was really tempting God to try to do the law, which neither he nor the fathers were able to keep! Then, Peter, why this conduct of separating from these saved sinners out of heathendom?

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

Out of the Shadows

Rev. John A. Heys

Having returned home from the mission field of our churches in Jamaica, we decided to write a few more lines about the work there and what we found. What we wrote last time was written after we had been there barely a week. And little did we know what we would experience there during the weeks we were to labour among the brethren and sisters on that island.

It was not a pleasant final week which we spent there. And we came home deeply saddened and with heavy hearts. One of the young men whom we were privileged to help train for the ministry of God's Word among the churches with which we were dealing, Rev. Alvin Beckford, we found seriously ill the first week we were there. A week later we found him to be desperately ill and greatly in need of medical care. He was, in fact, in a condition that called for hospitalization instead of being nursed by his mother up in the hills north and east of Lacovia. On our next visit we found that through the instrumentality of

Rev. Nish and Elder Foster he was hospitalized in Black River. We found this out before we had a meeting with the Reading congregation. This congregation is located a short distance north of Lacovia in what, as far as the postal divisions are concerned, is the Reading District of Lacovia; and we noted later on that these brethren and sisters call themselves the Reading Protestant Reformed Church of Jamaica. Late as it was after our meeting, we drove to the Black River Hospital; but Rev. Beckford was under sedation, and we were not able to speak with him. Graciously, though it was near 10 o'clock P.M., they did allow us three minutes of "visit" with him. The next Sunday we looked him up again, though we had to come from Belmont and had to return to that area for the evening service. He was still in a coma. And on Tuesday he left this vale of tears and sorrow for the reward of God's grace which He gives to His faithful servants. On the afternoon of our last Sunday on the island, February 20, we attended the funeral service in the Reading church, and undersigned preached the

sermon to an audience that filled the church and spilled out around the doors and open windows outside. Members of his congregations at Cave Mt. and Waterworks were there. His fellow ministers with whom he went to our school were there, and their congregations to a great extent also came.

It was a short illness, beginning, we were given to understand, last November or December. It was a short ministry, beginning in 1974 when Rev. C. Hanko preached the ordination sermon, Rev. Heys read the form, and Rev. Elliott ordained him into the ministry of God's Word in these Jamaican churches. According to the report of Rev. G. Lubbers and elder J.M. Faber, who laboured on the island last year, he was just beginning to get the feel of the work and, according to the report, "has blossomed out in his preaching quite remarkably . . . and preached a very good sermon." Added is also the remark, "His character is most loving, and he is a humble servant. He has a very large store of Psalter numbers in his memory and loves to sing them." When we broke the news to his congregation at Cave Mt. that he was hospitalized and in very serious condition, Elder Ried made those same remarks that he was a humble and faithful servant.

But it pleased God to end his ministry and to take him away from the two congregations which he was serving. And now each Sunday there are three of the seven churches that will be without the services of an ordained minister of the Word of God. The veteran, Rev. Elliott, is there and, although he is 73 years old, he faithfully trudges up and down those steep mountain roads, rides for hours on hard seats of busses and over bumpy roads; and no doubt will be serving Cave Mt. quite frequently now. It was formerly his congregation, and he still is active in the work. For the rest, there are the three younger ministers who have their own congregations: Rev. Brown, who serves Dias and Fort William; Rev. Williams, who serves Belmont; and Rev. Nish, who is minister of the Reading church in Lacovia. In the churches of the younger ministers we noticed growth and fruit upon their labours; and we were privileged also to see the Belmont congregation begin to get a suitable place of worship. Synod last June authorized using some of the restricted funds, that had been collected in our churches for the buildings of the Jamaican churches, for Belmont. All they had was a little hut that consisted of a few bamboo poles stuck in the ground and a roof of dried palm leaves. This did help a bit to keep out the burning sunshine, but it was of no value to shed the heavy rains known to the island. On three occasions our meetings in Belmont were cancelled because of rain, even after hard, rough traveling over two mountain ranges and with gasoline at \$1.98 a gallon. Perhaps you say, "Well, why start out

then in the rain?" It is not quite that simple. We lived on the northern coast, and Belmont is on the southern coast. In between are all these mountains, ridge after ridge; and although the island is roughly one hundred fifty miles long and fifty miles wide, it can have extremely contrasting weather across it. We can leave in bright sunshine and find Belmont having a torrential rain, or the other way around.

This reminds us of the first cancellation. It poured and poured all day in Montego Bay, about the time the States had all that snow. We debated all day about going that Tuesday night, it looked so hopeless. About four in the afternoon we went down the hill to the Police Station in Coral Gardens (the suburb where we were living) and asked them if they could find out whether it was raining in Belmont. Graciously, the officer got on his short wave radio and called the Bluefields police station. Now Bluefields is one mile from the city of Belmont and about two from where the Belmont bamboo-palm-leaf church stands. That was awfully close. The police at Bluefields responded in a strong clear voice that it was raining heavily. We stayed home, only to learn the next Sunday that they patiently waited for us in a completely dry church and had not had any rain all day! This led up to the next incident. On the last Tuesday that we worked on the island (the very last Tuesday on the island saw us at the airport checking in to go home) we left under sunny skies for Waterworks and Belmont. We dropped Elder and Mrs. Faber off at Waterworks for a session of instruction on Infant Baptism. But, part way over, it began to rain in the mountains, and it was raining heavily when they left us to go into the Waterworks church which is a solid building. We told them that most likely we would be back shortly, after finding it impossible to have a session on Holy Matrimony in Belmont. And then it began to pour as we have never seen it in the States as we were on the way to Belmont. As the crow flies over the mountains Belmont is about five miles away. Over the highway, as the road meanders along the coast line, the map says it is closer to ten miles. But it is a half hour drive. At Bluefields yet it was pouring, but in Belmont it was bone dry and we had an enjoyable meeting. We returned to Waterworks to find that the Fabers wondered why it took us so long to come back and tell them that we also could not meet. In Waterworks, even if the people could have come out through that heavy rain, you could not speak above the noise of the rain on the roof — a corrugated metal roof. So you learn to go, regardless of what the weather is where you are.

But to return to growth in the congregations. One of the evidences is that under the preaching of these ministers there are now two more young men with abilities who desire to learn for the ministry and are

eager to have a missionary come and instruct them. Then, too, that funeral service under the leadership of Rev. Nish was the solemn, spiritual meeting that it ought to be. He handled it very ably, and it was so different and such an improvement upon others which we attended on the island. The prayers of the elders and deacons manifest a clearer insight into and grasp of the truths of the Word of God. No, they are not pure in their doctrine and thinking; they are not what one may call strongly Reformed. But there is a desire to learn, a willingness to come and learn, and evidences that they have been taught the truth. They have a long way to go yet; and we must remember that they were so far removed from the truth. You just cannot compare the field with those which we had where the people had a Reformed background, knew the Heidelberg Catechism by heart, had been taught the Reformed Faith from infancy, were drilled in the Westminster Confession, or had through the years pastors who on the whole preached sound doctrine in other churches. Always we must remember where they were when we first began to labour there. Always we have to remember what that greatest of all missionaries, the Apostle Paul, did in the churches where he found evils creep in after his departure. He found gross adultery in Corinth and terrible desecration of the sacrament of Holy Communion. Did he say, Brethren, let us pull out and have nothing to do with these people? He did not. He still called them saints and wrote two lengthy epistles to them. Why? Why did he not shake the dust off his feet and abandon them? Because they were willing to listen even to his rebukes.

We, on several occasions, rebuked the Jamaican churches in regard to the songs which they sing, and, in our discussion sessions with them, in regard to visiting other churches with strange doctrines, and in regard to infant baptism, holy marriage, and the supporting of those who preach the Word to them. Did they show up in fewer numbers the next time? They did not. They asked whether we could come back the next night or for sure next week! After a session on infant baptism, Elder Foster in Reading said, "We did

not know that these truths were in the Bible, but in due time God sent these men so that we might also know them."

Incidentally, and we have not room for more although there is much more to say and write, our labours over the years are bearing fruit, and there is fruit upon the labours of Rev. Lubbers and Elder Faber when they visited last year. Dias is now renting a home for Rev. Brown — the home of the late Rev. Joshua Frame — and paying \$40 of the \$60 per month rent. They have also a policy to pay their minister 50¢ per member (not family) per month. To us this may seem a little sum, but many of them cannot even bring up that much in cash. But it is all a step in the right direction, and they ought to be encouraged in it. Cave Mt. expressed it audibly, as did Dias, that the Word of God does show them this calling. And they promised to do more. This was after we had our meeting when with them we searched the Scriptures to see what they teach about this matter of supporting their ministers.

What we did *not* find was that they follow us for bread. Yes, they did ask at times for money for so and so. Rarely, very rarely do we receive a request for self, it is for this poor widow, glasses for this one or that one, etc. And would Belmont (and later Reading when unavoidably by heavy rains we arrived an hour late) sit for an hour waiting for us when we had no bread in our car for them? When we gave no money, and they asked us to come back the next night or for sure next week; when Rev. Williams with a twinkle in his eye said at Belmont, "We pray that God will move Holland's congregation to let Rev. Heys stay and teach and preach for us another six weeks; when this year we did not give any money; and when over the years they have been refused sums for buildings, etc., and yet they come back, is that for *bread*? They pray and thank God that we came to bring them *the truth*, not bread. Indeed, it is slow, but these brethren and sisters in Jamaica are coming out of the shadows of false doctrines and religions and into the light of the glorious truth that our God has given us.

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MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE

Letter to the Members of the Church at Philadelphia

May 1, 1977

Dear Timothy,

In our last letter we began a discussion of some of the practical aspects of a minister's life in the parsonage — especially from the viewpoint of Paul's discussion of these things in I Timothy 4. And we began our discussion with some comments on the need of the minister to "give attendance to reading." This time I want to talk about the matter of being an example in the congregation. Paul talks about this also to Timothy: "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." (Vs. 12.)

It might be well to talk about this verse in general for a few moments before we get down to some specific ideas on the matter.

It is very striking that Paul should speak of Timothy as being an example in connection with Timothy's youth. It is thought (though this is admittedly a guess) that Timothy was about thirty years old when Paul wrote this. Upon him had been thrust the responsibility of the care of the church at Ephesus in which the apostle himself had labored diligently for a number of years. Especially in those days, thirty years old was comparatively young — especially if we think of the fact that this was about the normal time for a man to begin his active work. John the Baptist was about thirty when he began his ministry. So was our Lord.

But the interesting point here is that Paul writes this admonition to Timothy, not to the congregation when he writes: "Let no man despise thy youth." The responsibility for this falls primarily upon Timothy. And the idea is that Timothy must be a good example in the congregation *in order that* no one will despise him for being so young. And indeed, if he walks in the congregation as a good example, the people of God will not despise his youth but will give him the respect that is due him for the sake of his office. But if he does not walk as a good example, then they will despise his youth.

The apostle mentions a number of specific things in which Timothy must be such an example: word, conversation (or, as we would call it, behavior or manner of life), love, spirit, faith, purity. While it is not necessary for us to describe each one of these elements, it is interesting to note that this Scripture does not make a distinction between that part of a minister's life which belongs to his official work as a minister of the gospel and that part which is his own personal life — at least, as far as this matter of example is concerned. I recall distinctly a minister telling me, in support of conduct less than exemplary, that what he did in his own personal life was nobody's business. This is not so. A minister is an example in the whole of his life. And all of his life must be so lived that he may confidently hold up his life as a pattern for the saints to follow.

There is a question which arises in this connection. I recall that you once brought up the question in connection with a discussion we had on this very subject over a cup of coffee. The question involved the exercise of Christian liberty in the life of the minister. As I recall it, our conversation at that time had particularly to do with this responsibility as exercised by a parent in the home who must be an example to his children. But the principle remains the same. The question comes down to this: For the sake of being an example in the congregation, should a pastor refrain from doing certain things which, all other things being equal, he could in good conscience before God do? Should he, in other words, curb his Christian liberty for the sake of being an example in the midst of the flock?

There is a certain aspect to this problem which Paul himself brings up in the early verses of this chapter. Paul speaks a vehement word of condemnation in these verses against evil men who arise in the latter days and who, with consciences seared with a hot iron, forbid to marry, forbid the eating of meats, and apparently, in general, advocate the life of an ascetic. Paul says that this is all wrong. These are evil men and they must be condemned. Every creature of God is good. And because every creature of God is good, it must be received with thanksgiving. And

indeed, if it is received with thanksgiving, it is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer.

It is clear, therefore, that also in this respect, you must be an example to the flock. You must live your life in such a way that you clearly show by your conduct that you despise no good creature of God. And indeed, because all these creatures of God are good, they must be used with joy, receiving them at the hand of the Giver of every good and perfect gift.

But there are, nevertheless, certain circumstances in which the minister of the gospel finds himself in his work in a congregation when he must curb his Christian liberty as he uses God's good gifts in order that he may be a good example. To put it a little differently, a minister must be prepared to sacrifice his own personal enjoyment for the sake of the gospel which he preaches. He must be willing to do without many things because of his calling to preach the gospel. He must be willing to forego certain pleasures, for he must never be a stumbling block to his brethren.

And this is, after all, the point. Scripture speaks of the fact that our Christian liberty is always to be circumscribed by this one principle. Paul writes to the Corinthians: "Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend (and the meaning here is, stumble), I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." (I Cor. 8:13)

That is the principle, of course, for the whole of Christian life. But it is a principle which applies with double force to a minister of the gospel. And it is clear why this is true. Every saint is, after all, more or less an example to his fellow saints. This is determined, quite naturally, by many different circumstances; and some saints are more of an example, under given circumstances, than others. But this is the point behind this limitation of Christian liberty. We will not cause our brother to stumble unless we are an example to him. But because we are an example, it is very well possible that we, by our conduct, in the exercise of our own Christian liberty, cause our brother to do something in imitation of us which is an offense to his own conscience. And this we must never do.

It is this principle which applies to ministers with so much force. They are examples to the whole congregation because of the unique position which they occupy in relation to the flock over which God has placed them. Because they must come to the sheep of God with God's Word, they are looked to as examples of the life which the Word of God enjoins. It may very well be that the congregation expects from her pastor as leader and shepherd a life which is near to perfection. And this is expecting too much. A shepherd who is conscientious about his work is always

the first to admit that he himself is a sinful man and that the Word of God comes to him as well as to all the sheep. But the fact remains that he lives in the midst of the congregation as an example for all to follow. God wills that this be so. His Word comes to you: "Be thou an example of the believers."

And in being such an example, your life must be a life which every one of the sheep may imitate — from the weakest to the strongest of God's sheep. A shepherd is one who calls his sheep to follow him. This is the kind of shepherd you must be. Paul was not at all hesitant to hold up his own life by way of example to the churches. For example, he writes to the Philipians: "Brethren, be followers (and the word here means, more literally, "imitators") together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample." (Phil. 3:17)

But because you must be an example to all the sheep — to strong and weak, to aged and young, to parents and children, to saints in all the varied circumstances of their life — you must, for the sake of being an example, give up many things which you in good conscience before God could ordinarily do.

The word which Paul uses when writing to Timothy is a Greek word from which comes our English word, "type." You must be a "type" to all those in the congregation over which God has placed you. That is, your whole life must be a pattern according to which all the saints may fashion their own lives. In everything you do, you must be able to say: "God's people over whom God has placed me may emulate me in what I am now doing and not be guilty of any sin."

And at the same time you must be sure that your people understand that every creature of God is good and never to be refused if it be received with thanksgiving. In this, too, you must be sure that they are instructed. You are not called to live the life of an ascetic. You are not to engage in some kind of world flight. You are not to leave the impression with God's people that, although you too possess certain gifts of God, you really would rather do without them, and you have them only because they are necessary evils. This is false sanctity and a hypocritical holiness which makes of God's gifts something abhorrent. By despising God's gifts, you despise the Giver Who gave them. Be thankful for them and enjoy them as you sanctify them by the word of God and prayer.

Well, we are nearly at the end of another letter. We can talk about some of the particulars of this calling to be an example in future letters. Let me hear from you if you have any questions.

May God bless you.

Fraternally,
H. Hanko

ALL AROUND US

“What must I do to be saved?”

Southern Presbyterians Reject Proposed Constitution . . .”

Rev. G. Van Baren

“WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?”

One comes to expect anything nowadays from theologians and professors in Reformed seminaries and pulpits. The sad fact is that strange teachings hardly create a ripple anymore. An example of such appeared recently in an article in the *Christian Reformed Banner* of February 11, 1977. It was written by professor, emeritus, Henry Stob who has assisted in the teaching of a generation of preachers. And of all places, it appeared in a rubric entitled: “Test the Spirits.” His article was called: “Christianity and Other Religions.” Dr. Stob writes ably and presents some very good points. He arrives, however, at some very strange, un-Reformed, antiscritptural conclusions. At the end of the article, he confronts the question of the “fate of those who die without knowing Jesus Christ and without making any profession of His name.” His question is: “Are all those who have not known the name of Jesus, and all those who have not acknowledged the Galilean as the world’s Redeemer, consigned to hell?”

The article points out that saints of the Old Testament were saved in Christ — even though they “had no conception or image of the historical Savior.” That statement itself is hardly accurate. It is true that they had no conception of the historical Savior *as we presently do in light of the New Testament scriptures*; yet they surely had a proper conception of the Savior in light of the Word of God spoken to them through prophets (cf. Is. 53 for instance), and given by means of the types and shadows (the temple, altar, etc.). The other parts of his answer, however, are far more disturbing. He speaks of children who die in infancy:

It is likewise universally acknowledged that the children of believing parents who die in infancy are without their knowledge, and without confession, and even without baptism, received into heaven. It is also held by such Calvinists as B.B. Warfield, Charles Hodge, Robert Breckenridge, Robert Candlish, and others, (whose opinion I share) that *all* who die in infancy, whether born of believing parents or not, are children of God and enter at once into His glory.

This view is hardly consistent with Reformed thought (though Stob claims support from several staunch Calvinists). *All* infants, dying in infancy, shall be saved? One wonders what happens with the view of total depravity in this case, and the truth of original guilt of which all born in this earth possess. This view must presuppose a certain pelagianism (that all those born on the earth are without sin — but only become sinners through their own actions), or it must suggest that the death of Christ removed all of original guilt from all men, or a combination of such views. The view of predestination is also ignored, as is the scriptural view of the covenant. God calls His people of believers and their spiritual seed. Surely these views are ignored in the proposition set forth by Stob.

But other questions arise. What of the infants who died in the flood, or in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah? Did all such infants go to heaven, too? According to the viewpoint of Stob, the answer must be that they did. One might almost then say, “What a wonderful thing that God sent this flood! Thus hundreds of thousands of infants were also brought to heaven — who otherwise might have been lost eternally in hell!” The flood, then, would have been the means not only to save righteous Noah and his family, but perhaps millions of infants as well! Yet Scripture hardly speaks that way. We read in Gen. 7:1, “And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation.” There God identifies Noah as righteous — but also distinguishes him from all his generation in that respect. That can only be regarded as God’s judgment also of those infants who drowned in the flood.

And what does Scripture teach of Sodom and Gomorrah? When Abraham pleaded with God to preserve the city for the sake of the righteous, and God agreed *even if as few as ten righteous were found there* (Gen. 18:32), the cities were nevertheless destroyed. Counting the infants, as Stob would have to do, the number would surely have exceeded ten

many times over. Did the infants who died in the destruction of those cities go to heaven? They did not – if God's judgment of those cities was correct. And for myself I would far rather take God's judgment than that of Stob – though admittedly, Stob's judgment is more appealing to the flesh!

Besides, if Stob's position were correct, one could wish and pray for many disasters, catastrophes, wars on this earth – so that many more infants of unbelievers might enter heaven. Though it might sound absurd, one could even rejoice in the actions of Hitler in killing many Jewish infants (with their parents) who now will be in heaven! The suggestion of Stob certainly does not harmonize with Scripture.

But Stob points out something which, to me, is far more disturbing. Stob does say, "Missionary work is *necessary* because the natural man is lost without Christ, no man being able to be saved by even the most diligent observance of the prescriptions of the ethnic faiths." However, he does not consistently maintain this. He includes a disturbing suggestion:

The fate of others who, not knowing the Christ in His historical concreteness, remained external adherents of pagan or heathen cults (as, e.g., Socrates); and the fate of those who, having heard of the Christ, made no public profession of His name and continued to bear some non Christian label (as, e.g., Ghandi) – the fate of these must be left in the hands of God; we are not here entitled to enter into judgment. We are only to remember that God is sovereignly free in His election and that the Spirit of God bloweth where He listeth.

The one thing we are authorized to declare with certainty is this: If anyone is saved, it is because of what God did in Jesus Christ, who by His birth, death, resurrection, ascension, and kingly session became the only Savior that lost sinners will ever have; who, in short, is and will ever remain the one and only mediator between God and man.

This is nothing short of astounding! Stob at least suggests the possibility of salvation of those who have never believed! And he comes with this suggestion on the basis that God can do anything ("sovereignly free in His election") and that the Spirit works in ways other than we might expect ("Spirit bloweth where He listeth"). Though I hesitate to state it, one can only conclude that this is nothing short of blasphemy. It attributes to God the works which are of the devil. Stob refers here not merely to "common grace" but to a "saving grace" which will lead these unbelievers nevertheless to heaven! That is a terrible doctrine! And a generation of preachers, presumably, was taught this under Stob!

It is true that Stob does not *affirm* the above to be undoubtedly the case. He presents a theory which he is ready neither to affirm nor deny. It remains merely a possibility in Stob's mind that some unbelievers are

also saved. But is not this ever the approach of the heretic? Does he not cleverly instill doubt in the minds of the child of God by way of question? Didn't Arminius and his followers do this when they wrote the five articles of the Remonstrants – especially in connection with the truth of preservation of the saints? These did not deny the truth of preservation – but left it an open question. Did not even Satan himself do this in Paradise when he asked, "Yea did God say that ye might not eat of every tree of the garden?" By asking the question, one can not pin a heresy on another. Yet the heretic has the opportunity to instill his evil suggestion in the minds of others. Let Stob either affirm outrightly or deny the proposition. To come in the form of a question is devious and deceitful. Nor let him claim the omnipotence of God as the basis of the possibility he suggests. That is as preposterous as claiming that God, Who is omnipotent, can will to sin if He would. God can not do what is contrary to His nature and Word.

But can not Stob know for sure? If he believes the infallible Scriptures, he can. Remember the cry of the Philippian jailor, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" And what did Paul answer? "Don't worry! The Holy Spirit bloweth where He listeth! A good man as yourself can easily, perhaps, be saved just the way you are!" But what saith the Scripture? "*Believe* on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved and thy house." There is no other way. Or, in Romans 10:9, 13-15, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?" Or did not Jesus say to Nicodemus, "He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God"? (John 3:18). And are there not many other similar passages?

No, Stob; Socrates and Ghandi are not in heaven.

How long can this sort of thing be taught or implied unopposed – and still a church retain its name "Reformed"?

SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIANS REJECT PROPOSED CONSTITUTION

From *Christianity Today*, Mar. 4, 1977, (and many other magazines) comes the report that the Presbyterian Church U.S. (Southern Presbyterian) has officially rejected its proposed new confession. This is particularly surprising since many of the "conservatives" of that denomination left to form the Presby-

terian Church in America. To approve such a document, three-fourths of the districts (similar to our classis) must approve. To date, more than a fourth have rejected it. Many of the votes were extremely close. Those seeking a new confession, however, will not cease their efforts. The attempt to gain approval in the future will have a two-pronged approach. There will be a continuing attempt to change the constitutional demand that three fourths approval of change is required (perhaps lowering the requirement to

two-thirds approval). And there will be a resubmission of this constitution or confession, perhaps with certain changes to gain additional votes, in the future.

The rejection of this new confession throws doubt upon the success of the proposed union between the southern and northern Presbyterian churches. The United Presbyterian Church (in the north) had adopted a new confession about ten years ago.

Book Reviews

I BELIEVE IN THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS, by George Eldon Ladd; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; 156 pp., \$2.95 (paper) (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko)

This book is one of a series of books which Eerdmans is in the process of publishing, edited by Michael Green, and intended "to take a fresh look at controversial areas of the Christian faith." The author of this book is professor of New Testament in Fuller Theological Seminary.

George Ladd has given us an interesting and worthwhile book in many respects. His purpose is primarily to substantiate historically the fact of the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. To accomplish this, he examines in some detail all the various theories which have been proposed over the centuries to explain the empty tomb and the faith of the New Testament Church. He gives special attention to those who, on the basis of literary and historical criticism, deny the resurrection of Christ as a bodily resurrection from the dead. But he discusses all these views in a way in which anyone can understand them. He is also intent on showing the total importance of this truth for the Christian faith.

Nevertheless, I was not happy with this book. I am aware of the fact that there is serious disagreement among evangelicals on the whole question of Hermeneutics. There is a large number of evangelical scholars (perhaps the majority) whose approach to Scripture is basically the approach of those critics who examine the Scriptures from the viewpoint of literary and historical criticism. They examine even the truth concerning inspiration from this viewpoint. That is, only if there is, after a careful literary and historical examination of the Scriptures, sufficient reason to accept the Scriptures as true will they do so. If they are evangelical, they do, more or less, arrive at the conclusion that Scripture is indeed true, but their reasons are less than satisfactory. Others, and they are probably in the minority, do not come to Scripture

in this way. They accept the truth of the infallible inspiration of Scripture on the basis of Scripture's own testimony. They do this by faith. They *believe* without question, on the basis of Scripture's testimony of itself, that Scripture is God's Word. This does not mean that they show no interest in literary and historical questions; they do. But their examination of these literary and historical questions is not to *prove* Scripture's trustworthiness; it is an examination within the confines of Scripture's trustworthiness. Their fundamental presupposition of faith is that Scripture cannot err. And all the historical and literary data of Scripture must be explained and interpreted within the context of infallible inspiration.

I belong to the latter group. Ladd belongs to the former group. We part ways at this critical juncture, and the result is that, while our conclusions may in some instances be the same, they are in other important instances quite different.

Ladd indeed believes in the bodily resurrection of Christ. He even says in more than one place in the book that faith is necessary to believe this truth. But at the same time, on the basis of his approach, he denies infallible inspiration. In fact, in all the book there is not so much as one word breathed concerning the inerrancy of the Scriptures. The veracity of the Scriptures is weighed much as one would weigh the truthfulness of any book in a court of law. So he comes to several conclusions with which I can never agree. He freely admits that there are errors in the record of Scripture, even in the records of the resurrection. The gospel narrators do not always agree on details, and one or more may have erred. He speaks of the whole of the New Testament as based solely on traditions in the early Church which were orally passed on from eyewitnesses to others, and from them to yet others or to the writers of Scripture. He accepts the theory that both Matthew and Luke are dependent upon Mark's gospel in their writings. Etc.

Why is it that evangelical scholars are so frightened

by the truth that God could have revealed to the apostles and writers of Scripture what they could not have known apart from direct revelation? I do not understand this fear. I have no doubt that it is true that some of what the writers wrote they received from others. But even then, they were infallibly guided in their writings so that they were preserved from error. But Scripture is clear that this was not always the case. Ladd insists that when Paul says in Gal. 1 that he received his gospel not from men but from God, this nevertheless means that he received it from the apostles with whom he had contact in Jerusalem. But Galatians 1 is exactly a refutation of this. "But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." Gal. 1:11, 12. Paul recounts his brief stay in Jerusalem just exactly to show that his contacts with the apostles were too short and too limited for him to have received his gospel from them. The same thing is true of I Cor. 11:23: "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread...." To anyone who can read the English language this means that Paul did not receive this information concerning the institution of the Lord's Supper from anyone else but the Lord Himself. It did not come to Paul by oral tradition from the apostles.

The seriousness of this position is clear from Ladd's own words. He writes on p. 140:

But "historical reasoning" has not provided an adequate explanation for the rise of the resurrection faith. Therefore, historical reasoning reinforces my Christian convictions, if it does not prove them. There must be critical interaction between my Christian faith and my historical critical faculties. *The present author is ready to admit that if historians came up with a completely convincing "historical" explanation of the resurrection faith, his evangelical faith would be shaken."*

I want Ladd to know that though all the critics in the world agree on a theory which can explain the data of the resurrection in a way other than that Christ bodily arose, and can make the theory so plausible that all the world should believe it, I still believe with all my heart that Christ arose bodily from the dead by the power of God. I believe this because God says, in His Word, that it is true!

Ladd shows after all that any other grounds for believing the truth of Scripture than faith in God's infallible Word are treacherous grounds which, sooner or later, will lead to a denial of that fundamental truth of the Christian faith.

Would that evangelical scholars would be much less frightened by the charges of lack of scholarship raised

by higher critics and would be somewhat more frightened by an angry God Who will not leave unpunished those who will not believe His Word.

COMMENTARY ON ROMANS Martin Luther (translated and condensed by J. Theodore Mueller), Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, Michigan; 223 pp., \$4.95. [Reviewed by Prof. H.C. Hoeksema]

This is a reprint of a work originally published in 1954 by Zondervan Publishing House.

To this reviewer the value of this book does not lie so much in its exposition of the Epistle to the Romans. It is not without value in this respect, to be sure. Nevertheless, as a commentary — as its very brevity of 223 pages will tell you — it is rather scant. Besides, it is not the work of the mature Luther: Luther began his lectures on Romans in 1515. And besides that, this is a condensed and abridged edition. Anyone who is interested in the complete comments of Luther will have to turn to the rather recently completed English edition of the complete works of Martin Luther. However, to purchase the latter is beyond the means of most people; and to borrow these volumes from a library is not always possible or practical.

The value of this book is historical, in the first place. It furnishes an insight into the way in which the Reformation took place, first of all, in Luther's own mind and heart. For do not forget that it was through his study of Romans that Luther arrived at an understanding of "the righteousness which is of God" and of the blessed truth of justification by faith. And, as is plain from the date of these comments on Romans, 1515, this pre-dated the Reformation. In the second place, the value of this condensed commentary is somewhat devotional; and as such it will furnish the reader a taste of Luther, a taste which might inspire him to read more of Luther's writings.

The book is enhanced by a preface by Dr. Mueller and by the inclusion of Luther's own Introduction, written in 1552.

Recommended.



News From Our Churches

Rev. David Engelsma, pastor of our church in South Holland, Illinois, has received a call from our new congregation in Houston, Texas, to be their first pastor.

The Reformed Witness Committee in Northwest Iowa and Minnesota has sponsored a series of three lectures this spring in Runals Memorial Hall in Edgerton, Minnesota, on the general theme of Recognizing the Signs of the Times. The topics and speakers were as follows, "Old Creeds — Right for these Last Days?" (March 17, Rev. Marvin Kamps). "Faithful Preaching — Do We Still Need It?" (March 31, Rev. James Slopsema). "Biblical Discipline — Too Conservative for Today?" (April 14, Rev. Mark Hoeksema).

Edgerton also scheduled a "Men's-Ladies' Social" on Monday, April 4. There was to be a discussion on "Baptism on the Mission Field" and also special numbers from the Men's and Ladies' Societies. All the adults of the congregation were invited to attend this meeting. The bulletin announcement did not say, but I have a suspicion that coffee and other suitable refreshments were served at this meeting.

The Western Ladies' League meeting was scheduled for April 21 at 1:00 PM in Hull, Iowa. Rev. Mark Hoeksema's topic was "Molding Christian Character In the Home." In the east, it would be very unusual to hold a public meeting such as this at a time other than a weekday evening, but in the west an afternoon meeting is not too unusual.

The Classis East Office Bearer's Conference was held on April 5 at Southeast Church. Rev. Ronald Van Overloop's topic was "Our Responsibility to the Church and School vs. Our Responsibility to the Family." This is a topic of no little interest to many men in our churches who often find themselves spending many evenings away from their families while busy with the work of the church and christian school.

The Eastern Ladies' League and the Men's League have scheduled a combined meeting in Hudsonville Church on April 26. Rev. B. Woudenberg was asked to speak on "The Victory of the Church in the Life of Its Members."

The young people's societies in our Hudsonville Church decided to make it their project to pay for the sign in front of their new church. To accomplish this goal, a committee was busy contacting all the young people in the congregation in an attempt to raise the \$700 cost of the new sign.

A Quiet Thought from the Southeast bulletin: "He who has no desire to be in the company of God's people on the Sabbath, will not be among them when the Lord comes to claim His own — unless by the grace of God they repent."

K. G. V.

*Report of Classis East
Held April 6, 1977 at
Southeast Prot. Ref. Church*

Classis East met in regular session on April 6th at Southeast Church. The business was routine. There were no pressing problems for the churches. Each church was represented by two delegates. Rev. G. Van Baren presided at this session. Noteworthy was the fact that four elders were in attendance at classis for the first time and signed the Formula of Subscription.

In its business for the day, the Finance Committee, composed of Elders J. Kalsbeek and C. Kregel, reported and classis approved expenses of \$363.40. Revs. Heys and C. Hanko were elected as church visitors, the reports of the Stated Clerk and the Classical Committee were heard. Covenant Church of Wyckoff, New Jersey requested permission to ask the churches in Classis East for collections to help them in their building project. Classis also extended to these brethren the privilege of approaching synod for the purpose of making a similar request to the churches of Classis West.

After the asking and answering of the questions of Article 41 of the Church Order and the closing remarks of the chairman, classis stood adjourned. Rev. J.A. Heys closed the meeting with prayer. Classis will meet next in July at Southwest Church.

Respectfully submitted,

Jon Huiskens
Stated Clerk