

# The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

The Reformed Church rejects hyper-Calvinism, not because she hedges on her Calvinism at the last moment, but exactly because of her Calvinism. Knowing her salvation as the sovereign, free, gracious calling of God in Christ, she burns with zeal for the glory of her God. In the love of her thankful heart, she desires that His great Name, Jesus, be published to the ends of the earth and that His good commandments be obeyed.

See "Hyper-Calvinism" and the Call of the Gospel — page 204

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## MEDITATION

## Be Strong in the Lord

Rev. H. Veldman

*“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.” Eph. 6:10.*

Finally, my brethren . . .

The apostle is nearing the end of his epistle to the Ephesians. And, now, as far as the rest is concerned, concluding my epistle to the church at Ephesus, and also to the church of God throughout the ages, the apostle would say, I leave with you this final word of God: Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. And then the apostle holds before us in the

verses that follow how we can be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Engaged in the fearful struggle of the ages, fighting a battle which is exclusively spiritual, we must put on the whole armour of God.

We must be strong in the midst of the world. That we are in the midst of the world is, of course, an obvious fact. But, what is fully as important is that

we must be in the midst of the world. We do not believe in world flight, that we must seclude ourselves from the world. As impossible as it is for us to “get out” of the world, so wrong and contrary to the will of God is it for us to do so. Although not of the world, we are nevertheless in the world. Naturally speaking, contact with the world is unavoidable. We are not called to separate ourselves from any world sphere. In the world, we must certainly “rub elbows” with those who love the darkness rather than the light, with all the powers of sin and darkness.

What is this world that confronts us? Viewed naturally, they are exactly as we are. We come into contact with men having bodies and souls, who have the same needs we have . . . We meet men who stand in the same earthy relationships as we do, such as parents and children, husbands and wives, employers and employees, etc. They are men of like passions as we are; they receive from God the same gifts, such as and sunshine, etc.

Viewed spiritually, however, they are vastly different. The children of the world are governed from below. It makes not a particle of difference how they may appear and conduct themselves in the outward sense of the word. They may be ever so humanitarian, striving for the betterment of mankind, making this world a better place in which to live. Fact is, they are governed from below. How scriptural this is! How the Word of God emphasizes this in Eph. 2:1-3 and Rom. 8:6-8! And governed from below, controlled by the power of sin and evil, they have but one purpose and goal. They are unalterably opposed to God and the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. All their humanitarian efforts are only man’s vain attempt to set up and establish his kingdom of sin, without God and the Christ of Calvary. All this will culminate in the kingdom of Antichrist. How important it is that we understand this, as fathers and mothers, as husbands and wives, also as young people.

Besides, this world is strong. On its side are the spiritual powers of the air, the devil and all his demonic host – see Eph. 6:12. United with the world are countless millions of men, far more numerous than the people of the Lord. Then, they have access to all the resources of this world . . . And, to add to this very sober and apparently gloomy picture, there is the manner in which we must conduct this warfare. We may never resort to force or violence over against those who are in authority, and this also includes our employers. We must be willing to be led as sheep to the slaughter, even as Christ, and we must trust that the Lord will vindicate us in His own good time.

To be strong always means two things. It means that we must be strong in the truth. We do well to bear in mind that, in the apostle’s description of the Christian’s armour in the verses 13-17, the first item

mentioned is the girdle of truth. We must know the will of God, what the Lord demands of us in the midst of the world. That will of God is contained for us in the infallible scriptures. And, we must also be able to recognize that will of God from whatever is opposed to it. We must have the power of spiritual discernment. Secondly, we must also be strong in our walk. We must always be ready to seal our confession of the truth with a new and godly walk. This may imply that we invite trouble and disaster. Yet, we must be strong. Doctrine and life belong inseparably together. If we are not grounded in the truth, we will be as a ship without a compass and a rudder; then we will drift aimlessly to and fro. But, if we do not seal our confession with a godly walk, then all our knowledge will be nothing more than a tinkling cymbal; then we are nothing; then it would have been better had we never been born.

How can we be strong? The expression, “be strong,” as it appears in the original, can mean two things. It can mean that we strengthen ourselves. It can also mean that we are strengthened. We prefer the passive interpretation: be strengthened. We believe this interpretation to be more in harmony with what follows: in the Lord, and in the power of His might. The translation, “be strong,” is permissible, if only we remember that our only strength is exactly in the Lord and in the power of His might. Besides, the word, “be strengthened,” is in the present tense, a being strengthened, and this means that we must be strengthened continually, as in the Lord and in the power of His might.

Indeed, we can never be strong in ourselves. On the one hand, the odds are hopelessly against us. The people of God are hopelessly outnumbered, in man power and in resources. Besides, we can never be strong because of ourselves. The fifth columnist lurks in our every bosom. We are holy only in principle. The spiritual undertow, the current against which we must struggle, is terrific in its force. And, we are naturally attracted to the things that are below. How can we ever protect this small principle of our new and heavenly obedience? Indeed, the history of the Church is littered with the debris of those who would stand in their own strength.

How can we be strong? First of all, we can be strong only as in the Lord. The Lord here is surely our Lord Jesus Christ. To be strong in Him means that He must be the sphere and origin of our strengthening. We must never seek help outside of Him. Of course, we must be in the Lord, united with Him. But then we must also seek all our strength from Him; always He must be the source and origin of all our strength. And, secondly, we must be strong in the power of His might. These words are added by the apostle as a further explanation of the words: be

strong in the Lord. Indeed, well may we seek our strength in and from the Lord because of the power of His might.

Indeed, what a tremendous power is His! This power which proceeds from the crucified and living Christ is surely the same power which was wrought by God in the Christ Himself. It is the mighty power which raised up Christ from the dead and exalted Him into the highest glory, far above all principalities, power, might, and dominion. Christ emptied Himself into the lowest abyss of hell; the power of God exalted Him, our crucified Lord, into the highest heaven.

And, this power of His might is also ours. Christ is not merely an individual. He is not merely another man who suffered and died and rose again, and now beckons unto us that we follow in His footsteps. If this were true, we could never attain unto heavenly glory. Jesus must surely be more than a trail blazer who shows us the way. This Christ is none other than our Lord Jesus Christ. He suffered and died as our Head, the Head of all the elect given Him by the Father. He suffered and died for our sins. For us He merited everlasting life and glory. So, the power of His might which elevated Him to the highest glory is now His, and to be wrought by Him in all His own, the elect given Him by the Father from before the foundations of the world.

Now we understand the word of the apostle: be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Seek Him at all times, constantly, through God's word and prayer. Seek Him as our Lord Whom we confess, Who suffered and died for us, paid for all our sins and has begun His work of grace in us. Seek Him as the One Who is alone able to keep us and to preserve us, Who can give us grace to be strong, to stand in the battle of faith, to persevere against hopeless odds, to enable us to suffer and shame, and then, when our life's course has been finished, to take us unto Himself in everlasting life and glory.

Indeed, the struggle will be difficult. How this truth is emphasized in the Word of God! The world is unalterably opposed to the kingdom of God and of His Son. The book of Revelation speaks vividly of the struggle throughout the ages between the kingdom of this world and the cause of God and of His Christ. In Revelation 13 we have the description of the anti-christ as he rises out of the sea and out of the earth. And in Hebrews 11 the inspired writer speaks of the great cloud of witnesses, the saints of God throughout the Old Dispensation. Seeking all our strength in the Lord and in the power of His might, our path will not be a path of roses. The Word of God tells us that the servant is not greater than his master. This same truth is also emphasized in this sixth chapter of Paul's epistle to the Ephesians.

However, we will be strong. We will be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. And whatever may be life's troubles and trials, this will be our joy and experience: the assurance of eternal and heavenly victory, that no harm can really befall us, and that all things work together for our good. Although hopelessly outnumbered, God is for us, and, if God be for us, nothing is and can be against us. We are more than conquerors through Christ that loved us. Our Lord Jesus Christ, through the power of His might, can preserve us even unto the end. And we will have the assurance that nothing will ever be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Even as we may read it in Romans 8:38-39: "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord." Let us, then, put on the whole armour of God, stand in the power of His grace, and rejoice in the victory which is ours and will be given us in that day when the battle will be over and the crown of victory given us only because of Jesus, the Captain of our salvation and the Author and Finisher of our faith.

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## EDITORIAL

### The GKN and Dr. H.M. Kuitert Baptism on the Mission Field (4)

*Prof. H. C. Hoeksema*

Recently so much attention has been paid to the Wiersinga Case in various reports about developments

in the Netherlands that one was almost inclined to think that the problems surrounding the teachings of

Dr. H.M. Kuitert had subsided or disappeared. Nothing, however, could be farther from the truth. Dr. Kuitert has changed neither his teachings nor his rather abrasive tactics. Moreover, he continues to occupy a chair in the Theological Faculty of the Free University, where he can easily influence the budding theologians and future ministers of the *Gereformeerde Kerken* who are his students. He continues, too, to propagate his views among the churches and to influence the churches in various ways by virtue of the fact that he has remained undisciplined with respect to his place in the churches. He has even been able to function as advisor at the General Synod of the GKN recently.

Rather futilely, in my opinion, some have continued their attempts at protest against the views of the liberals in the GKN, and in particular against the views of Dr. Kuitert. I say "futilely" because to date no one has been successful in these attempts at protest. The General Synod has been willing in some instances — not in all — to make some mildly condemnatory pronouncements concerning some of the liberal and un-Reformed teachings of these men; but it has not been willing either to take or to recommend any kind of disciplinary action with respect to the men themselves.

And as might be expected, this failure to take disciplinary action only serves to embolden the heretics. They do not stand still, of course; but become more bold and outspoken in expressing their heretical ideas, and also add heresy to heresy. It is already several years ago that Kuitert's views first came under attack. And although at that time the General Synod of the GKN made a doctrinal pronouncement concerning the historicity of the creation and fall of Adam and Eve, nothing was ever done by way of disciplining Kuitert. The result has been that Kuitert not only "stuck to his guns" but also that he propagated more and greater errors in his characteristically abrasive way — a manner which is intentionally employed by Kuitert, I think, for its shock-effect.

What is worse, the result of all this has been that the down-grade movement in the GKN has also continued unimpeded. No synodical pronouncements have been able to stop it. There were those who found reason for cheer in the fact that the Synod declared Wiersinga's denial of the atonement impermissible; but the simple fact is that this declaration, mainly because it was not enforced (and, I dare say, unenforceable), did nothing to stem the tide. No church ever stands still, you see. Either a church moves forward in the way of the truth of the gospel, or it retrogresses. And sad to say, in the GKN there is every evidence today that there is neither the will nor the ability to stand for the precious truths of our Reformed heritage.

Of all this I was reminded when I read the reports of the most recent synodical decision concerning Kuitert's views. Dr. Kuitert wrote a little book entitled "*Zonder geloof vaart niemand wel* (Without faith no one prospers)" — a book with a fairly decent title, but which occasioned complaints of a very serious nature against his views. And, as reported in various church papers recently, the Synod of the GKN has now expressed itself concerning those complaints. Rather than translate the entire decision of the General Synod, I will try to furnish the highlights.

First of all, questions were raised in connection with Kuitert's book concerning the following items: being bound by the confessions, the nature of the authority of Scripture, the relation between revelation and Holy Scripture, and so-called extra-ecclesiastical Christianity, i.e., a Christianity outside of the Christian church. Before the decision on Kuitert's views was made, there were extensive discussions with Kuitert about his views and about the criticism of them.

In reaching its decision, Synod took into consideration the following items: 1) That Kuitert maintains his objections against the binding character of the confessions under the 1971-72 Formula of Subscription, although he does not plead for setting aside of the Formula of Subscription. 2) That certain expressions in his book concerning the relation between revelation and Holy Scripture and the nature of Scriptural authority are, without further explanation, difficult to harmonize with the acknowledgment of Scripture as the Word of God; but from further explanations on his part it might appear that he confesses that via Holy Scripture God's unique and unrepeatable Self-revelation is transmitted to us. Yet there are still important questions concerning Kuitert's views concerning the relation between revelation and Holy Scripture and concerning the nature of the authority of Scripture. 3) That Dr. Kuitert in general repudiates the apparently possible conclusions which might be drawn from his book, such as that he holds for true the content of Scripture and of the Christian faith only in as far as they, according to general human opinion, can promote a liberating human prosperity; such as that he makes no essential distinction between God's general revelation and His special revelation in Scripture; such as that he holds that the Christian faith is a human invention and not the divinely wrought response of men to the Gospel of God in the Christ of the Scriptures; such as that he views the Christian faith as one of many ways by which a man can come to God and His salvation; and such as that he wants to legitimize an extra-ecclesiastical Christianity. With respect to all the latter items, however, the Synod declared and took into considera-

tion the fact that the discussion with Dr. Kuitert did not lead to satisfactory clarity.

Permit me to interrupt this account of Synod's decision for a moment, in order to observe that at the least, *at the very least*, there are grounds in the above for the Synod to declare that Dr. Kuitert is *incompetent* to instruct students in theology and future ministers. If a man's writings are so vague and so lacking in precision and clarity that even ecclesiastical experts (the Synod and the deputies who engaged in these long discussions) cannot gain a clear understanding of what he teaches, and if the man himself cannot, when given extended opportunity, clarify his views, then he is obviously not much of a scholar and still less of a teacher. A teacher must be able to make things plain, and he must be able to communicate. For my own part, however, I do not believe this story of the Synod. I believe it is a ruse. Dr. Kuitert is quite able to communicate. I have found him to be so in his writings. I also found him to be quite clearly heretical when he lectured several years ago under the auspices of the Christian Reformed Ministers' conference. No, that is not the trouble. The trouble is that the Synod was afraid to say anything unfavorable in forthright language. Notice that in all of the above items there is nothing unfavorable to Kuitert which is stated in black-and-white terms. Everything is qualified; nothing is firmly declared. The language reminds one of the double-talk of a diplomat. The trumpet gives an uncertain sound!

As you might expect, the actual declaration of the Synod is no better than the considerations which precede it.

In the first place, the Synod declares that objections were rightly registered against Kuitert's radical criticism of the binding character of the confessions, and it rejects such radical criticism. And then this is added: that of Dr. Kuitert, even as of all who sign the Formula of Subscription, it is expected that he will continue to adhere to that which is laid down therein.

A decision of this kind is ridiculous; it is not worthy of a Reformed assembly. What is worse, it is a lying decision! Notice: 1) Synod acknowledges that Kuitert objects to binding and that the protests against him are legitimate. 2) In the next point Synod also acknowledges that the protests against Kuitert's views of the relation of revelation and Scripture and of the nature of Biblical authority are legitimate. In other words, he has already transgressed the binding authority of the confessions! 3) Yet Synod speaks of *continuing* to adhere. How, pray tell, can a man *continue to adhere* when he has already departed and failed to adhere? But notice, too, that Synod *demand*s nothing of Kuitert. Synod uses the same miserable language as in the Wiersinga case: it "is expected. . . ."

In the second point of its declaration Synod declares that the protests against certain expressions of Kuitert concerning the relation of revelation and Scripture and concerning the nature of Biblical authority are legitimate. Then it points out what is involved in the acknowledgement of Scripture as the Word of God according to the Netherlands Confession, Articles 3 and 5 — as if both Kuitert and his critics did not know this! But then the Synod adds that because the confession is historically modified in its formulation of the truth of Scripture, it does not answer the new questions which have arisen since then concerning the relation of revelation and Scripture and concerning the nature of Biblical authority, and that therefore Synod had previously already assigned the study of these questions to the Commission on Church and Theology. Yet the Synod gave no specific mandate on this matter of Kuitert's unclear views to the committee.

Notice again, however, that nothing whatsoever is demanded of Dr. Kuitert with respect to his views of Scripture. The objections are legitimate; but nothing is required of him!

In the third point of its decision Synod takes note of the fact that Kuitert claimed in general not to be able to recognize himself in the conclusions which could apparently be possibly drawn from his book, and that for the rest no ecclesiastical pronouncement can be made concerning various items at the present stage of discussion.

And do not forget in all this discussion how serious these matters are. For it is a mark of the false church when heretics are upheld and tolerated!

#### Baptism On The Mission Field (4)

In this installment of our consideration of the Study Report we wish to return to the item which we by-passed earlier, namely the decision of the Synod of 1956.

First of all, let us quote what the Study Report has to say on the matter. Their mandate was "to take into account . . . the previous decisions of Synod, especially 1956." In referring to this decision of 1956, the committee offers the following summation:

The Synod of 1956 approved of the labors of the missionary working in Loveland, Colorado "with the exception of his administration of the Sacraments." The grounds adopted were: 1. That the administration of the Sacraments is contrary to the second duty mentioned in the Form for Ordination. 2. It is contrary to his being under the supervision of the Consistory of the First Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan. Article 7 of the Constitution of the Mission Committee." (Acts of Synod, 1956, Articles 85,86, 90-94.)

In connection with its discussion of the Form of

Ordination of Missionaries, the Study Report has the following to say about this decision of 1956:

The Form of Ordination of Missionaries (pp. 74-76 in the back of the Psalter), rightly understood, charges the missionary with the duty of baptizing on the mission field, before and with a view to the existence of the instituted church. This Form was misunderstood by the Synod of 1956, which decided that "administration of the Sacraments is contrary to the second duty mentioned in the Form of Ordination" (Art. 91).

Finally, in its advice the Study Report has the following to say: "B. Synod declare that the Synod of 1956 erred in Art. 91, Ground 1 when it said, 'That the administration of the Sacraments is contrary to the second duty mentioned in the Form for Ordination.'"

In considering this material, we should get the background of the 1956 decision, which is not furnished in full by the Study Report. Here it is:

1. Our missionary was at that time laboring in Loveland, Colorado, *and was laboring in an already existing and instituted congregation*, which, however, was not yet a Protestant Reformed Congregation. It was the Reformed Hope Church of Loveland.

2. According to a letter from the Consistory of that Reformed Hope Church which the Mission Committee included in its report, our missionary "has administered the Lord's Supper twice, has baptized three of our children." Acts of Synod, 1956, pp. 78, 79.

3. Neither the Advisory Committee nor the Mission Committee offered Synod any advice on this matter. But when this material was treated on the floor of Synod, the following decision was made:

Motion is made that we approve of Rev. Lubbers' labors in Loveland as reported by the Mission Committee. See "I" of report. An amendment is made "with the exception of his administration of the Sacraments." A motion is made to add the following grounds:

1. That the administration of the Sacraments is contrary to the second duty mentioned in the Form for Ordination.

2. It is contrary to his being under the supervision of the Consistory of the First Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, Article 7 of the Constitution of the Mission Committee.

This motion carries.

An amendment is made to add "and with the exception of pronouncing the blessing." Ground: The official blessing and benediction is only and exclusively laid on an organized congregation, and under the supervision of a local Consistory. Proof: all the benedictions in the Old and New Testaments are laid upon the organized church of Christ. Carried.

The motion of Article 86, with its various amendments and grounds offered is now adopted. (Articles 85, 86, 91, 92, 93, 94)

I quote all of this material in full because it sheds a little different light on the subject than one might gain from the partial quotation in the Study Report. From a strictly formal point of view I am not greatly in love with the decision of 1956. You see, it was one of those decisions which was hatched out on the floor of Synod. Our past leaders, such as the late Revs. Hoeksema and Vos, were rather adept at these "floor" decisions. And at the time they were made, very often they were correct, too; and usually they would be clear to those who were present at Synod. The trouble is that because of their brevity they are often not clear to posterity, except by way of looking up all the background, etc. That is why synods do well to commit such problems to advisory committees for full and careful formulation. Nevertheless, I am essentially in agreement with the decision, as I was when I was a delegate to the 1956 Synod. And in connection with the Study Report and the above data, I wish to point out the following:

1. The Study Committee, it seems to me, went beyond its mandate. The mandate was *to take into account* this decision of 1956. The Study Report *passes judgment* on the 1956 decision, and even recommends that Synod declare it to be in error. Moreover, in the advice of the Study Report no grounds are offered for declaring it in error.

2. It should be carefully noted that this decision was taken in a *concrete case*. Synod of 1956 did not simply declare that *all administration of the sacraments on the mission field* was improper. But it referred to the situation as described above. What was that situation? This: 1) there was an organized congregation. 2) However, that congregation was not yet a Protestant Reformed congregation.

3. In this light it is plain that the Synod of 1956 understood the Form for Ordination in the same way as I have explained it in my earlier articles on this subject, namely: if it please the Lord to make thy work fruitful unto the gathering of a congregation, i.e., a Protestant Reformed congregation, then the missionary may and must baptize. In addition, Synod offered the ground that a minister may not without authorization place himself (in preaching and administering the sacraments) under the supervision of a non-Protestant Reformed consistory.

Finally, I wish to point out that there is a vast difference between what the Form states and what the Study Report states.

1. The Form places a *limitation*, a condition, on the missionary with regard to baptism: "...IF it pleases God to make thy work fruitful unto the

gathering of a church....” The Study Report in effect changes this to a statement of *purpose*: “...with a view to the existence of the instituted church. . . .” These two are by no means the same.

2. The language of the form is *objective*: it points objectively to the proper circumstances under which a missionary has the duty of administering baptism. The language of the Study Report, it seems to me, is *subjective*: it seems to me to speak only of the out-

look or the purpose which the missionary has in mind when he baptizes. No one knows whether or not a church will be instituted. But the missionary must have this in mind in baptism: it is “with a view to the instituting of a congregation,” but this instituting of a congregation is not certain, it may be possible, may even be probable, but may also be improbable or doubtful. Again, the language of the Study Report and that of the Form are obviously by no means the same.

## TRANSLATED TREASURES

# Acts of the Synod of Dordrecht

### Historical Foreword (5)

At the Synod of the South Holland Churches, held at Dordrecht, they took cognizance of the fact that none of the Ministers siding with Arminius had been willing until now to reveal his objections against the adopted doctrine to his fellow Ministers, but that with various alibis they had all made mockery of the admonitions of the Churches and the decisions of the Synods. It was again decided that they should earnestly order them anew, within one month after this warning, to make known their objections, under penalty of ecclesiastical censures against those who stubbornly refused. The Synod also decided to require the same thing of the Professors of Sacred Theology in the Academy of Leiden and of Petrus Bertius, Regent of the Theological College. When these Ministers saw that they either had to reveal their views or undergo ecclesiastical censure, in order to escape these alternatives, with the help of Uitenbogaard they obtained authorizations from the States by which these Ministers were ordered to send their accusations, within a month's time, sealed, to the States, to be kept and delivered to the Provincial Synod. When the Professors were requested by the deputies of the Synod to reveal any objections which they might have, Gomarus answered that he had detected nothing in the Confession or the Catechism of these churches which did not agree with God's Word and which was in need of change or improvement. Arminius replied that he would in his own time answer this request in writing. And when he saw that he would in this way be pressed to declare his views, he revealed to the States in their full session in a wide-ranging speech what he believed concerning divine predestination, concerning the grace of God and the free will of man, concerning the perseverance of the saints, concerning the certainty of salvation, concerning the perfection of man in this life, concerning the deity of the Son of God, concerning the justi-

fication of man before God, and concerning other main points of doctrine. And he sought to prove that in these Reformed Churches a doctrine of divine predestination was being promulgated which conflicted with God's nature, wisdom, righteousness, and goodness, with the nature of man, with his free will, with the work of creation, with the nature of eternal life and death, and, finally, with the nature of sin. Further, he charged that this doctrine undermined the grace of God, was opposed to the honor of God, was a hindrance to the salvation of man, made God an author of sin, was a hindrance to sorrow over sin, took away all godly carefulness, diminished diligence to do good, quenched the fervency of prayer, deprived of the fear and trembling with which we must work out our salvation, produced despair, perverted the Gospel, was against the ministry of the Word, and, finally, subverted the foundation not only of the Christian religion, but also of all religion. When Gomarus had learned of this, he, December 12, felt obligated better to inform the States, in order that their feelings might not perhaps be prejudiced by wrong pre-judgments against the orthodox doctrine. On this account, having sought consent to speak, he declared at length what the real view of Arminius was concerning the grace of God and concerning the free will of man, concerning the justification of man before God, concerning the perfection of man in this life, concerning predestination, concerning original sin, and concerning the perseverance of the saints. And he showed how Arminius had given just reasons for suspicion that he did not have the right view concerning Holy Scripture, concerning the Holy Trinity, concerning the providence of God, concerning the satisfaction of Jesus Christ, concerning the Church, concerning faith, concerning good works, and other main items of doctrine. Further, he exposed the practices of Arminius in spreading abroad his beliefs, how until

now he had not revealed his views in public, though asked and begged to do so by the Churches, but had done so secretly, especially to the Ministers whom he hoped to draw to his side and to his pupils. He showed how Arminius diligently taught his views, how he undermined the chief proofs of those who sought to establish sound doctrine, how he supported the proofs of the Jesuits and other enemies by which they opposed the doctrine of the Reformed Church, how he inculcated various doubts concerning the truth of the adopted doctrine in his disciples, and how he presented the true doctrine first as being on an equal footing with the opposing doctrine, in order thereafter simply to reject the former. Gomarus pointed out that until now Arminius had been completely unwilling to make a declaration of soundness and agreement in the doctrine (although he was many times lovingly and fraternally asked to do so by the Churches), that he had done his utmost to prevent his errors which had been exposed before the High Council, from becoming known to the Churches. And he showed how Arminius, having despised the judgments and decisions of the Synods, Classes, and Consistories, had for the first time walked into a trap before the Government, and there had presented his complaints and accusations against the Churches, and with courtly practices had diligently labored to arouse favor for himself and hatred and disfavor for the Churches. Gomarus concluded by beseeching the States, seeing the Students of Sacred Theology in the Academy of Leiden and many preachers in various places were every day more and more falling away from sound doctrine, and seeing that the disagreements and disputes were increasing and that the Churches were disturbed and the citizens divided, that the promised National Synod might be held immediately, and that at this Synod the causes of the calamity might be lawfully investigated, and at last a proper remedy might be applied. The Deputies of the Churches repeatedly requested the same thing; but through the initiative of Uitenbogaard and others the convening of the Synod was always postponed.

They also admonished Arminius various times that he should keep his promise to deliver his objections in writing. He finally answered, April 4, 1609, that he did not deny having promised this, but that seeing he had understood that the States had ordered the Ministers to send their objections sealed to the States, he had changed his mind and would wait until the same order came to him. Petrus Bertius, Regent of the Theological College, was admonished by the same Deputies that in case he had anything against the adopted doctrine of the Churches, he should declare this freely. And on February 13 he declared his views concerning many points of doctrine forthrightly and without any alibi, and declared that in the Articles concerning the justification of man before God, con-

cerning predestination, concerning the grace of God and free will, and concerning the final perseverance of the saints, he had different views than the doctrine of the Netherlands Churches. This increased the concern of the Church, seeing that not only Arminius in the Academy but also Bertius in the Theological College, a "greenhouse" of the Holland Churches, presented a strange doctrine to the youth entrusted to him and dedicated to the service of the Churches, and, leading them away from sound doctrine, instilled in them new beliefs. All this the Churches saw, and they were grieved. And although they greatly wished and considered it highly necessary to make lawful provision in this matter and to remedy this evil, they nevertheless could not accomplish this by reason of the fact that Uitenbogaard and others, whose influence at that time was great with many Regents of the Fatherland, diligently prevented all synodical gatherings and ecclesiastical judgments. All of this served to make the Ministers siding with Arminius bolder; and they began to bring their strange beliefs to the people openly, attacking the adopted doctrine with false complaints, and striking out against it in a grievous and despicable manner. Among these Ministers, the chief was a certain Adolphus Venator, minister of the Church of Alkmaar in North-Holland. He (besides the fact that he was not very pious in his life) openly spread abroad in public and in private the Pelagian and Socinian errors with unbelievable shamelessness. For this he was suspended from his office by a lawful judgment of the North Holland Churches. But, despising the judgment of the Churches, he nevertheless continued in his office, in spite of anything the Churches did. The right-minded Ministers in the Classis of Alkmaar judged that this evil man, as also other lesser Ministers whom he had drawn to his side and who had stubbornly refused to express agreement with the doctrine of the Reformed Churches, might not properly be admitted to their gathering. These Ministers complained about this to the States; and, with the help of Uitenbogaard, they obtained an order for Classis Alkmaar to admit them into their gathering. Since the orthodox Ministers could not in good conscience allow this, they humbly petitioned the States that they should not be aggrieved by such orders, which they in good conscience could not obey. The Deputies of the Churches, seeing that all these disagreements and offenses were increasing every day, again earnestly petitioned the States, in the name of the Churches, that the promised Provincial Synod for the removal of these evils might immediately be convoked. When Uitenbogaard and the other Ministers who sided with Arminius saw that the States were inclined to do this, they wanted to avoid any ecclesiastical judgment. And they succeeded in bringing about through the influence of some who seemed to favor their cause that, instead of a Provin-

cial Synod, a Conference should be held between Gomarus and Arminius, in the gathering of the States, concerning the Articles of doctrine about which they disagreed. In this Conference each man might be accompanied by four Ministers, of whose advice they might make use. Arminius chose Uitenbogaard, minister in the Hague, Adrianus Borrus of Leiden, Nicolaus Grevinchovius of Rotterdam, and the aforementioned Adolphus Venator of Alkmaar. Gomarus on the other hand, chose Ruardus Acronius, minister at Schiedam, Jacobus Rolandus of Amsterdam, Johannes Bogardus of Haarlem, and Festus Hommius of Leiden. When they had come together, Gomarus and his fellow Ministers requested these two items: 1.) that this Conference might take place by written document, delivered by both sides, in order that by this means all kinds of evil rumors might be prevented; 2.) that these documents might thereafter be delivered to the National Synod, in order that the judgment of an ecclesiastical matter might at the

same time be reserved by the Churches. The States desired that the Conference should take place orally, but that for the help of the memory one might use documents. And they promised by a public act that this case, after they would have taken cognizance of it at this Conference, would be reserved for the judgment of the Provincial Synod, and that to that end everything which was dealt with orally would afterwards be put in writing and that these documents would immediately be delivered to the Synod. The same Ministers (Gomarus and his fellows) judged it also to be improper that Adolphus Venator, who had been suspended from office by lawful ecclesiastical censures on account of his unsound doctrine and life, should be admitted to such a conference. They claimed that this could be done only with great prejudice to the ecclesiastical censure; and they requested that on this account someone else might be accepted in his place — something which they could not gain because Arminius was vehemently against it.

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## STRENGTH OF YOUTH

# Envy Not the Wicked

(1)

*Rev. J. Kortering*

How often have you looked slant-eyed at your neighbor and secretly wished that you were in his shoes?

The catalog of “advantages” is lengthy.

They can get the best jobs — through their unions and all that. It’s easier for them to climb the ladder of success; after all, they feel a kinship for one another and this enables them to enjoy a convivial life of eating and drinking in jovial fellowship. Besides this, the money they do make is their own; they simply think of ways in which they can spend it on themselves, their families, their friends. Just imagine if we didn’t have to spend our money on Christian education, church supported ministries, the poor, and missions. I’m sure that many of your folks could buy a brand new car *each year* and pay cash for it, if they didn’t have to pay tuition in a Christian school. That sounds pretty good to our fleshly desires. The world about us is doing this right along. No wonder they have money for all kinds of things and entertainment. It’s easy for us to envy them.

There is, of course, much more. Having fun seems to be the one big thing today. Jobs are necessary to

some extent. There are responsibilities we must accept. Life is bearable only if one is able to get away from it all from time to time. One can’t be serious all the time. There must be times for living it up a bit. So the entertainment business beckons for followers. The movie business creates as much appeal as it possibly can, all geared to having fun and forgetting the seriousness of life. Show tunes are broadcast over the radio so that the poor worker can have something to make his day bearable. The carpenter bangs his hammer to the beat, the mechanic tightens bolts to the beat, the merchant sells his product to the beat; and so the beat goes on. The atmosphere is relaxed and pleasant, people like the noise. For those who can pay more attention, television offers plenty of opportunity to escape from the humdrum of life. You can be swept into the world of the imaginary, or you can follow the raw edge of murder, the swinging life of the fun-lovers, the intriguing life of the detective, or the titillating embrace of the lustful. All you have to do is turn it on in the privacy of your own home; . . . so convenient. True, there is more available if you want to go out and spend a night on the town. You can see much more live and in the flesh. There

are racier places, bawdier shows, that go much farther than public broadcasting allows (although even this is changing). The night clubs, the cheap motels, the massage parlors are all over the place.

And what fun they all seem to have!

Add one more thing, people are having more time for this fun. Not only do they have more money, they also have more time. In some areas the work week is shortened — not due to lack of work, but rather to give more time to the worker to have fun. And, of course, he must make at least as much money as, if not more than, when he worked 40-45 hours a week. Think of the free time! Even the housewife doesn't have to be tied down as she used to be. Microwave ovens, TV dinners, disposable diapers have taken care of that. Doesn't it look good to have a two day and sometimes three day weekend for camping, fun, and relaxation. Every week! Wow, there is no end to possibilities! A person can bear a few days of work if he can look forward to a few days of sheer fun. They do not have to bother with attending church, at least not at *their* sacrifice. If it is convenient they might perhaps make an occasional appearance.

The keynote is, obviously, fun!

## ENVY NOT

It is very easy for us to envy them.

Let's be honest about this, for this is the root of our daily struggle. We come into contact with this world of the wicked, to some extent, every day. From our position it seems as if they have it pretty good, and, by contrast, we have to live a rather stuffy life. We might even feel that we live in drabsville.

God also recognizes that we struggle with this envy. Asaph, the man of God, had similar problems. He speaks of this in Psalm 73, "Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart. But as for me, my feet were almost gone, my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked," verses 1-3. He explains that they prosper, they have strength, they don't have trouble like others, they are proud, violent, rich, corrupt, boastful, and have more than heart could wish. God's people seem to have the opposite. They struggle, are plagued and chastened every morning. Then he continues, "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain and washed my hands in innocency," verse 13. Does God send more blessing on the wicked than He does on His children? Envy brings one to this basic confrontation: do the wicked have it better than the righteous? If so, we cleanse our hands in vain, it is no advantage to be a Christian. Envy ultimately would bring us out of the church into the world.

Hence, God comes to us in His Word. The Psalmist learned that it was foolish to envy the wicked because

their prosperity placed them on slippery ground that caused them to slide headlong into hell, Ps. 73:18. Hardly an enviable position. But, we must be warned, "Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity," Ps. 37:1. There are plenty of examples of God's people acting out of envy and having to suffer the sad consequence. How else can we understand Israel's behavior in the wilderness except we understand Israel's envy of the wicked. Numbers 11:5,6 describes it: "We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick; but now our soul is dried away, there is nothing at all beside this manna, before our eyes." Egypt without God appeared better than manna with God; hence some proposed to return to Egypt. Since they were not allowed to return, the second best thing would be to erect the gods of Egypt and have the pleasures connected with it. The calf appeared, and God had to strike them severely.

Time and again this took place in Israel. They envied the wicked in their feasts and idol worship. They clamored for a king as the other nations. They wanted to have more fun than the dull life of the covenant. Sad, but true, the kings and priests, as well as prophets, often led the people into this terrible path.

Envy always brings compromise, sin, and ultimately destruction.

How can we best deal with this terrible sin?

Let's do two things. First, in this article, we should begin to examine who the wicked are. Are they enviable? Or should we say with Asaph, how foolish of me to envy them? Secondly, in future articles, we should consider who we are in contrast. Who are God's people, covenant youth? What makes us different and why should we envy rather in a sanctified manner, that is, "covet earnestly the best gifts"; I Cor. 12:31.

## WHO ARE THE WICKED

In answering this question, we should consider three things about them. First, they are corrupt and defiled in their sins. Secondly, they are transgressors; in their corruption they violate God's holy law. Thirdly, they reveal themselves as Godless, that is, they oppose God and God opposes them in His judgment.

Let's begin by considering the wicked as evil, that is, morally vile and full of the stench of death.

Consider a passage such as Isaiah 57:20,21, "But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." Paul, writing in the Spirit to the church at Rome, expresses the content of that mire and dirt. He writes, "God gave them

up unto vile affections; for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature; and likewise the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet . . . Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: who knowing the judgment of God that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them," Romans 1:24-32.

God's Word calls the products of the unbelieving world, *filth*, mire and dirt.

The Bible is as timely as when it was written. If you covenant young people cannot see this today, you never will see it. What is the spiritual character of the arts, science, and culture of the unbelieving world? It is even as Paul describes it in Romans, and as the Prophet Isaiah described it in his day; it is the filth that comes forth from a reprobate mind. True, there are relative degrees of filth. Even the world recognizes this. But let's not call the less evil, good! The degree is that of corruption, not a degree of goodness.

The evidence of this is round about us on every hand. Examine the ten pop tunes, the best sellers in L.P.s, the most requested songs on the radio programs. What is their subject matter? They glamorize sex so openly and explicitly that even their conscience must be seared. The perversion that Paul speaks about is openly glamorized in our society today. Marriage is laughed at. How can there be marriage when group sex is the ultimate? Most of it is so vile that the sensitivities of God's people are hurt

even considering it. It's dirt, alright. Yes, they can include "Amazing Grace" along with the others, but I'll tell you it's not the same grace of God that the Christian reverences. In fact it is not even the same God. That's the deception. Even their "religion" is a vulgarization of the divine and a secularization of the spiritual. Godspell and Superstar are proof enough.

How cunning our enemy works! He works on two levels, in the area of the so-called secular and the so-called religious. But, he works the same, that is, to cut away the truth of God's Word and give license to the ungodly to wallow in their filth, casting up mire and dirt. Publishers are producing books and magazines prolifically. The movie and television industry are producing yardage instead of footage. Some of the largest sales in our country deal in liquor, tobacco, pornography, gambling and even illicit drugs. Stand on the street corner; watch the world pass by. Look at the magazine rack, read the movie reviews, cast an eye upon the best sellers in the literary field. If there ever was a time that a person doesn't have to go to the movies, watch the TV programs, read the books and magazines, to see how bad things really are, it is today. The promotional advertising of these things tells you enough.

Woe be to the church that calls the evil good and becomes as a blind man leading the blind so that both fall into the pit together. The sure sign of apostasy in the church is for the leaders of the church to call this mire and dirt something clean and worthwhile. How the devil laughs at such deception! It is the worst kind.

Envy the wicked?

Their works smell like dead carcasses and look like an oil slick that the storm tossed sea has cast upon the shore.

It is mire and dirt.

(To be continued)

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## TAKING HEED TO THE DOCTRINE

# "Hyper-Calvinism" and the Call of the Gospel

(23)

*Rev. David Engelsma*

In its classic, developed form, hyper-Calvinism denies that it is the duty of the Church to preach the gospel of salvation to all men and to call all men to believe on Jesus Christ. The gospel is to be preached only to the elect, and only they are to be called to faith. The grounds put forward for this position are the doctrines of election, limited atonement, and

irresistible grace, i.e., Calvinism. Hyper-Calvinism also denies that it is the duty of every sinner, without exception, to believe on Jesus Christ. Only the regenerated elect is required to believe. The ground for this position is the doctrine of total depravity, i.e., Calvinism.

The English Baptist, Joseph Hussey (1660-1726),

taught this hyper-Calvinism. A preacher must preach a different message to unregenerated sinners than he preaches to the converted elect: "you must preach the Gospel of the kingdom to them: exalt Christ (i.e., preach that Christ is a special king to crush gainsayers -DE). Do this, then, when you do not preach the Gospel of the blood of Christ to them."<sup>1</sup> A preacher mand. . . ."2 As regards infidels and Jews, a preacher our duty to preach the mere form of the command. . . ."2 As regards infidels and Jews, a preacher that they should believe on Christ with true faith — for this is not their duty, but that they should believe in Christ with "natural faith" — something, according to Hussey, that lies within their natural power.<sup>3</sup> All of this is set forth as if it were the Calvinistic repudiation of the Arminian offer.

Calvinism becomes the ground for a restriction of the preaching of the gospel, a silencing of the gospel-call, and a denial of human responsibility. The very errors with which Calvinism has always been charged by its foes and from which Calvinism has always had to disassociate itself are here acknowledged as an integral part of Calvinism.

Even though such a fully developed, hardened hyper-Calvinism does not threaten, a Reformed church must guard against the subtle inroads of the hyper-Calvinism heresy with all vigilance. She must resist every manifestation of the spirit of hyper-Calvinism, for it is not the spirit of Reformed Christianity. To guard against hyper-Calvinism is peculiarly the urgent task of the Reformed church which, in keeping with the Reformed tradition, has rejected the Arminianism of the well-meant offer of the gospel. Against this church, the favorite wile of the father of lies is the antinomism of hyper-Calvinism. Although she may never become suspicious or fearful, a Reformed church must watch against hyper-Calvinism with the keen awareness that this evil, like the opposite evil of Pharisaism, is not far from her, since it is ingrained in sinful human nature.

What are the manifestations of the spirit of hyper-Calvinism? How does this fundamental enemy of the gospel attempt to subvert the truth, ruin a church, and dishonor the God of grace?

One such manifestation is a minimizing of Christ's mission-mandate to His Church with an appeal to election as the guarantee that God will save His people. There need not be an outright denial of the mission-calling of the Church; it is enough that there be unconcern and negligence. The justification, or excuse, is that no elect will ever perish, even though the Church sits on her hands. Arminianism's emotional motivation for missions, "Many will perish, who otherwise might have been saved," is in error; equally erroneous is hyper-Calvinism's cold defense of its failure to engage in missions. Indeed, God will save

His elect, all of them; but it pleases God — and He has revealed this to us in His Word — to save them by the preaching of the gospel. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth . . ." (Rom. 1:16). "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?" (Rom. 10:13,14)

The Reformed faith has a lively knowledge of, and healthy respect for, the fact that the sovereign God is a God Who uses means, thus establishing and maintaining human responsibility. It knows God as a God Who gives men their daily bread — in the way of their working at a job; therefore, the Reformed faith demands that men work and refuses to feed anyone who will not work. It knows God as a covenant God Who saves the children of believers — in the way of believers faithfully rearing their children; therefore, the Reformed faith does not counsel parents to inaction, but calls them to establish sound homes and good, Christian schools. It knows God as a faithful God Who infallibly preserves every saint — in the way of his diligent use of the means of grace in the church; therefore, the Reformed faith does not conclude from preservation to carelessness, but exhorts believers to frequent the house of God every Lord's Day, to hear the Word and receive the sacraments. Just so, it knows God as a God Who will save all of His chosen people in all nations — in the way of calling them to Jesus Christ in faith by the gospel; therefore, the Reformed faith cannot recommend passivity or excuse negligence in the matter of missions, but calls the Church to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, commanding all men everywhere to repent and believe.

To separate what God has joined together, to divorce God's decrees and purposes from God's means, is no honoring of God's sovereignty, but a tempting of the Most High. "As the almighty operation of God, whereby he prolongs and supports this our natural life, does not exclude, but requires the use of means, by which God of his infinite mercy and goodness hath chosen to exert his influence, so also the beforementioned supernatural operation of God, by which we are regenerated, in no wise excludes, or subverts the use of the gospel, which the most wise God has ordained to be the seed of regeneration, and food of the soul. Wherefore, as the apostles, and teachers who succeeded them, piously instructed the people concerning this grace of God, to his glory, and abasement of all pride, and in the meantime, however, neglected not to keep them by the sacred precepts of the gospel in the exercise of the Word, sacraments and discipline; so even to this day, be it

far from either instructors or instructed to presume to tempt God in the church by separating what he of his good pleasure hath most intimately joined together. For grace is conferred by means of admonitions; and the more readily we perform our duty, the more eminent usually is this blessing of God working in us, and the more directly is his work advanced; to whom alone all the glory both of means, and of their saving fruit and efficacy is forever due. Amen" (Canons of Dordt, III, IV, 17).

Another betrayal of the spirit of hyper-Calvinism is embarrassment and hesitation, i.e., fear, over giving the call, "Repent! Believe!," and over declaring the promise, "Whosoever believes shall not perish, but have everlasting life." This language is not suspect; it is not the language of Arminian "free-willism." It is pure, sound, Biblical language; it is as much a part of the Reformed heritage as is the statement of divine, double predestination. We must take care that we do not concede precious elements of the gospel to the Arminians. Because they have seized on certain elements of Scripture, have wrenched them out of their proper setting, force them into the service of their false gospel, and, thus, wrest them to their own destruction, we may not abandon those elements. Rather, we must continue to honor them as part of God's revelation and must continue to give them their necessary place in the proclamation of the Word. There is no "Arminian text" in Scripture, nor one Arminian word. No more than we renounce love because the "Liberals" abuse it, do we downgrade the external call of the gospel and slight the promiscuous publication of the promise because heretics construct a message of salvation by the will of man from a perversion of them.

If the fruit of the preaching of the gospel is that men, pricked in their hearts, cry out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?," or that a Philippian jailor says, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?," it is not in place, it is not typically Reformed, to launch into a fierce polemic against free will or to give a nervous admonition against supposing that one can do anything towards his own salvation. The answer to such questions — the Reformed answer — is: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins . . ."; and: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 2:38; Acts 16:31).

Although, ordinarily, hyper-Calvinism is afraid to call the unconverted to Christ, there may even be a hesitation to preach the call to repentance and faith within the congregation. One feels uneasy about this, as if this goes in the direction of "works" or the altar-call. Then, a preacher does grave injustice to Scripture and great disservice to God's people. If he dares to preach on Matthew 11:28, the merciful

Savior's tender call to the laboring and heavy laden with its precious promise of rest, the bulk of the sermon is controversy with the Arminian corruption of the text. Little is done with the comforting message of the text; the tender, urgent call to the laboring in the audience is never given; the audience goes home convinced that the Arminian interpretation is wrong, but without having heard the gospel themselves.

The Reformed faith condemns, indeed despises, the "altar-call." It has bad parentage: Finney. It is bad theology: universal grace dependent upon the free will of the sinner. It is bad practice: the transforming of the inner, spiritual activity of the heart into an outward, carnal activity of the body — Scripture nowhere presents repentance or believing as a matter of "coming to the front"; besides, no Reformed church has an altar. But opposition to the altar-call does not, in any way, imply opposition to the call of the gospel to the spiritually laboring and laden sinner to come to Christ for rest. God forbid!

When hyper-Calvinism has developed somewhat, there is a failure, even a refusal, to preach the admonitions and exhortations of Scripture to the saints, on the ground that good gospel-preachers should not tell God's people what to do. At the very least, the admonitions and exhortations are not proclaimed with the sharpness, urgency, boldness, and freedom that obtain in Scripture. From this stage, it is but a little way to the disorder and license of open antinomism — "let us sin that grace may abound."

How such a notion can be mistaken for orthodoxy is a mystery. How it can be mistaken for *Reformed* orthodoxy is a still greater mystery. The Scripture abounds with exhortations and warnings to God's people; Calvin, theologian of holiness that he was, is full of them; the Canons of Dordt expressly warn the Reformed pastor not to interpret sovereign grace as rendering admonitions and discipline unnecessary (III, IV, 17). Luther, peerless defender of the gospel of grace against every encroachment of illicit law and glorious champion of justification by faith only — Luther can be our teacher and guardian here:

The churchly office of preaching is necessary not only for the ignorant who must be taught, for the simple and stupid populace and the youth, but also for those who well know what they ought to believe and how they ought to live, in order to awaken and admonish them to be daily on their guard, not to grow weary and listless, nor to lose heart in the battle they must wage upon earth against the devil, their own flesh and all vices. Hence St. Paul so diligently admonishes all Christians that he almost seems to be overdoing the thing, by continually dinning it in their ears, as though they were so ignorant as not to know it of themselves or so careless and forgetful as not to perform it without this telling and urging them. But

he knows full well that, although they have begun to believe and are in that state in which fruits of faith must appear, the thing is nevertheless not so easily carried out and brought to completion. It will not do to think: 'It is enough to have given them the truth; when the spirit and faith are present the fruits of good works will follow of themselves.' For while it is true that the spirit is present and is willing, as Christ says, and works in them that believe, it is likewise true that the flesh also is present, and the flesh is weak and indolent. The devil, moreover, is not keeping holiday, but seeks by temptation and incitement to cause the weak to fall. Here you dare by no means be negligent or indolent; as it is, the flesh is too indolent to obey the Spirit, nay it is strong to resist it, as Paul says in Galatians 5:17. God, therefore, must deal here as a good householder or faithful regent, who has a lazy man-servant or maid-servant or indifferent officials. (They need not be actually wicked or disloyal.) He must not think it enough to tell them once or twice what to do, but must be constantly at their heels and personally urge them on. So, too, we have not reached the point where our flesh and blood go leaping in pure joy and eagerness to do good works and obey God, as the Spirit would gladly have us do and directs us to do. On the con-

trary, even though faith unceasingly urge and buffet the flesh, it scarce succeeds in accomplishing very much. What would be the result if this admonition and urging were omitted and one were to think, as many Christians think, 'Well, I know of myself what I ought to do; I have heard it so many years and so often, and have even taught it to others, etc.'? I verily believe that if we were to cease our preaching and admonishing for a single year, we should become worse than heathen" (sermon on the epistle for the XIX. Sunday after Trinity).

The Reformed Church rejects hyper-Calvinism, not because she hedges on her Calvinism at the last moment, but exactly because of her Calvinism. Knowing her salvation as the sovereign, free, gracious calling of God in Christ, she burns with zeal for the glory of her God. In the love of her thankful heart, she desires that His great Name, Jesus, be published to the ends of the earth and that His good commandments be obeyed.

FINIS

<sup>1</sup>Joseph Hussey, *God's Operations of Grace But No Offers of Grace* (Elon College, N.C.: Primitive Publications, 1973), p. 87.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 153.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 156, 157.

## THE VOICE OF OUR FATHERS

# Christ, Our High Priest

*Prof. Robert D. Decker*

"We believe that Jesus Christ is ordained with an oath to be an everlasting High Priest, after the order of Melchisedec; and that he hath presented himself in our behalf before the Father, to appease his wrath by his full satisfaction, by offering himself on the tree of the cross, and pouring out his precious blood to purge away our sins; as the prophets had foretold. For it is written: He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and was numbered with the transgressors, and condemned by Pontius Pilate as a malefactor, though he had first declared him innocent. Therefore: he restored that which he took not away, and suffered, the just for the unjust, as well in his body as in his soul, feeling the terrible punishment which our sins had merited; insomuch that his sweat became like unto drops of blood falling on the ground. He called out, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? and hath suffered all this for the remission of our sins. Wherefore we justly say with the apostle Paul: that we know nothing, but Jesus Christ, and him crucified; we count all things but loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord, in whose wounds we find all manner of consolation. Neither is it necessary to seek or invent any other means of being reconciled to God, than this only sacrifice, once offered, by which believers are made perfect forever. This is also the reason why he was called by the angel of God, *Jesus*, that is to say, *Savior*, because he should save his people from their sins."

Article XXI, *The Belgic Confession*

The main thought of this article is that Christ made satisfaction for the sins of His people as their eternal High Priest. The article calls attention to the fact that Our Lord is a Priest after the order of Melchisedec. This truth is emphasized in Scripture. We read: "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek."

(Psalm 110:4) And again we read in Hebrews 6:20: "Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." (Cf. also Hebrews 5:10)

Several rather striking things are said in Scripture of this Melchisedec. In the epistle to the Hebrews we are told that this Melchisedec, who was king of Salem

and priest of the Most High God, blessed Abraham as the latter returned from the slaughter of the kings. (Cf. Genesis 14) Abraham recognized his priesthood, as is evident from the fact that he gave Melchisedec "a tenth part of all." Further, we are told that his name, Melchisedec, means "King of righteousness" and that "King of Salem" means, "King of Peace." What is more striking, however, is that Scripture says of Melchisedec that he is "without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually." (Hebrews 7:1-3) We cannot go into the several interpretations given to Melchisedec as he appears in Genesis. (The reader interested in making further study of this whole subject may consult H. Hoeksema's *Reformed Dogmatics*, pp. 373 ff.) Suffice it to say that Genesis 14 presents this Melchisedec as a real, flesh and blood man, who lived in the days of Abraham and who was king of Salem and a priest of the Most High God.

Melchisedec, therefore, must have been a real, historical person who lived in the days of Abraham. He was king of Salem, which means that he must have ruled over a real people. And, he functioned as a priest for these people. Even outside of Abraham God preserved a remnant according to the election of grace. Of this remnant Melchisedec was a part.

What does it mean that Christ is a priest after the order of Melchisedec? In Hebrews 7 Scripture makes a distinction between the priesthood of Melchisedec and that of Aaron. This is not to say that the two are mutually exclusive. In certain respects they are alike. And certainly it is true that the priesthood of Aaron (also a type of Christ) foreshadowed that of Christ. The difference lies along these lines. The priesthood of Melchisedec is far greater, much richer, and wider in scope than that of Aaron. The priesthood of Aaron focused primarily in the bloody sacrifices and was fulfilled once and for all in Christ's perfect sacrifice on the cross. The priesthood of Melchisedec, however, was so realized in Christ that it is perfected and abides forever.

Bearing this in mind we are able to understand the points of difference between the priesthood of Aaron and that of Melchisedec. In the first place, in Israel the priestly and kingly offices were separated, so that one and the same person could not function in both. Aaron was High Priest but could not be king. Melchisedec, however, was a royal priest. He was both priest and king. The second difference is that the priesthood of Aaron was temporal and came to an end when the perfect sacrifice was brought by the Son of God. The priesthood of Melchisedec, on the other hand, is everlasting.

Thus Melchisedec appears in Scripture as *the* type of Christ as Priest. He is both king of righteousness

and king of Salem or peace. He is "without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life . . ." (Hebrews 7:1-3). And, all this applies not to the person of Melchisedec but to Melchisedec as he is the type of Christ. As priest and king Melchisedec has neither father nor mother, beginning of days or end of days. Christ is the real Melchisedec. He is the perfect royal priest and of His priesthood there is no beginning nor end. Having brought the perfect sacrifice for the sins of His people Christ now and forever consecrates Himself and all things as priest after the order of Melchisedec to the glory of God.

Thus Article XXI emphasizes that Christ, Who is priest after the order of Melchisedec, "... hath presented himself in our behalf before the Father, to appease his wrath by his full satisfaction, by offering himself on the tree of the cross, and pouring out his precious blood to purge away our sins. . ." What the article emphasizes, therefore, is that Christ as our eternal Priest made *satisfaction* for our sins and those of all the elect.

There are various theories concerning the satisfaction of Christ, two of which, the moral theory and the governmental theory, are worthy of note. According to the moral theory, Christ died on the cross as an *example* for others to follow. Christ in His death is an example in that He was willing to die for His principles. In His life, Christ leaves the pattern of morality which others ought to follow. Thus in His life and in His death Jesus has a moral and improving influence upon mankind. If mankind follows the example of Christ, morality and goodness will prevail in the world. This theory is the modernistic, liberal view of the cross of Jesus Christ.

According to the governmental theory God shows us in the cross of Christ what He might have done to all of mankind if He had followed His own justice. God sent Christ into the world to suffer and die on the cross as a revelation of His justice. If we believe that a like punishment is what we deserve, we shall be saved. This theory has its roots historically in Arminianism.

Both of the above theories, and others like them, are alike in that they deny the vicarious character of atonement of Jesus Christ. These theories deny the fact that Christ died in our place and on our behalf. They deny that Christ made *satisfaction* for the sins of His people. This latter is the emphasis of our *Confession* and this is a Biblical emphasis. Scripture teaches that Christ bore our griefs and carried our sorrows and was wounded for our transgressions (Isaiah 53:4, 5); was delivered for our offences (Romans 4:25); died for us (Romans 5:8); as the Good Shepherd laid down His life for His sheep (John 10:11, 15-18, 28).

These passages, and Scripture in general, present several points concerning the death of the Son of God. Scripture makes plain that Christ died in our place by assuming the guilt of our sins. Thus in His death Christ paid the price which the justice of God demanded. In His suffering Christ brought satisfaction for our sins and took those sins away. They are no more. This means that the atonement is *particular*. God chose His elect in Christ. God, as it were, gave His people to Christ before the foundations of the world (Cf. Ephesians 1:3 ff.). For these elect and only for these elect Christ died. The Savior in His death saved His people from their sins (Cf. Matthew 1:21). Scripture further teaches that this death of Christ was voluntary on Christ's part. Christ died willingly. As our eternal High Priest Christ brought the sacrifice of His own life and blood before God. In perfect obedience to the Father, Jesus laid down His life for the sheep given Him of the Father. Having come to do the will of God, Christ died in our place and on our behalf. This is what the Scriptures teach when they say Christ died FOR us. Finally, this means that Christ bore all of the wrath of God against the sins of all God's elect. He did this by entering as our substitute into the very suffering and agonies of hell. He took the suffering we deserved upon Himself. There remains for the people of God, therefore, no more wrath. The sins of the elect are paid for. He was able to do this, i.e., Christ was able to suffer the hellish agony of the wrath of God and remove that wrath because He is the Person of the Son of God in our flesh.

Thus it is that "... he restored that which he took not away, and suffered, the just for the unjust, as well in his body as in his soul, feeling the terrible punishment which our sins had merited." This is the only comfort for believers who "... justly say with the apostle Paul: that we know nothing, but Jesus Christ, and him crucified; we count all things but loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord, in whose wounds we find all manner of consolation." And, this sacrifice is the one and only means of our being reconciled to God. The *Confession* puts it this way: "Neither is it necessary to seek or invent any other means of being reconciled to God, than this only sacrifice, once offered, by which believers are made perfect forever."

The cross of Jesus Christ is, therefore, the revelation of the sovereign grace and eternal love of God Who accomplished all of our salvation for us. In His death Christ merited all the blessings of salvation for us. His death accomplished our redemption. This we must maintain overagainst Arminianism which insists that the death of Christ only made possible salvation for all mankind. According to the Arminians it remains for man to accept that salvation. That is not the cross of Christ! Christ accomplished our salvation, all of it. This means that we have nothing in which to boast in ourselves. With the Apostle we say: God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Christ! All glory belongs to God; of whom, through whom, and to whom are all things.

## Book Review

**PSALMS**, Charles Haddon Spurgeon (edited by David Otis Fuller), Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, Michigan; 703 pp., \$14.95. [Reviewed by Prof. H.C. Hoeksema]

This is a one-volume reprint of a two-volume edition of Spurgeon's *The Treasury of David* copyrighted by Dr. Fuller in 1968.

Spurgeon has sometimes been called "the prince of preachers." This does not necessarily mean, however, that he was also "the prince of exegetes." And as any well-versed Reformed person should know, Spurgeon is surely not always to be depended upon. Nevertheless, one can surely do far worse than to read Spurgeon. And his seven-volume *The Treasury of David* is indeed a treasure, both because of its warm, devotional character and because of many rich exegetical insights.

As far as I know, the original seven volumes cannot be obtained today, except second-hand. Most younger ministers and, I am sure, most of our readers will have difficulty gaining access to the unabridged work of Spurgeon on the Psalms.

This condensation, therefore, is of value in so far as it offers limited access to Spurgeon's work. It stands to reason that when seven large volumes are condensed to 703 pages, there is some very severe abridgement involved. Moreover, there is always a subjective element involved in abridgement: in this case, one gets to know Spurgeon on the Psalms as David Otis Fuller sees him. This is, of course, the disadvantage of this abridgement. In this connection, I have two points of negative criticism: 1.) The condensation is too extreme. 2.) In some instances there is very little of Spurgeon himself, and a preponderance of the comments of others whom Spurgeon quoted.

To the extent, therefore, that this volume furnishes some access to Spurgeon, I can recommend it.



## THE DAY OF SHADOWS

# The Gay Receive Their Pay

*Rev. John A. Heys*

Had you, instead of Moses, been on Mt. Sinai when God gave the law, and instead of cutting that law into the solid granite with His fingers, had God dictated it to you and then told you to list the commandments in the order that you deemed best, where would you have put the seventh commandment?

Would you have placed it between the commandments against murder and theft? Would that not be too strong a position for the commandment against adultery to hold? Murder is the worst thing you can do to a man, for by it you rob him of all his possessions. Take his life and you take away from him everything he has on this earth. What is more, when you take his life, you perform a deed which can never be undone by you. You can never make amends to him or to his family. And shall we list adultery immediately after such a vicious sin?

Surely those who commit the sin do so voluntarily and do so because of the pleasure they derive from it. Shall we then list it so high among the sins that are condemned by God? The parents may have grief of soul when they learn that their son or daughter has fallen into this sin of adultery or fornication. The husband or wife whose mate has been unfaithful may be wounded in the soul by this deed. But would you still list it next to murder?

We had better leave it where God placed it, and we had better remember also that God decreed the death sentence for it in the Old Testament dispensation. Let our men and women who are contemplating divorce and remarriage bear that in mind as they read what Jesus said about divorce and remarriage in Matthew 19. Let our young men and our young women take a hard look at the position of this commandment in the law and listen to the Heidelberg Catechism when it declares that this sin is accursed of God.

It is not literal adultery that occasions these lines. It is not that normal adultery (normal for depraved man) that has been practiced by man through the ages that calls our attention at this time. It is a more vile form than that of which we write at this time. It is the sin of Sodomy, the sin for which Sodom and Gomorrah were known, and because of which God sent down brimstone and fire in His terrible displeasure upon these evil-minded and shameful people. Of them Paul spoke in Romans 1:24-27 in these

words: "Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up to vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the women, burned in their own lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.

Thus it was in Sodom; and that is the meaning of the statement that the men of Sodom came to Lot's house and asked for the strangers who came to stay with him because they would "know them." Homosexuality was the order of the day in that city. Unashamedly, young and old, they come, not one by one but in a group, all seeking to practice this vile deed, which was not only a case of leaving the natural use of the woman but a dishonouring of their own bodies. We have a picture here in Sodom of men whose morals are lower than the beasts of the field, men driven so fiercely by their lusts that even the beasts cannot teach them. Is it any wonder that God, Who created them in His own image, and instituted such a beautiful relationship as marriage to reflect His own covenant life, should send fire and brimstone to wipe them off the face of the earth and into the lake of fire?

One can only wonder at the patience of God when one looks around today and sees the Sodoms and Gomorrah of our present "civilization." The world is steeped in sexual immorality and does not know pornography from true art. Today men are seeking new ways to practice the evil and more ways of entrapping others into it. The homosexual is called sick; and he himself feels hurt that some in society still do not accept him. Sick? Well, yes, if you mean spiritually sick! But in the eyes of God it is being exceedingly sinful besides. And not accepted in society? If the beasts of the field could talk, they would speak out their rejection as well.

And can you imagine that in the church it is no longer called sin, in spite of what Paul wrote to the Romans, and in spite of this clear judgment of God

upon Sodom? Can you understand that the knowledge that one is gay poses no problem in some circles for such to be on nomination for elder or deacon? Can you imagine that in spheres that claim to uphold the law of God and to defend sanctity some see no reason why such should not be ordained as elders and deacons in the Church of Christ? The Word of God says that they dishonour their bodies; and do not such also dishonour the Church, the Body of Christ? Can words be found strong enough to condemn this unnatural activity, this abuse of powers which God has given for wholly different purposes? Does man live for himself and have his members to end in himself and seek himself, or is there an all-wise God Who has fashioned us and made us male and female for the cause of His Church and the growth and fulness of His covenant? Scripture speaks of vile affections, which literally are dishonourable affections. And certainly such dishonour brings dishonour to the Church of God if the guilty ones are not disciplined — to say nothing about it if they are set up to be the ones to discipline as elders in the Church. To defile a woman is a great evil; to defile one's own body as the homosexual does is a baser evil! And God said so when He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah with fire!

Surely it is for the elect's sake in this adulterous world that a new sunrise occurs every day and the world continues as it has for thousands of years. God is not willing that any of US should perish but that all of US should be saved. That is what Peter says in II Peter 3:9. Some of the elect must yet be born. Others of the elect must yet be born again; and that none of us should perish is so clearly taught when God takes Lot literally by the hand and pulls him out of the city before destroying it.

What a terrible devastation that was when Sodom perished! Not one soul escaped; and one who left the city with Lot still perished in the fire because her heart was still back in Sodom. Lot's wife went a distance with him and their daughters. But gradually she fell back first a step, then two, and then more. For we read that Lot's wife "looked back *from behind* him, and she became a pillar of salt." It was not simply a matter of looking back. That was forbidden them, for it meant that the heart was still in Sodom; and on all such its punishment would fall. But it was a case of not believing the words of the angel so that with leaden feet she went along a distance because Lot (not the angel) insisted on it, and because the angel took her hand also for a time and led her out of the city proper. Her heart was not in it, and she saw no reason for leaving. Nor did she want to leave. First she fell back because she wanted to go back. Then she looked back to see whether it would be wise to go back. And she got no further. As one who did not want separation from such filth, she died with the filthy.

Now those cities lie on the bottom of the Dead Sea. And the region is desolate. Nothing will grow or live in the Dead Sea because of its high salt content. Neither will anything grow or live on the land around its shores. It is indeed a dead sea and a living testimony of the fury of God's wrath against licentiousness. It speaks of the place that the seventh commandment occupies in the law and assures that it is properly placed.

Let it be clearly understood then that it can happen again. Let it not be forgotten that it will happen again; and this time it will destroy the whole world with all its cities. The wages of sin is death. And God pays those wages. He may not pay them in full in this life. He does not settle His accounts in detail while we are in this flesh. He will do so fully when He sends His own pure Son upon the clouds of heaven. Even now the diseases that accompany this sin are on the rise again, and men ruin their own bodies as well as dishonour them. Sin never goes unpunished, and the gay will always have to pay. In this life they may have their carnal pleasures. In the life to come they will have their everlasting, excruciating pains and woes.

The name given the homosexual (or did they pick it for themselves?) is misleading. They are to be pitied not envied. Webster says that the word gay is an adjective that in one of its uses means "Given to social pleasures or indulgences; hence loose; licentious; as a gay life." And licentiousness is lewdness, lasciviousness which are strongly condemned in Holy Writ. Pity the homosexual then, but do not excuse him, for God has not one good word to say about his wholly inhuman, unnatural deeds.

In His own pity and mercy God will save that man, but in the way of taking him out of his dishonourable walk. God will cause him to walk as Paul writes in Romans 12:1 when he exhorts us to present our bodies as living sacrifices to God. Homosexuality by no stretch of the imagination comes anywhere near such presentation, such living as God's royal priesthood.

It was this same pity of God that informed Abraham of Lot's position in a city about to be destroyed in the holy wrath of a righteous God so that he could pray for Lot. And this incident is preserved on the pages of Holy Writ by God Himself that we might be informed and pray for His people in the modern Sodoms who are walking in the sins which the seventh commandment forbids, including the seeking of divorce and the remarriage of those who are divorced. These, too, are making great inroads into God's church. Condemn it, but pray for those who are walking in it. Their works will be burned, but pray that they may be saved as by fire.

# THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL

... OF THE ...  
PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCHES

4949 IVANREST AVENUE, S.W.  
GRANDVILLE, MICHIGAN 49418  
PHONE: (616) 531-1490

February 1, 1977

Beloved in the Lord:

It has been some time since we have written to you concerning the work of the Seminary. We have been a bit negligent in this, and we apologize for our tardiness.

The second semester of our school year is well under way. Our first semester of classroom work ended the Wednesday before Christmas. We added two days to the semester because, with the lateness of Labor Day, the semester as scheduled was very short. After two weeks of Christmas vacation, during which many of the students returned home, we spent two weeks in exams, grading the semester's work, and conferences with the students to evaluate their work with them. Our second semester began January 24.

We have a rather large number of students in Seminary this year. It is possible that we have one of the largest Seminary enrollments ever. In the Seniors Class we have three students: two from the Free Reformed Church and Ken Koole, from our Hope congregation. The Lord willing, Ken will be eligible for a call some time this coming summer. There are three students in the Middlers Class. All of them have been speaking in the churches, and many of you have heard them by this time. They are Rich Flikkema and Bill Bruinsma, both sons of our South Holland Church, and Mike De Vries, a son of Pella. In the Juniors Class there are five students: Carl Haak and Dave Zandstra, from South Holland; Ron Cammenga, originally from Holland; and Ron Hanko and Steve Houck, from Hope.

There are also nine students studying in the Pre-Seminary department. Three are at the Junior level, four at the Sophomore level, and two are at the Freshman level, having just begun their college instruction this past semester. You can readily see from this that we have, at present, a large and busy Seminary. It may seem to us as if there is scarcely room in the church for them all. But this is closely connected with our Mission labors. It remains always true that "the harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few." Let us be thankful to God for these young men who seek the work of the ministry.

The readers of our Standard Bearer have been generous in their support of our Library. The result is that we have been able to purchase a large number of books since we have been in our new building. We have been careful to concentrate on buying books which will be of direct value to the studies of the Seminary students and the professors, and the result is that our Library is much enlarged. Don't worry, though: we still have many unfilled shelves, and there are many books which we still must purchase.

We shall have to close for this time. We hope that there will be a little more regularity in our letter-writing in the future. We earnestly covet your prayers in behalf of our school. May God bless you all and the cause of our churches.

Fraternally, in Christ,  
The Faculty

## CALL TO ASPIRANTS TO THE MINISTRY

All young men desiring to begin studies this fall in the Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches, located at 4949 Ivanrest Ave., S.W., Grandville, Michigan 49418 are hereby notified of the Theological School Committee meeting to be held on March 17, 1977 at 7:30 P.M. in the Theological School Building.

### Pre-seminary Department:

Permission to pursue the pre-seminary course of study shall be granted by the Theological School Committee. A transcript of grades from High School and College (if any), a letter of testimony from a student's pastor or consistory, and a certificate of health from a reputable physician shall be submitted along with the student's application.

### Seminary Department:

Permission to pursue the Theological course in the seminary shall be granted by the Synod, upon recommendation of the Theological School Committee, to such an aspirant only who

comes supplied with a testimonial of his consistory that he is a member in full communion, sound in faith and upright in walk, and also a certificate from a reputable physician showing him to be in good health.

A complete high school education and the equivalent of a four year (125 hour) college education are required for entrance into the seminary department. Moreover, each entrant into this department must produce evidence that he has credit for the required college courses. Requirements are listed in the school catalog, available from the School.

All applicants for enrollment in the seminary department must appear before the Theological School Committee for interview before enrollment. In the event you cannot be present at this meeting, please notify the undersigned secretary of your intentions, prior to the meeting. Mail all correspondence to the Theological School.

Richard H. Teitsma, Secretary

### NOTICE!!!

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet, the Lord willing, in Hull, Iowa, on March 2, 1977. Material for the Agenda should be sent to me thirty days prior to the convening of Classis. Delegates in need of lodging should notify the Clerk of the Hull consistory.

Rev. David Engelsma,  
Stated Clerk Classis West.

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Class of Faith Protestant Reformed Church, (Jenison, MI), wishes to express its sympathy to its fellow member, Mr. Henry Brands, Sr., in the passing of his wife, HILDA BRANDS, on January 11, 1977.

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee; because he trusted in Thee." (Isaiah 26:3).

Rev. M. Joostens, Pres.

## R.F.P.A. PUBLICATIONS

<b>Behold, He Cometh!</b>	<b>\$9.95</b>	<b>Mysteries of the Kingdom</b>	<b>\$5.95</b>
<i>by Herman Hoeksema</i>		<i>by Herman Hanko</i>	
(An exposition of the book of Revelation)		(An exposition of the parables of Christ)	
<b>Believers and their Seed</b>	<b>\$2.95</b>	<b>Peaceable Fruit</b>	<b>\$5.95</b>
<i>by Herman Hoeksema</i>		<i>by Gertrude Hoeksema</i>	
(An exposition of the truth of God's covenant of grace)		(Instruction concerning the nurture of covenant youth)	
<b>God's Covenant Faithfulness</b>	<b>\$5.95</b>	<b>Reformed Dogmatics</b>	<b>\$9.95</b>
<i>edited by Gertrude Hoeksema</i>		<i>by Herman Hoeksema</i>	
(Commemorative volume, 50th anniversary of Protestant Reformed Churches)		(A systematic study of theology)	
<b>In the Beginning God</b> (paper)	<b>\$1.00</b>	<b>Therefore Have I Spoken</b>	<b>\$5.95</b>
<i>by Homer C. Hoeksema</i>		<i>by Gertrude Hoeksema</i>	
(An exposition of the truth of creation)		(A biography of Herman Hoeksema)	
<b>Marriage: The Mystery of Christ and the Church</b>	<b>\$3.50</b>	<b>Triple Knowledge</b> (3 vol.)	<b>\$24.95</b>
<i>by David Engelsma</i>		<i>by Herman Hoeksema</i>	
		(An exposition of the Heidelberg Catechism)	
		<b>"Whosoever Will"</b> (paper)	<b>\$1.95</b>
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## ALL AROUND US

### Wiersinga and Atonement C.O.C.U. and Unity New Confession for the Presbyterian Church U.S.? NAPARC Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches

Rev. G. Van Baren

From the R.E.S. *News Exchange* of Dec. 7, 1976, comes a further report concerning Dr. Wiersinga and developments in the Reformed Church in the Netherlands:

The consistory of the Reformed Church of Amsterdam sent a letter to the Synod of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN) expressing consternation at the latter's statement that the views of Dr. Herman Wiersinga on Christ's atonement are inadmissible. The Amsterdam consistory claims that despite important differences, there is nevertheless far-reaching agreement on essential points. "In view of this agreement and unity in the faith, the consistory accepts Dr. Wiersinga in trust as its minister of the Word and believes that his views are admissible within the bounds of the confession, namely as a contribution to the discussion concerning the meaning of the atonement." The consistory also challenged the Synod's characterization of Wiersinga's views as a "threat to the unity of the faith." Part of the Synod's recent *judicium* expressed confidence that the Amsterdam consistory would see to it that no denial of the Reformed doctrine of the atonement would occur in Wiersinga's ministry. The consistory obviously would have no part in this.

The RCN Synod of November 24 responded that the letters of the Amsterdam consistory proposed no new arguments in favor of Wiersinga's doctrine. Synod referred the consistory to a Synodical committee to discuss the possibility of framing an appeal to the next Synod (1977) to revise its earlier *judicium*.

Reacting to the letter of the Amsterdam consistory, Dr. Herman Ridderbos (*Gereformeerd Weekblad*) expresses his consternation at the attitude of the consistory. Reminiscing, Dr. Ridderbos pointed out that this same church that now expresses alarm at the idea of having to discipline someone who challenges the doctrine of the atonement was one of the leaders in the Reformation of the Dutch church during the last half of the 19th century. During that period, the Amsterdam consistory required everyone coming to the Lord's Supper to express their accord with Paul's confession regarding the atonement of Christ, "Who was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification."

#### COCU and Unity

*The Christian News*, Nov. 15, 1976, reports on a meeting of COCU which recently met at Dayton,

Ohio. The report is of interest especially because of the clever (?) way in which these unite all divergent views to form the basis for unity.

Delegates from the nine denominations of the Consultation on Church Unity (COCU) chose a new president, accepted a 10th member body, and debated a revised theological basis for their unification at COCU's 13th plenary meeting here. . . .

Chief architect of the seven-chapter "theological basis for union," Prof. John Deschner of Dallas, urged COCU delegates to "invite the churches to consider it officially and decide whether they are willing to gather around it."

The 1970 union plan, of which this is a revision, was widely criticized for some of its organizational proposals, though at the time the theological portion seemed more acceptable.

Prof. Deschner said the new proposal is "not a kind of theological constitution but rather a "movable, changeable starting point" which the COCU denominations can use "to work with other churches to create a revised plan of union."

At the 1973 COCU plenary in Memphis, delegates decided not to pursue union via a once-and-for-all plan, but rather to "grow toward union" in a variety of ways.

Eight of the denominations have agreed to work toward "mutual recognition of members" as part of growing together. COCU has also fostered local efforts ("interim eucharistic fellowships," "generating communities," and "communities in correspondence"), and work on common worship materials as part of the growth effort.

Among the "notable improvements" in the revised plan listed by Prof. Deschner are a "much stronger explication" of the three uniting principles, a church "truly catholic, truly evangelical, and truly reformed"; a "considerably strengthened" emphasis on diversity, inclusiveness, and participation in membership; and a strengthened discussion on both lay and episcopal ministry.

Among its other points:

- Acceptance of the Apostles and Nicene Creeds, but with no single confession required for all.
- Baptism by immersion, pouring, or sprinkling for both adults and infants.

— The Lord's Supper or Eucharist at the heart of worship, but with a recognition of the sacramental nature of other rites.

— Three kinds of ordained minister: deacon; presbyter (similar to pastor or priest or elder in current denominational usage), and bishop.

— The bishop as chief symbol of ministerial unity and continuity, but with no bishop functioning autonomously.

In addition to the seven-chapter theological document, the drafting committee presented an "alert on the new church-dividing potential of some persistent issues," — racism, sexism, institutionalism, and congregational exclusivism.

The above surely represents an attempt to be all things to all men — not to the furtherance of the gospel but rather to the destruction of the truths of that gospel. The denominations participating in COCU are: The United Church of Christ; The Disciples of Christ; Episcopal; Christian Methodist Episcopal; African Methodist Episcopal Zion; United Methodist; United Presbyterian Churches; and the newest member: the National Council of Community Churches.

#### Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches

*The Christian News* also reports in its Nov. 15, 1976 issue that the new Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (AELC) now numbers some 60,000 members with 119 congregations. These represent those who have separated from the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, the so-called "moderates," who refuse to abide with the more conservative rulings of the Missouri Synod especially on the infallibility of the Bible.

#### NAPARC

A relatively new organization held its second annual meeting in Grand Rapids. The organization is North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC). There are presently five member denominations: the Christian Reformed Church, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the Presbyterian Church in America, and the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America. There is a sixth application for membership for the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church.

Meeting at Calvin College, representatives of these denominations toured Calvin's facilities where, in June of 1978, the General Assemblies and General Synods of these denominations expect to meet concurrently.

The council also voted to hold a conference on "Office in the Church" in March of 1978.

The editor of the *Presbyterian Journal*, Nov. 10, 1976, comments about this conference and presents

his own suggestions in drawing these various bodies closer — and hopefully into union.

We no longer believe that the pathway to union is best paved by formal negotiations between formally appointed committees, charged to hammer out agreement in all points of potential differences; in the course of drawing up detailed plans of union to be adopted by intricate constitutional processes.

There are two ways that men of good will can come together — *if* they are willing. The first of these is by a form of federalization, somewhat similar to the philosophy which underlay the willingness of the 13 original colonies to come together as united and yet sovereign states. Such a plan might include the erection of a provisional General Assembly in which separate delegations could participate without surrendering their denominational sovereignties. This was detailed in the June 18, 1975 *Journal*.

Another, more drastic and yet fully workable way in which compatible Christians from various traditions could form a more perfect union — if they could summon the courage to do it — would be the way of a great constitutional convention. A great congress on the Christian faith, bringing together all those interested in belonging to such a body, could resolve itself into a constitutional convention, adopt a working constitution and walk out as a *Church*. It has been done repeatedly on a smaller scale, in the formation of a presbytery, a synod and even a General Assembly!

#### New Confession for the Presbyterian Church U.S.?

This fall and winter the presbyteries of the Presbyterian Church U.S. (Southern Presbyterian) will be voting on the new confession entitled, A Declaration of Faith. This confession was adopted by the 1976 General Assembly (similar to our Synod) and now must receive approval of the presbyteries.

Those who have studied the new confession suggest that, though many acceptable statements are made, and though the "conservatives" are finding it difficult to condemn this confession, yet that there are "grave weaknesses" in the confession. In an article from the *Presbyterian Journal* of Nov. 3, 1976, the author, John Davis, points out that the confession suggests that though the Bible is the "Word of God" in a unique sense, it is no longer to be considered infallible: He points out a "creeping universalism" in this new confession. He writes, "By affirming neither universalism nor double predestination, the confession ends with a note of hesitation rather than the triumphant confidence of our Christian faith." The same author suggests there is "an unhappy combination of the classic views of the Westminster divines and the views of Karl Barth." Though this author does not believe the confession ought to be adopted, he also insists that its adoption ought not to justify a conservative exodus from the denomination.

## News From Our Churches

December, 1976, is a month that will probably be remembered by Rev. Dale Kuiper and his family for many years. On the 11th, the Kuiper family was blessed with the arrival of a son, Victor Paul. Rev. Kuiper preached the evening sermon in Hudsonville Church on the 12th, his last in the church which had been "home" for the Kuipers for the past several months. On the 13th Rev. Kuiper left for Lynden, Washington with his older children. Mrs. Kuiper was to follow by plane with the two youngest children a bit later. Rev. Kuiper was scheduled to be installed as the new pastor of our Lynden Church on the 19th by Rev. Wayne Bekkering.

Upon decision of the Mission Committee and in harmony with our last Synod's decision, Elder and Mrs. J. M. Faber of First Church and Rev. and Mrs. John Heys of our Holland Church left on January 12 to labor on the island of Jamaica for six weeks. For those who desire to write (and I am sure the emissaries would appreciate your letters), their address is:

c/o General Delivery, Montego Bay, Jamaica W.I.  
Rev. Heys says air mail postage is 25¢. Letters should get to them in about one week.

Bulletin contributors please take note. The new bulletin clerk for First Church is Mrs. Judi Doezeema 1904 Plymouth Terrace SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506. Bulletin announcements must be in written form and on Plymouth Terrace before 6:00 P.M. on Thursdays. Mr. Jim Heys retired from this post after ten years' service. He was publicly thanked for his many labors in this task and for his service as clerk of the First Church consistory upon the occasion of his retirement as elder on January 2.

The congregation of Hudsonville extended an invitation to all our area churches to join with them in the dedication of their new church building on January 20. An open house followed on January 22. The new church is located at 5101 Beechtree Ave. in Hudsonville, Michigan.

K.G.V.

### REPORT OF CLASSIS EAST

January 5, 1977

Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church

Classis East met in regular session on January 5, 1977 at our new Hudsonville church. A guided tour of the edifice preceded the meeting. Each congregation was represented by two delegates and, for the first time in many years, each congregation has an under-shepherd of her own. Rev. B. Woudenberg, having returned to serve a congregation in Classis East after a long stay in Classis West, was duly welcomed to the Classis. Rev. M. Schipper served as chairman of this session.

The usual preliminary business was conducted. The minutes were read, the Stated Clerk's report was read, and the Classical Committee reported its activity of approving the ministerial credentials of Revs. Kuiper and Woudenberg.

The church visitors made their final report which related their visit to Covenant Church in New Jersey. The visitors report that while this small church continues to struggle because of its size, their spiritual condition is excellent and they continue to be a strong witness in their area.

Subsidy requests for 1978 were received from Kalamazoo and Covenant. Both churches requested \$9000 subsidy for 1978; both requests were approved and forwarded to synod. Covenant also presented a letter of thanks for the subsidy received in the past, which letter was forwarded to synod for publication in the Acts.

In voting for synodical delegates classis selected the following: MINISTERS: Primi-C. Hanko. G. Van

Baren, R. Van Overloop, B. Woudenberg; Secundi A. den Hartog, J.A. Heys, M. Joostens, M. Schipper. ELDER: Primi- D. Engelsma, J. Huiskens, G. Pipe, R. Teitsma; Secundi- J.M. Faber, G. Hoekstra, J. King, G. Scholten. Voting for delegates *ad examina* resulted in a three-year primus term for Rev. G. Van Baren and a three-year secundus term for Rev. B. Woudenberg.

Holland presented a request for pulpit supply while Rev. Heys is in Jamaica. The following schedule was adopted: Jan. 16 - C. Hanko, Jan. 23 - M. Joostens, Jan. 30 - M. Schipper, Feb. 6 - G. Van Baren, Feb. 13 - H. Veldman, Feb. 20 - B. Woudenberg.

One matter involving the request by a consistory for the increase in censure was treated in closed session.

The Finance Committee composed of Elders G. Scholten and G. VandenTop reported expenses of \$392.01. These expenses were approved and payment authorized. Elder A. Alphenaar thanked the ladies for their catering.

The questions of Article 41 of the Church Order were satisfactorily answered, the concept minutes were read, Elder Alphenaar closed the meeting with prayer, and classis stood adjourned. The next meeting of Classis East will be held on April 6, 1977 at South-east Church.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jon J. Huiskens  
Stated Clerk