

# The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

No one will ever ask us for a reason for the hope that is within us unless that hope comes to expression in the witness of our mouth and lives.

See “My Sheep Hear My Voice” — page 257

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## THE STANDARD BEARER

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## MEDITATION

## Liberated to Serve

Rev. M. Schipper

*“Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness..” Romans 6:16-18.*

Know ye not?

O, indeed, the apostle does not question the knowledge of the saints at Rome as to whether they have it or not. Rather, he is reminding them of the knowledge they have. This is very evident from the fact that they had obeyed from the heart that form

of doctrine which had been delivered to them.

Implied in the whole question is the solemn truth that they knew that no matter who their master was, they are always servants. If their master is sin, then they are the servants to sin. If their master is righteousness, then they are servants to righteousness.



They know therefore that the servant never becomes lord and master. Of this saving truth the saints at Rome, and all the saints, must constantly be reminded, for in this truth is bound up their everlasting freedom.

The apostle gives thanks, and so must we, for the glorious fact that, whereas once the saints were servants to sin, they are now become the servants to righteousness. They have been made free from sin, and, having obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered to them, they are now free to serve righteousness.

They have been liberated to serve. This is evidently the main thought in this passage of Scripture. And this thought the apostle further develops in the remainder of the chapter. For, says he, when ye were the servants to sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become the servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Liberated to serve!

Apparent paradox!

Does not this expression seem quite contradictory, and does it not defy the normal concept of freedom? Is it not normal to conceive of freedom as that state and condition where servitude no longer obtains? where one is under no master at all?

Yet there it stands, black on white — having been made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. Ye have been made free to serve!

Surely this conception of freedom violates the understanding of freedom in our modern world. Would not the fathers of our country and the authors of the Declaration of Independence scoff at this presentation of freedom? Do not all our history books teach us and our children that the war for independence was fought to set us free from the dictatorial tyranny of a foreign power? Or, to put it another way, was not Lincoln's Emancipation Act the declaration of jubilee for all the black men who wished to be freed from their slave masters? a freedom just as real as the liberation of the slaves in the year of jubilee in the old dispensation?

And is not this idea of freedom in the sphere of the mundane relations carried over into the realm of the spirit? Is it not precisely the doctrine of all Pelagianism and Arminianism that man has a free will, and that freedom is a matter of man's choice?

Indeed, when the text speaks of having been made free to serve, it not only suggests an apparent paradox

in the light of history, but it markedly militates against the whole conception of freedom as expressed by man in any age.

We must see that the paradox is only apparent, not factual. We must understand that man, whether he is under sin, or grace, is always only a servant. He never becomes lord and master. This was true when he was the servant of sin. Though the master was a tyrant, exacting death; man was a willing slave of sin. This is true now when he becomes a servant of righteousness. Also here he is a willing servant, and he serves with a service that never ends. In both cases he is a willing servant, and he never becomes lord and master.

Fact of the matter is, that man in the state of righteousness before the fall was created only to be servant, never lord. It was precisely his sin that, under the enticement of Satan, he rebelled against the whole idea of servitude, and sought to be equal with God his Creator and Master. In this he emulated the Deceiver, whose sin, no doubt, was also that he refused to be under God, but sought to remove God from His exalted place, and to move into God's state, Whose prerogative as Creator is to be Lord. Does not Jesus say of the devil (John 8:44) "He abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him"? What was the truth in which he abode not? Was it not that God was God alone, and that he was only servant? Mind you, he was an exalted servant, head of the entire heavenly realm under God. But he puffed himself up with pride and sought earnestly to demote God and to take His place. This lie he also conveyed to man in Paradise. Said he, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil. (Gen. 3:4, 5) Man believed that lie, and ate of the forbidden fruit, because no longer did he wish to be servant, but as his lord. He did not want to serve God in love, but to be as God — to be lord, and not servant. And when man sinned, he became a slave of sin. This is the category in which the apostle also puts us, as we are by nature. We are by nature the servants of sin.

And the apostle suggests in the question he asks that this service of sin is not merely a service which is imposed on us against our will, but it is a willing service. Literally he says, "Know ye not that to whom ye place yourself beside as servant unto obedience, servant ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or obedience unto righteousness?" O, we know, of course, that the service of sin unto death was the judgment of God, which He said man would experience if he transgressed the commandment of God. Nevertheless, man after the fall does not serve sin against his will, but willingly. He actually places himself beside sin, and says with all his heart, I will serve thee, I will obey your every dictate.



He loves sin with all his heart and being, and would not have it otherwise.

The same is true when he is liberated from the service of sin; he becomes a willing servant of righteousness. True, he no longer serves from the heart the tyrannical slave-master sin, but from the heart now serves righteousness. But in either case, he remains servant. Only now he places himself beside righteousness with the intention to be devoted unto righteousness with all his heart and being.

Man never becomes God, the very thought of which is blasphemy! Man, whether he be natural man, or the new man in Christ, remains servant. When he becomes the latter, he is liberated to serve righteousness.

What is generally forgotten at this point, or we should perhaps say is not understood, is the fact that man's true freedom consists in his being able to serve his God. So it was in the state of rectitude. Man was created in the image of God and possessed all the faculties to love and serve his God. He was made a covenant friend-servant. That was his true freedom. When man rebelled against God, at that very moment he lost his freedom. He imagined he would be free when he transgressed. The truth is, he became a servant, bound with the shackles of sin and death which he could not break. God was not mocked — the day he sinned, that day he died. This is the plight of all who are born of Adam, of the whole human race. But here is the gospel, the good news of salvation: God in Christ came to deliver His people from the bondage of sin and death. He not only restored them to their original state of rectitude, but raised them up to the glory of the heavenly and eternal covenant relationship in which they will be His covenant friend-servants forever. Yes, they were the servants of sin, but are now become the servants of righteousness.

Wonder of grace!

The apostle says: But thanks be to God! Literally he says: But grace to God! The idea is that when the grace of God is recognized, observed, it becomes "thanks" to God. As you probably know, the fundamental and basic significance of grace is beauty. And that significance must not be lost out of sight here. The beauty which is here ascribed to God is seen in the redemptive work of making us, who were the servants of sin, to become the servants of righteousness. The change therefore is wrought through the wonder of grace. God, through a wonder of grace, made the change.

To be sure, when man sinned and became a servant of sin, that was also of God. And the fact that the wages of the service of sin is death is also of God. It belongs to the righteous judgment of God that the sinner must serve sin unto death.

But, O wonder of grace, God did not leave His people in the bondage of sin. He delivered them in His sovereign grace from sin and from death.

The text does not tell us in so many words how He delivered us. It simply assumes that that deliverance has taken place. But we know, do we not, from the Scriptures that God did it through His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. He it was Who assumed our nature and our guilt, bore the penalty of our guilt in our nature on the accursed tree. He became a curse for us, in order that He might deliver us from the curse. He, by His death, broke the power of sin and death which held us in bondage, and in His glorious resurrection declared unto us our justification. As the glorious Head of His people He ascended to God's right hand where He received the Spirit without measure and power to change us from servants of sin unto servants of righteousness.

Indeed, it is all of grace!

For He comes by His Spirit and truth and attacks our hearts, which loved the lie and the service of sin, and makes those hearts to love and obey that form of doctrine which was delivered to us through the preaching of the gospel. Through that change of heart we learned to hate sin and to flee from it. Through that change of heart we love God once more and desire to serve Him. Through that change of heart we submit to the form of doctrine delivered by His apostles and prophets; yea, more, we submit to the form of doctrine unto which we were delivered.

All of grace!

And when we by grace recognize this, we say with the apostle:

Thanks be unto God!

Not only do we say this with our lips, but we seal this confession with a godly life. That is what the apostle means when he says: obeyed from the heart with an obedience unto righteousness.

Willing service!

This is sanctification, without which no man shall see the Lord.

We have been made free to serve. In the text it is obedience unto righteousness. In the verses that follow we note that the apostle adds, "yielding your members servants to righteousness unto holiness." (vs. 19) And he concludes, "servants unto God." (vs. 22)

It is a devoted service, not by compulsion, but willing from the heart. Consecrated are our lives in the service of and unto the glory of God. The end fruit of which is everlasting life.

Thanks be unto God!



## EDITORIALS

## Baptism on the Mission Field (6) Reformed Thought on Baptism

Prof. H.C. Hoeksema

In this section of our discussion we will try to cover that part of the Study Report which deals with what the Church Order has to say about baptism. The material of the Study Report appears on page 107 of the 1976 Acts of Synod, and it reads as follows:

It is the Church Order that apparently stands opposed to baptism on the mission field. Articles 39 (with its appended decision), 56, and 58-60 seem to require the institution of a congregation, or the enrolling of the members of a group in an adjoining congregation, before there may be baptism, thus prohibiting baptism on the mission field and denying that baptism is part of the missionary task.

Such a reading of the Church Order confronts one with the serious question: How is the Church Order to be harmonized with the missionary mandate of Matt. 28 and Mark 16 and with the practice of the Church in the book of Acts, i.e., with the Word of God?

In fact, there is no conflict between the Church Order and Scripture. In these articles on baptism, the Church Order's scope is the local, instituted congregation. As regards the instituted congregation, the sacraments are to be administered in the public gathering of the congregation under the supervision of elders. But the Church Order does not address itself to the missionary situation. This was the position of the General Committee for Home Missions report to Synod of the Christian Reformed Church 1957. (See attachment I, "Historical Perspective.")

In this connection, the objection that baptism on the mission field does not harmonize with the truth of the church institute should be faced. The fear that baptism in the mission field does not do justice to the church institute, or to the supervision of elders, is unfounded. The instituted church that sends out the missionary does the baptizing on the mission field through the missionary, just as she preaches through the missionary (Cf. Acts 13: 1-3 and Acts 14:26, 27). The elders of the sending church oversee the missionary's baptizing, just as they oversee his preaching. The simple truth that must be remembered here is that it is the instituted congregation which preaches the Word and administers the sacraments: in the case of missions, she does this through the missionary whom she sends out. The missionary and his labor do not stand over against the local congregation, but are the

arm of the congregation. The baptism records, therefore, can be held either by the missionary, on behalf of the sending church, or by the sending church. The missionary can use our present Form for the Administration of Baptism, making plain to the baptized persons, or their parents, that "this Christian Church" refers to the institute that sends out the missionary.

There is one more paragraph in this section of the Study Report. But since this does not deal with the Church Order as such, we will not quote it and discuss it now, but reserve treatment of it for a later date. The "Attachment" referred to is found on pp. 109-111 of the 1976 Acts of Synod. We shall refer to that later.

Now I can agree with the fundamental point made in this section of the Study Report. For the rest, I am in radical disagreement. The fundamental point with which I am in agreement is: "In fact, there is no conflict between the Church Order and Scripture. In these articles on baptism, the Church Order's scope is the local, instituted congregation." If only the Study Report had stuck to this point and proceeded from it, it would have reached an entirely different conclusion and would not have been compelled to invent solutions for all kinds of problems resulting from its present, incorrect conclusion — solutions, I am sorry to say, which are obviously no real solutions and which do not even, when tested, ring true.

But what does the Report go on to state?

In the first place, it says: "As regards the instituted congregation, the sacraments are to be administered in the public gathering of the congregation under the supervision of the elders." Now this statement is in itself true. However, it is not to the point. And it is not to the point because it fails to state the principle which underlies virtually everything that our Church Order says concerning the sacraments. That principle is this: *the sacraments and their administration are inseparably bound to the instituted, local congregation, gathered for public worship (in which the preaching of the Word is indispensable) under the supervision of its own, local elders.* And this is a principle always held by Reformed churches, as well as maintained by almost every Reformed theologian



who addresses himself to this subject in any detail. Precisely because it is a *principle*, it can be and must be observed on the mission field as well as in the already organized and established congregation. And let me add immediately: when we properly read the Form of Ordination of Missionaries, as I have previously explained it, this principle also *can be observed on the mission field*, whether foreign or domestic. Have no fears about it, our Reformed documents (Church Order, Liturgical Forms, Confessions) are all consistent with one another.

In the second place, the Report goes on to state: "But the Church Order does not address itself to the missionary situation." Here the Report makes a fundamental mistake, first of all. It pits the missionary-situation over against the local-church-situation, as though they are two entirely different situations when it comes to the administration of the Word and sacraments and when it comes to the principles involved and the rules which follow from these principles. This is erroneous. Even the appeal to the "Report re Branch Churches" attached to the Study Report does by no means entirely support this contention. For one thing, this report is talking about branch churches, not mission stations. But besides, its recommendations (which are somewhat in harmony with our own Study Report) are not in harmony with the data in the report. The latter speaks of *organizing* churches before administering the Lord's Supper. (This is apart from the fact that a report of 1957 surely does not date from what might be called the most flourishing period of the Christian Reformed Church.) But be that as it may, in the second place, let me point out that the statement of the Study Report is not factually correct. The Church Order *does indeed* address the missionary situation in Article 39 and its footnote. This is exactly the article which in part has been involved in this entire discussion from its beginning in Hope's Consistory. It reads: "Places where as yet no consistory can be constituted shall be placed under the care of a neighboring consistory." Regardless now of whether the original article was geared to mission or church extension work, it has been applied in this fashion for almost 70 years, as is plain from the footnote attached: "If possible the organization of a congregation shall precede the administration of the sacraments. However, if the conditions are not ripe for the organization of a congregation, such members are to be enrolled in an adjoining congregation, and thus the sacraments can be administered under the supervision of that consistory. However, this shall not be without the accompanying preaching of the Word, nor without sufficient representation of the consistory to have supervision of the administration." Let no one say, therefore, that the Church Order does not address the missionary situation. And bear in

mind, too, that this is not just a decision hatched out in our own Protestant Reformed Churches. No, we took over this decision from the Christian Reformed denomination; and the latter adopted it as early as 1908. Notice, too, that it maintains the principle which I mentioned above.

In the third place, while it may be true that Articles 56 and 58-60 of the Church Order do not specifically address the missionary situation, this is really beside the point. It is somewhat like saying that these articles do not address the question of church-state relationships or some other question. For do not overlook the fact that our fathers who drew up the Church Order (and also the confessions and liturgy) — even as many Reformed theologians who can be quoted to this effect — were well aware of the very Scriptural data which the Study Report cites. Yet they insist that the sacraments are bound to the locally instituted congregation, as stated above; and they never make any provision for violation of this principle.

I must conclude the discussion for this time. But let me put to the test just one of the Report's proposed solutions — which, by the way, ought also to be included in the recommendations (for from a formal point of view the Report is sorely lacking in spelling out regulations governing this whole new procedure). But let us test what the Report says about the use of the Baptism Form(s), as required by Article 58 of the Church Order. The Report addresses but one problem, that of the expression "this Christian Church" in the second question asked of parents at infant baptism and in the fourth question at adult baptism. The Report proposes that the missionary make it plain that this expression refers to the institute that sends out the missionary. Hence, in the Houston, Texas mission station our missionary would say: ". . . in this, the Hope Protestant Reformed (Grand Rapids) Christian Church . . ." It is perfectly obvious that this is factually incorrect. It doesn't work. But now bear in mind that the Study Report does not even mention the full expression used in the Form. That specific expression is: ". . . *here*, in this Christian Church. . . ." (italics added) Now anyone can understand that "here," which is Houston, Texas cannot at the same time be "here, in this Hope Church in Grand Rapids." The Baptism Form does not fit the position taken by the Study Report. It would have to be officially changed in order to make it fit. And why? The whole of the Baptism Form is in harmony with the principle that the administration of the sacraments is bound inseparably to the locally instituted congregation. And this, mind you, is not simply a matter of some elders supervising — whether in actual presence or *in absentia* and long distance. Supervision of elders is



only one, limited aspect; and supervision of elders without an instituted *congregation* and *members* of a congregation is a complete anomaly.

But let us test more of these solutions next time.

### REFORMED THOUGHT ON BAPTISM

The following quotations are taken from Robert L. Dabney, *Lectures In Systematic Theology*.

p. 790: "They say they can prove in each case there were none: Cornelius' by vss. 2, 44. But see Genesis xviii: 19; 2 Chron. xx: 13; Ezra viii: 21; Matt. xxi: 15, 16. That Lydia's house were all believing adult children, or servants, or apprentices, they argue from Acts xvi: 40, 'brethren.' But see vss. 14, 15, nobody's faith is mentioned but Lydia's, and doubtless Paul had many other converts out of Lydia's house. The proof is, that the whole context shows the meeting in vs. 40 was a public one, not a family one; and the Philippian church, a flourishing body was now planted."

Note: This quotation is significant because it shows that Dabney's view was that there was already a Philippian church organized at the time when Paul baptized the jailer.

p. 794: "When our standards say, 'all baptized persons are members of the Church,' this by no means implies their title to all sealing ordinances, sufferage, and office. They are minor citizens in the ecclesiastical commonwealth, under tutelage, training, and instruction, and government; heirs, if they will exercise the graces obligatory on them, of all the ultimate franchises of the Church, but not allowed to enjoy them until qualified. They are, justly, under ecclesiastical government."

Note: We are not interested here in Dabney's argument concerning the difference between children and adults who are members of the church. This is the question which he is discussing in the context. We are, however, interested in the fact that he proceeds on the assumption that baptized persons are *members of the church*, and that, too, in its visible, institutional sense. This is quite in harmony with the current position of the Reformed confessions and of Reformed dogmatists that baptism is the sacrament of our incorporation into the visible church. Baptism which does not function as such is not proper baptism and is not recognized either in our Reformed confession or in Reformed dogmatics.

The following is translated from Dr. A. Kuyper *Dictaten Dogmatiek IV, Locus De Sacramentis*.

p. 41: "According as the sacrament is a means of grace, it belongs in the Church, and is incapable of existence outside the Church; and according as Christ no more appears directly in the sphere of the visible,

he brings the sacrament into existence at present only mediately through the Church.

"Seeing that the sacraments belong to the realm of the visible, in this connection by the Church is to be understood the Church as she appears in the realm of the visible; not a visible Church next to the invisible, but the invisible, which appears in the visible. Now this Church is not something next to, outside of, or over against Christ, but His body, which by Him as her Head is inspired and ruled. He is her subject. By her intruding into the visible, however, she causes her unity to go into hiding; she bedims her holy character, and she can let the works of Christ be seen in no other way than through the office.

"The *actio* of the church as such is:

"1. That she appears as visible institute in order to be Christ's instrument, in order that He may bring forth His sacraments: on this account she is bound to His institution, to the form determined by Him, to the Word given by Him and to the purpose prescribed by Him.

"2. That she in the name of the Mediator and thus in the name of the Triune God administers these sacraments to everyone who reckons himself to be member of the body of Christ in the realm of the visible.

"3. That by means of discipline she guards both against the non-use of the sacrament by him for whom it is, and against the use of the sacrament by him for whom it is not proper.

"Also in the determination of time and place the Church is not free; not in regard to place, — for she can only administer the sacrament there where she becomes revealed as Church, whether in the gathering of believers or in the gathering of the office bearers, representing the Church; and also not with respect to time, in so far as the determination of time arises out of the nature of the sacraments, even though there is left to the Churches a judgment of discretion in this."

p. 42: "The sacrament is bound to the Church; not to individuals in that Church. A believer has indeed a mystical life, can allow Christ to operate through the Word upon his consciousness, but the sacrament he does not have. This belongs to the Church as institute as organism.

"Besides it is bound to the Church in the visible, the visible instituted Church, not to a circle of believers. This arises out of the nature of the sacrament as visible sign. . . ."

p. 45: "Always must the Church as institute administer the sacrament. There can be a Church in the realm of the visible, not yet instituted, for example in the case of moving, but then the administration of the sacrament may not take place there."



Kuyper then goes on to explain his position in this regard and to emphasize strongly and repeatedly the necessity of the institute.

p. 47: "But what rule follows from the ordinance of the sacrament? This: only in the gathering of believers may there be baptism. Not in the absolute sense; but where the Church as instituted Church appears in the organs of her office bearers."

p. 113: "The Reformed have excluded every magical conception and said that the Church can only exist in the heart of believers (Luke 17:20); she is *naos tou theou* (temple of God), seeing that the Holy Ghost dwells in her. That Holy Ghost is the *Pneuma* (Spirit) of all the believers; and therefore it must be maintained that the Church is only there, where the believers are.

"Therefore also baptism must take place in the midst of the congregation. Where there are no believers, the rite of baptism is not complete.

"The Romish appeal to the eunuch and the jailer at Philippi. But those are exceptions. They tell us only that baptism without *praesentia fidelium* is not impossible.

"Baptism in the midst of believers must be strongly maintained, secondly, because baptism is the quest after a good conscience. (I Peter 3:21), and, thirdly, because the sacrament, as sign of being received into the covenant of grace, is not possible with the exclusion of the love of the remaining members, who therefore must also manifest themselves as Church."

## STUDIES IN ISAIAH

# Woes Denounced Against Deliberately Self-Destructive Ways

Rev. Robt. C. Harbach

Isaiah 5:19-23

1. *Deliberate defiance of God's judgments.* Woe! "to the ones saying, Let Him hurry His work in order that we may see (it), and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel approach and come (to pass), so we may know (what it is He threatens to do.)" He whom the world calls a free-thinker the Scripture calls a fool (nabal) and a scorner (letz). They flout the judgments of God, since they doubt whether they, as prophesied, shall ever occur. They say, If they are coming, we ought to be able to see and hear their approach! The philosophy of these free-thinkers is, "We know only phenomena. So when will we ever see or experience the phenomena of which you prophesy so much?"

Final judgment, fire and brimstone are far from the minds of worldly men! Nor will they have these things in mind. They despise such warnings as fanaticism and madness. Their notice of the divine judgment is only that of a contemptuous dare, or throwing down the gauntlet to God. It would delight them to see Him back up these silly alarms. The challenge to hasten His work implies God does not work, is a do-nothing God, has trouble getting into action. His work of judgment is all talk. This is deistical free-thinking. God does nothing and cares nothing about

the affairs of men. God, seeking His highest happiness, aims to be free from men and the world of men! Deism is refined contempt for the counsel and decrees of God. Peter prophesied of the last days (2 Pet. 3:3-4) when mockers would hold in contempt the promise of Christ's second coming. Why should we be surprised at such derision on the part of the wicked? For they had already despised His salvation, had mocked Him as a Savior, and had sarcastically called upon him to hurry and do the work He had pretended to come to do. (Matt. 27:42). Just so, such men in our own age are by this very word of the prophet, by the plain message of the Bible, warned that they are exposed to the wrath and righteous judgment of God. But they will not believe the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. Yet in the depths of their conscience, where they cannot possibly deny it, they know this judgment to be a reality to come. Still they fly in the face of the wrath to come, continuing to mock and flout the idea of divine judgment in the interest of convincing themselves otherwise, and to applaud other fools who mock God. (Rom. 1:32)

2. *Deliberate confusion of moral distinctions* (20). "Woe to those who say to Evil, 'Good!' and to the



Good, 'Evil!' who put darkness for light, and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter." (Heb.) False prophets call their lies truth, and the religion of Jehovah a lie. Crooked, corrupted judges pronounce the innocent guilty and the guilty innocent. Libertines praise drunkenness, carousing, and bacchanalia, but slander a life of worship and service to God. This applies to the Talmud, which interprets and belabors every commandment of God in such a way as to enervate and evaporate its tornadic force against transgressors in Israel. They call boozing good fellowship, whoring necessary recreation, gluttony good housekeeping, squandering they call stewardship, sea and soil pollution, husbandry; revenge becomes self-defence, assault becomes defending one's honor, lust becomes love, tantrums are self-expression, violence provides fulfilment; the more perverted the violence, the more fulfilment is afforded.

With this philosophy there is no concept of black or white, all is gray, with evil allowed to run rampant, and good charged with evil. When white is made black, there can be no concept black; there is no crime, no wrong. The equalitarians make the world of morals, ethics, behavior, law and order, standard or norm and purpose of education all black. The world is a ball of mud floating in a bottomless, shoreless, fog-bound sea of irrationality. Crime (pornography and obscenity for example) cannot be defined, and so the law-abiding cannot be protected. It is certainly true that "an openly heartless faith is surely dangerous, but a heartless faith which believes in itself as a loving agent is even more to be feared" (Rushdoony).

3. *Deliberate reliance on human reason.* "Woe to those wise in their (own) eyes, and those (super) intelligent in their own estimation" (Heb., v. 21). Who, in the upper strata of society, well-mannered, with a modicum of real intellectual merit, would ever estimate the modern boasted supremacy of human wisdom as the worst form of pride? But such it is in the judgment of God. Society no longer has any morals when it relies on its own wisdom in preference to the wisdom (law) of God. He alone is the source of wisdom, and without His word, man, society, the nation stagger aimlessly in the cloudy miasma of their own fuzzy philosophy. Unaided human reason may dabble and play with facts, but cannot know them within their context (God and reality), nor know them as to their meaning (God's interpretation of them). Here, the Lord condemns the would-be autonomous mind and will of man, who performs a near-miracle in making folly and ignorance look like wisdom. There are some who, no matter what you say to them, argue against it, twist it, and try to make it look bad. However, the Reformed truth, as expressed in all the Reformed creeds of all denomina-

tions, needs no defence from us. It is as plain as the sun in the heavens. It speaks for itself. It has stood the test of time and attack, and will remain when humanism and pseudo-orthodoxy are destroyed. But he will not be convinced in good conscience who will not conform his thought to Scripture and the Calvinistical creeds. Here, then, is a woe, a curse, divinely pronounced on any who obstinately cling in absurd confidence to their own wisdom.

Ritschl, the German theologian, made much of his conceived "value judgments." The expression has "taken" in our modern vernacular. What is meant by it is, that has value which in man's judgment pleases him. Even the most religious minded "haughtily reject everything that does not please them. They acknowledge that they need some bridle, but, on the other hand, are so much blinded by their presumption, that when God points out the way, they immediately rebel; and not only so, but break out into violent indignation at the censure passed on the their proceedings . . . Where is the man who renounces his own judgment, and is ready to learn only from the mouth of God?" (John Calvin). Nothing is more deceiving, rebellious, and dangerous than this mere show of wisdom which stupidly persists in holding it knows not what. They who make the grossest mistakes are the most elated with their own opinions and their own vast capacity for understanding and outwitting infinite Wisdom. Positively amazing it is to see them, with the Word of God in front of them, under the guise of reverence for it to actually attempt baffling and correcting it!

4. *Deliberate perversion of justice.* "Woe to those who are heroes (only) at drinking wine, and the men of strength to the mixing of strong drink, to the ones acquitting the guilty for the sake of a bribe, and the righteousness (right) of the righteous (innocent) they turn away from him." The second woe was directed against drunkards, this sixth woe against drunken judges. Scripture does not regard the sinner here as an alcoholic, but as a drunkard, calling him what he is, (telling it like it is), and the drunkard must know himself under the curse of God (I Cor. 6:9, 10). The legal judge of such a sinner is called and appointed to be a hero in punishing men like that sinner (Dt. 16:18-20; Ex. 23:8), and not an expert in gulping wine; to be brave in condemning the guilty and acquitting the innocent, not to be pompous drunken asses in accomplishing the very reverse.

Especially since the assassination of President JFK, the philosophy of law has been away from individual guilt and punishment. Then innocent society is adjudged guilty, not the criminal. So that it gets dangerous to be innocent of wrong. For modern psychiatric mentalities views innocence as the greatest guilt. This is the philosophy of the civil rights



(riots) radicals. A homosexual is defended as innocent on the ground that his genes and chromosome structures are abnormal. So the criminal is neither a criminal, nor responsible, but innocent, while society drives the pervert to his vile excesses, so making the innocent guilty. So the guilty are acquitted and the rights of the innocent are taken from them. But this is what the Lord thinks of all this: "He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to Him." (Prov. 17:15).

What are these brave lone rangers in the fight for law and order? Bumpers of the beery battalion – wino musketeers – smug in their mugs – rich with bribes, spending their time wrestling themselves to cram down as much as their bellies will hold. Fatigued and weakened, they destroy their strength in gluttonous exploits. Their strength is not in their bodies but in their pocketbooks. Their might is their

money. Gifts and gluttony pervert justice. The result is that vices are not corrected, the sanctioning of wicked custom is not opposed, the innocent are deserted and deprived of the opportunity to defend their innocence, while judgment goes against them as the guilty go acquitted. But where there is bribing, "the offence is the judge's, not the briber's." The judge becomes a thief and his office a den of thieves. In our land crime does pay, as crooked judges are influenced by businessmen, powerful political machines, and such billion dollar organizations in the interests of their own evil purposes as a modern Illuminati, the Cosa Nostra. The law of God requires a responsibility to the victims of crime in reparations to them commensurate to their loss and suffering. The law also requires a responsibility to the guilty in their *speedy* punishment. But where in all the land is such responsible justice to be found? It is, as Martin Luther would say, a bird as rare as a black swan!

## TRANSLATED TREASURES

# Acts of the Synod of Dordrecht

(6)

At the beginning of the Conference they again debated concerning the order of the Articles which would be treated. Arminius seemed to think that it was advantageous for his cause to begin with predestination. But, seeing that the article concerning justification seemed to be more necessary, Gomarus believed that they should begin with this; and this was also the pleasure of the States. Concerning this point of doctrine there was the same dispute as that which had taken place earlier before the High Council, namely, whether faith itself, in respect of the fact that it is a deed, is through gracious acceptance by God the righteousness by which we are justified before God. In the second place, they treated the doctrine of divine predestination, which Arminius, by means of the same false consequences which he had not long previously presented in the gathering of the States, sought to make hated. But Gomarus clung to the chief item of difference, that is, whether faith is a cause or preceding condition of election, or whether it is a fruit and effect of election. The third difference was concerning the grace of God and the free will of man. Arminius testified that he acknowledged all the operations of divine grace which one could posit in the conversion of man, provided that no grace would be proposed which is irresistible. Gomarus pointed out

the ambiguity and deceit hidden in that word *irresistible*, namely, that under it lay hidden the formerly condemned view of the Semi-Pelagians and the Synergists. And Gomarus maintained that in the regeneration of man such a grace is necessary which operates so powerfully that, having conquered the opposition of the flesh, by that grace all who partake of it are certainly and unmistakably converted. Finally, they treated the doctrine concerning the perseverance of the true believers. Arminius declared that he had never contested the doctrine of the certain perseverance of the true believers, and that also now he did not want to contest it, seeing that there is such testimony of Scripture in favor of it that he at present could not answer it. For this reason he would only point out those passages which, for him, occasioned doubt and suspicion regarding this article. After Gomarus had replied to those passages, he established the doctrine of certain perseverance over against them with many clear testimonies from God's Word.

When this was finished, therefore, they asked the Conferees whether there were any more articles of doctrine about which they differed. Gomarus replied that there were indeed more, namely, the articles concerning original sin, concerning the providence of



God, concerning the authority of Holy Scripture, concerning the certainty of salvation, concerning the perfection of man in this life, and certain others. He further stated that he would leave it to the discretion of the States whether they would also deal with these matters at that place, especially since these matters would have to be dealt with again in the Synod. But since the sickly condition of Arminius no longer allowed him to continue at the Conference, the States deemed it good to terminate this Conference. But first, upon the request of Gomarus and the other Ministers with him, they promised, August 22, that this entire matter would be more thoroughly investigated and decided upon at the Provincial Synod which was to be convoked immediately. Moreover, they ordered the Conferees to deliver in writing, within fourteen days, their views, together with the proofs and the refutation of the contrary views, in order that these documents might be kept for the Provincial Synod. Gomarus sent his writings within the fixed time, and these were thereafter published in the Netherlands language. Since the difficulties of the Churches were increased rather than removed by this Conference, the Deputies of the Churches again humbly petitioned the States, September 16, that the Provincial Synod, which had been promised so often previously and also in this Conference, might be convened immediately. To this petition the answer was given, although some were opposed, that the summoning of the Provincial Synod would take place only after the Ministers of the Classis of Alkmaar would obey the orders of the States to admit to their gatherings Adolphus Venator and the Ministers siding with him. In order that this matter would not cause the postponement of the Provincial Synod, the Deputies of the Churches, traveling to Alkmaar, dealt with the Ministers of that Classis concerning this admission, and moved them to admit the Ministers who sided with Adolphus under honorable conditions; but they were not prepared to admit Venator himself. For this they furnished the Deputies so many and such weighty reasons that they themselves judged that they could not properly press this matter any further. Having made this known to the States, they still could not achieve the convening of the Synod. For the Ministers siding with Arminius brought it about that the Classis of Alkmaar was again ordered, October 15, to admit the aforementioned Ministers unconditionally. Since they could not do this, the convening of the Synod was again postponed. Meanwhile, Arminius by letter excused himself with the States, stating that because of physical weakness he could not prepare the document which he was ordered to prepare. This sickness soon became so severe that a short time later Arminius died.

The preceding is an account of the arguments and the disputes by which the Academy and the Churches

of Holland were troubled while Arminius was still living.

After his death, October 19, all the pious hoped that for the most part the difficulties would be removed and buried along with Arminius, since he had been the instigator and the author of all these entanglements. Yet since there were in various places many Ministers in the Churches of Holland who adhered to his views and did not cease to propagate them, therefore the Deputies of these Churches considered it necessary nevertheless to press for the convening of the Provincial Synod. However, they were again given the answer that the States would see to the convening of an ecclesiastical gathering only when the Classis of Alkmaar would obey their orders.

Meanwhile, when the Ministers siding with Arminius saw matters brought to the point that the convening of the Synod was prevented, they seemed to fear but little the judgment and the censures of the Churches, as became manifest from the degree of boldness and shamelessness to which they surrendered themselves. They began to strike out and to bellow against the pure doctrine of the Reformed Churches concerning election, the perseverance of the saints, the certainty of salvation, and other doctrines with extremely bitter and reproachful and abusive language, and to do so openly and in secret, to the great offense of the pious, to the joy of the enemies, and to the disturbance of the Churches. And it was not enough for them to upset the hearts of the common people and of the Regents alike by means of secret blasphemies and public uproarious sermons; but they also did so with open writings, which they distributed in great number and with equally great offense among the people. They tore to pieces the doctrine of the Reformed churches in such a way that only the sworn enemies of that doctrine could have done so with more bitterness and obscenity. And, in order that they might the better win the favor of the Magistrates and inflame their feelings more and more against the other Ministers, they worked through Uitenbogaard, first through a speech given in the gathering of the States and later through a published document, and sought to convince the Magistrates that the other Ministers belittled the authority of the Magistrates, sought to weaken it, and were striving for a separate or equally high power for themselves. On this account, the Deputies of the Churches deemed it good to address the States again, May 25, and to request that they, by convening a Provincial Synod, would finally see fit to help with these troubles, which appeared to have reached new heights, by means of a lawful remedy. But when the States, on account of the great need, appeared to concur in this readily, then the Ministers devoted to the views of Arminius presented a new plan, in order that through



this the convening of the Synod might either be prevented, or that the Synod might be so constituted, according to their idea, that their cause would remain sure and would suffer no harm. Their proposal was that the men who would be called together at this Synod would not be delegated by the Churches (as was proper and as until now had been the practice), but that the States themselves should invite certain men. For if they succeeded in this, they would easily gain their end, namely, that only those men would be chosen who were adherents of their cause or who would not be very strongly opposed to it. Although they convinced some of the Regents of the Fatherland of this innovation, nevertheless they could not move the most understanding men to do this; and the latter judged that the convening of the Synod had to take place in the usual way. Nevertheless, while the matter was debated by the States, the adherents of Arminius succeeded in bringing it about that the convening not only of the Provincial Synod but also of the annual Synod, which heretofore had customarily been held almost every year, was by this means delayed and prevented. For as often as those who wished that all these evils might be removed from the churches through lawful means spoke of the convening of a Synod, so often those who sided with Arminius renewed these debates about the manner of convening the Synod. For this reason also the Ministers who were committed to the views of Arminius, seeing that they had brought matters to the point that all fear of ecclesiastical judgment and censure seemed to be removed, became bolder; and without the knowledge and counsel of their

Churches, and without the authority of the government, a large number of them held a secret gathering. And there, but subscribing their names, they mutually formed a confederation, a body separate from the existing body of their Fellow Ministers, thus bringing about open schism in the Reformed Churches.

At this time they delivered to the States a request, or, as they called it, a Remonstrance (because of which they were hereafter called Remonstrants). This was published in June at the Hague Conference. In this they put the doctrine of the Reformed Churches concerning divine predestination, concerning the grace of God, and concerning the perseverance of the saints in bad faith, not without open and bitter slander. The purpose was to arouse the hatred of the States against these doctrines. Along with this they added a declaration of their opinions concerning the same Articles; but they sought to conceal their views under ambiguous and disguised words, in order that to the simple their views would not seem to differ much from the truth. In addition, they requested the States to take them under their protection over against all ecclesiastical censures. This caused the Netherlands Churches to become very dejected, seeing that these differences had now burst forth into open schism. And they all diligently attempted to get a copy of this Remonstrance, so that they might be able to give an answer to all the slanders. But the Arminians, through the favor of those who tried to hold matters in safe keeping, easily brought it about that no copy of that Remonstrance could get into the hands of the other Ministers for a long time.

## THE DAY OF SHADOWS

# The Shadow of Things to Come

Rev. John A. Heys

At the moment, we are on the island of Jamaica, and a few lines are due for our department, *The Day of Shadows*. But we have returned to such a different Jamaica that we feel constrained to write about it, believing that our people will want to know the situation as it affects the brethren and sisters on the island. Besides, one almost has to be a Jamaican chameleon to change again after adjusting to this lifestyle and fall back into the routine of life in the congregation, and in that spirit to fill our department and write of Abraham as he lived in the days of the

shadows and passed his pilgrimage without having obtained the promises.

We speak not of a spiritual adjustment. Such an adjustment was not necessary. And yesterday, January 23, when Mrs. McNab taught the Sunday School lesson at Dias with the help of our Sunday School paper, *Our Guide*, the truths of the day of shadows was with us. The "golden text" was taken from Hebrews 4:8, "For if Joshua has given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day." This was committed to memory by drill and repeti-



tion. And Mrs. McNab taught the children that the rest to which Joshua led Israel was a picture and only a picture of the rest which Christ prepares for us. Truly that rest did cast its shadow back over the ages to Israel as they crossed the Red Sea and entered into the land which God promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And, after all, even though we are not in the day of the shadows, we are not yet in the rest which Christ has come to prepare; and there are shadows here in Jamaica and throughout the world that are cast by His coming upon the clouds of heaven. And this moved us to write these lines.

Jamaica is undergoing a financial crisis and is struggling for its very life. This became evident the moment we arrived, if not even before we left Chicago by Air Jamaica, the national airline of Jamaica. This is the tourist season which had its beginning December 15. We are now in the heart of that season, and yet our plane was far from full. What is more, the newspaper tells us that in January the sale of tickets dropped another 22%, and January has a full week to go yet. But upon being questioned at Immigration as to how long we planned to stay, and upon answering, "six weeks", our immigration card was stamped to indicate that we might stay two months. They would like to have us stay the extra two weeks to pour more foreign money into circulation on the island.

Store shelves are becoming bare. Many items are no longer obtainable because Jamaica will not import goods in order to keep its money at home. And last week overnight we were informed that gasoline which already cost \$1.26 per imperial gallon of five quarts would have imposed upon it a 72¢ tax, bringing the price of the precious liquid to \$1.98! Yesterday on our trip to Dias in the west and to Belmont on the southern side of the island we noticed the effects, for we had, for the most part, the road to ourselves. In that respect it made things, humanly speaking, much safer.

To give a little idea of the situation, go into the store and buy a few of the items which we usually buy. Potatoes sell for 50¢ a pound. A small box of Jello costs 35¢, a very small roll of toilet tissue costs 40¢. Ground beef, called mince here, may be purchased, when you can find it, for \$1.95 a pound. A small 6½ ounce can of tuna sells for \$1.00 to \$1.15 depending on the brand you buy. Even native fruits, such as oranges, which two years ago sold for 30¢ for a large plastic bag containing from 18 to 20 oranges, now sell for 60¢ to 80¢ for a dozen.

Those who take a holiday (vacation) are allowed to take along only \$50. How long can one stay in Miami or New York with that amount of money; and what can one do with so little in our land or other lands which also know inflation? But get this, the Prime Minister, the head man politically, who put into

effect all these restrictions, himself was getting only \$22,000 a year for his salary, AND THIS HE CUT to \$16,000 a year! The members of Parliament were getting \$7,500 and were cut to \$7,100. With these salaries they must buy their gasoline and food at the prices quoted above. What then must be the case with the man who, as we were told, gets the minimum wage of \$2,080 a year? And what then of the bulk of those with whom we deal who have not even a job?

These economic woes have spawned great unrest, riots, fear, and desperation. Taxi drivers went on strike in Kingston because of the gasoline tax; and the capital city and largest city in Jamaica is without their services. Murder, robbery, violence, and rape have multiplied; and life has become far more dangerous than in the past. For that reason among others we moved after two days from the home where we first stayed upon arrival. No, we do not trust in horses and chariots, in windows with jail-like bars in front of them, in locked doors — in that first house we had one door with four bolts and one lock to prevent breaking it down — and in barking dogs with whom we had first to get acquainted. But we, putting our trust in the God of our salvation Who sent us here, do believe that we must make use of the safety devices which He provides.

The impact of this economic situation upon the churches in Jamaica wherewith we have been dealing these years is great. The poor are simply getting poorer and the hardships become greater. The five ministers in these churches will be confronted with higher bus and taxi fares and with ever higher prices for their food and clothing. It must be remembered that the buses do not run on Sundays, so that when travel becomes necessary on Sunday to and from the churches (in some instances coming Saturday and leaving Monday is impossible because the little, 12 foot by 12 foot houses are too small to have a guest room where the minister can sleep) must be done by taxi at a far higher rate, or by private car which is not cheap by any means. And with the rise in gasoline prices, these private cars will not only be forced to raise their prices but in many instances will be taken off the road. Consider these figures given to us by Rev. Elliott, who has to do the greatest amount of travelling, for he lives far to the east of the greater number of these churches. It costs him \$14.70 to go to Mt. Lebanon which is one of the most inaccessible of the churches. The closest to his home is Lacovia; and that costs him \$9.80. Mt. Lebanon requires bus transport for the greater part of the way, and then a private car from the sea coast up the steep mountain to a point some miles from the church. The last part is done by foot; and although this is the cheapest part as far as dollars and cents are concerned, it is taxing upon a man in his seventies. The trip to Cave Mt.



costs him bus fare of \$12.90 cents. And this, too, must be followed by a walk up a steep and high mountain road. One has to do it to know really what it is like; and one ought to walk from the sea coast up that road to the church before one dismisses it as simply a thing to be expected.

The collections taken by the congregation, if given in their entirety to the minister, would pay only a fraction — and a small fraction at that — towards these expenses. It is easy to talk and say that these people — who were never taught to do so in the past — should learn to support them. It takes no special effort to preach to them that first things come first, and that we ought to seek the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness first in the confidence that God will add all the material that we need. But when the whole nation, those with jobs as well as those without jobs, (those in the upper brackets and those who know only a few coins, must pay the prices that are constantly rising to go to market to sell their few oranges, bananas, yams, and the like, there just will not be much more than coins to put into the collection plate. When the newspapers print their hopes that the Carter administration will be more mindful of Jamaica, and at present the newspapers are discussing the pros and cons of becoming the 52nd State in the Union of the United States of America, things are bad economically by the admission of those with salaries and jobs and worldly goods. What must it then be for those who never had much and now must pay more for their foods? They must buy from the same stores; and we see them every day pay the same prices we do when they buy their rice and milk, their salt fish, for which they stand in line when a supply appears. One can close one's eyes to the facts, but this does not change the facts. One can say that they should give their ministers a salary and a home, but then one must also show them how to do this with next to nothing as their yearly income. Dias is providing a place to live for their minister, renting the home of the late Rev. Joshua Frame. This is a step in the right direction; but to encourage them we must not close our purse strings and expect them to do the impossible. These are small churches that cannot support a minister; and we ourselves have supported many a minister by giving subsidy to larger and wealthier congregations than these. Must we then withhold from these who by any standards are poor? Does not the word of Jesus come to us, as He sent us and called us to labour here, that the poor we always have with us? We cry that our deacons have no work to perform. The government with its social security and medicare, medicaid, and other welfare agencies has put them "out of business." But have we been brought face to face with these people to ignore their need? While we sit in comfortable and beautiful churches and live in homes of the latest design with

the most modern conveniences, have we no calling to these who have no windows in their churches to keep out the driving rain, no good roof to keep them dry, planks stretched across stones — and if they are rich enough, stretched across cement blocks — for seats? How about kerosene lights for your services? O, if they had money to build beautiful churches and homes for themselves and then neglected the ministry of the Word, we would have a different situation. And as the economic picture darkens here in Jamaica, saints of God who, upon being instructed plead for us to come back again next week — and we have been discussing with them the very sins which we have seen, such as visiting other churches that hold to false doctrines; the evil of common law marriages; the refusal to baptize infants and a rebaptizing of those whom they did "bless" or "consecrate"; and of giving offices to women — to show them what the Word of God says about these matters. It would do all our people good to watch them look up the verses we present as proof texts, and to hear them say that we show not what we think but what the Bible says.

Forgive us, we got carried away because we are here and see these things again at first hand. We had intended to write something else, at least to lead to another thought. Added to all these woes is the smut in the sugar cane fields and mango trees. You have just experienced unprecedented cold with snow in the Bahamas for the first time in its history. Here in Jamaica the temperature fell to 48 degrees in Mandeville and 64 in Montego Bay. These are extremely cold figures for Jamaica. But let no man say that these things cannot happen again, and that we in the United States cannot have famine. As we wrote above, the final coming of Christ casts its long shadow across the whole world. Look at it and ignore it not. We are not in the days of the shadows of the first coming of Christ. But that which cast its shadow in Canaan and was seen by Israel was not only the first coming of Christ in Bethlehem. Actually it is the shadow of Christ the King and of His coming as the glorious King of the Kingdom of heaven that cast its shadow way back into paradise after man's fall. And since He has not yet come that way, that shadow falls also on the world today. See that in the economic woes of the world, in the storms and the destruction of our foods, in the changing climates and bitter cold. He is coming. And we are much closer to the roots of the "tree" that cast this shadow.

**Know the standard  
and follow it. . .  
Read THE STANDARD BEARER!**



## THE STRENGTH OF YOUTH

# Envy Not the World (2)

*Rev. J. Kortering*

We have seen in our previous article that the world is not enviable to us because of the corruption that is manifest in their life. In the words of Isaiah the prophet, "The wicked are like the troubled sea, casting up mire and dirt."

We have to add to this the fact that this horrible filth makes the wicked worthy of God's terrible judgments. Sin is a transgression of the law of God and makes one guilty before God. The thought of God's punishing sin fills one with terror. It should drive us all the more to the cross of Jesus.

### SIN A TRANSGRESSION

God is a God of law.

This law is not simply a code for human conduct which God enforces throughout history. Human law is this way. The states have a code for criminal behavior. That code spells out what is to be considered wrong conduct. Very carefully, usually through court decisions dealing with precedent cases, the law distinguishes between degrees of crime. The code spells out the difference between misdemeanors and felonies. Along with such a distinction, the code also specifies what kind of penalty fits each crime. Lesser crimes have parole and fines; more severe crimes have imprisonment and even death. The system of justice must determine whether a person committed a crime, which crime, and apply the proper penalty to him for it. This is justice under our penal system.

With God, however, this is somewhat different. God's law is not simply a code for determining wrong; it is positively a way of *life*. There are two sides to God's law. The positive side is the one in which God comes to us and dwells with us as God in loving kindness and tender mercy. The negative side is the one in which God deals with those who step out of bounds and reject Him and therefore become the objects of His terrible wrath.

Let's illustrate this a moment. God has placed within the realm of nature His laws. There is a law for the bird in that it must fly through the air, it breathes

air, it is free to fly and to sit among the branches. There is also a law for the fish. That law is very different. The fish must draw its life from the water, it has freedom to swim to great depths, to eat vegetation or animal life within the water. Both animals have a law that binds them. There is a positive side and a negative side. The positive side is that the success of the bird is to fly and enjoy the freedom of the air and to sing among the branches. The freedom of the fish is to swim in the sea. The negative side is that each must stay within the proper boundaries. If the fish should say (as we imagine) I don't like it here anymore, I want to be with the birds, and it decides to jump out of the water; or if a fisherman should catch one and throw it on the shore, it flaps about a bit and soon it gasps its last and dies. The same is true for the bird. It can't decide to live in the water — that is out of bounds. If a naughty boy catches a bird and thrusts it under the water, it soon dies. There is a positive and negative side to God's law for every creature.

This is also true spiritually for us, as we think on God's law. The positive side of God's law is that we are to love Him with all our soul, mind, and strength and our neighbor as ourselves. This is what God says to us in the moral law of the ten commandments (Exodus 20), and what Christ also summarized for us in Matt. 27:37-39. That is not simply a code for conduct, it is a sphere of *life*. Within the law of God we enjoy blessed covenant favor with God and with one another. This is what God intended with the creation. He made man able to function within the sphere of His law. As long as man lives according to God's law, there is perfect harmony and peace. The joys of the covenant are expressed in loving kindness.

There is also the negative side of that law. God warned Adam and Eve, and everyone after them, that if they step out of bounds and transgress that law, they will forfeit the benefits of His loving kindness and will become subject to His terrible curse and judgment. That is the negative side.

The Bible speaks often of such transgression.



"Fools because of their iniquities are afflicted," Psalm 107:17. "The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again," Isaiah 24:20. To speak more personally, the child of God recognizes sin as transgression and therefore prays, "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgression: and my sin is ever before me," Psalm 51:2, 3.

When we look at sin, we must realize that all sin bears a terrible consequence. It is not so that God looks up in His code book to see what penalty he has affixed to certain evil deeds. Far worse, all transgressions, even the very first one which was "only eating fruit that was forbidden" bears the terrible penalty of death, everlasting death!

One trembles to think of the meaning of this.

### GOD PUNISHES TRANSGRESSION

God's righteousness demands that His law be maintained. The sentence of death hangs over the whole universe ever since the first transgression. Who can begin to understand the implications of death. It is brought forth by the wrath of the Righteous God against man's disobedience. That wrath is not an emotional outburst of power; it is His hot displeasure to deal justly with those who oppose Him.

This punishment of death ultimately leads to hell. Little wonder that the truth of hell is rejected today in increasing measure. Somehow the wrong emphasis on God's love is incompatible with hell. Yet, that truth is important, for sin committed against the eternal God bears everlasting punishment. The penalty is commensurate with the crime and the crime is determined also by the one against whom it is committed. The justice of God demands that one who steps out of bounds from God will receive everlasting death.

The Bible describes hell in such terms. It speaks of the fire burning but never consuming (Luke 3:17), of worms eating but never devouring, (Mark 9:47, 48), of falling into a pit and never reaching the bottom, (Rev. 20:3). The idea is that hell is conscious, unending torment of body and soul before the God of wrath.

We find a picture of hell within the chronicles of history when we turn to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. The holocaust of fire and brimstone must etch upon the mind of all men the sure fact that Jehovah is righteous in judgment.

This visitation of God upon the wickedness of men is not reserved entirely for death and the end of the world. God already now visits the wicked with such judgment. Do not the plagues upon Pharaoh and

Egypt demonstrate this? We read in Rom. 1:18, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." The Psalmist expresses it this way: "The Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men. The Lord trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth. Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup. For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright," Psalm 11:4-7. Solomon adds, "The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked; but he blesseth the habitation of the just," Prov. 3:33.

Sometimes this isn't so evident. As we noted in our last article, even Asaph envied the wicked, for it seemed as if their prosperity was greater, until he realized in God's house that even that prosperity was a curse to them. Then again it is very evident. According to the book of Revelation, Christ sends for the red horse of war, the black horse of famine, the pale horse of death as judgments upon the wicked in order that through these disturbances the white horse of the gospel may ride victoriously. Surely, such judgments in history indicate that even though the ungodly strive to build up Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots (and they will apparently succeed with the kingdom of anti-christ for a time), all this shall ultimately fail, for, according to Revelation 18, the merchants throw dirt upon their heads and mourn, crying out, Babylon is fallen, is fallen! As God disturbs them now, so He will ultimately destroy by fire all the wicked and their so-called achievements.

### OUR RESPONSE

Considering this truth, how can we possibly envy the world? Oh yes, they seem to have so much fun and are so carefree, but they pine away under the wrath of God. They are fools in their folly, sowing the wind and reaping the whirlwind.

Well may we tremble.

Rather than envy them, we do well to evaluate our position in relation to them.

Consider Lot of whom we read, "For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds," II Peter 2:8. It is further explained that he did this because, "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished," verse 9.

Do you vex your soul from day to day?

That's quite different from envying them.



Furthermore, the inspired apostle adds later, "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Wherefore beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless," II Peter 3:11, 12.

If we really stop to think of who the wicked are and that they are the objects of God's judgment for time and eternity, we must conclude that they are

not our friends. We do not find pleasure in their company, we cannot be imitators of their lifestyle, we cannot laugh at their jokes, we cannot be entertained by their iniquity. Rather, we separate ourselves from them and testify against them.

God's judgment upon them causes us to be humble.

By nature we are no different.

By grace we are transformed into a new and holy life.

To this we will direct our attention next time, the Lord willing.

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## MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE

# Letter to the Members of the Church at Philadelphia

March 1, 1977

To the members of the church in Philadelphia,

We ended our last letter with a number of questions. These questions arise out of our assertion that the preaching of the Word is of fundamental significance for the salvation of the child of God. It is of such critical importance that there is salvation in no other way. This is, e.g., the clear teaching of Paul in Romans 10:13-15: "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent?" Paul constructs a chain here which cannot be broken. He is talking about how we are saved. Or, perhaps more accurately, he is talking about *who* are saved. And his answer is that only those are saved who call upon the name of the Lord. But it is impossible for us to call upon the name of the Lord unless we believe in Him. And, it is impossible to believe in him unless we hear him. We cannot believe in someone whom we never hear. But we cannot hear Him unless there is a preacher. And there can be no preacher unless the preacher is sent. And so, when a preacher is sent, he can preach. And when he preaches, Christ is heard. And when Christ is heard, then we can believe in Christ. And believing in Christ we can call upon His name. And in this way we are saved.

It is for this reason that there is no salvation apart from the preaching. It is for this reason that it is a

grave sin to separate one's self from the preaching. It is for this reason that separation from the preaching deprives one of salvation.

This has been the gist of our argument against all such groups who do precisely this.

But it is this argument which raises other questions which I want to discuss with you now.

Basically these questions involve the spiritual efficacy and benefit of all sorts of other Christian activities. These activities include such things as Bible study (whether with other believers or in private), prayer, family devotions, Christian witnessing, etc. Does God use these means also to save us? Does Christ speak through these different means?

Surely this is an important question, for if Christ does not speak through these other means then they are little more than exercises in futility. And if you are in any way persuaded that this is true, then all these exercises to which Scripture calls us will soon disappear from our lives.

The answer to these questions is rooted in the fact that God has established an inseparable connection between the preaching and all these other exercises. The Scriptures are quite clear on the fact that the preaching is central to our lives. But the preaching is connected with the whole life of the child of God. That connection is clear and important. For one thing, that connection lies in the Scriptures themselves. The content of the preaching is the Scriptures. In fact, it is not too much to say that the preaching



derives its authority, its "Thus-saith-the-Lord" from the authority of the Scriptures. There is no preaching where the content of the preaching is anything else but the Scriptures. But, at the same time, the spiritual exercises of the child of God are also centered in the Scriptures. His Bible study is the study of the Scriptures. His prayers have as their content the Scriptures. His Christian witnessing is concerning the truth of the Scriptures. The connection is in the Word of God itself.

Furthermore, there is the connection of faith. According to our Heidelberg Catechism, the preaching of the Word is the *means* of faith. And the idea is that the preaching of the Word is the God-ordained way to bring faith into consciousness in our lives. Under the preaching the Holy Spirit so works faith that we believe the Word of God; and believing the Word of God, we believe Christ and call upon Him. But that very faith which is worked by the preaching is a faith which must come to expression in all our lives. All the exercises in which the Christian engages must be exercises of faith.

Closely connected with all this is the fact that the Holy Spirit is He Who works all this in our hearts. The Holy Spirit works faith through the preaching and makes that faith conscious. The Holy Spirit works that faith which must be operative in all our life: in our Bible study, our prayers, our witnessing, our daily walk. But the Holy Spirit never works apart from the Word. He never works apart from the Word preached principally. And when He works in us so that we live out of faith in all our lives, the Holy Spirit always works that faith as we tie ourselves to the Word of God.

The preaching is the real fountainhead of all our life. But drinking of the waters of life at the fountain of the preaching, we drink those waters from God's Word daily and those waters flow forth from us in all our life of faith.

Hence, the truth of the matter is that indeed Christ speaks to us through the Scriptures when we read those Scriptures in our inner closet, when we discuss those Scriptures with our families about our tables, when we study those Scriptures in the company of God's people.

But there is a sort of reciprocal relationship here. When we hear the preaching and are fed by the preaching, then we are very interested in the further and constant study of the Scriptures. It is as if the preaching serves as the stimulus to drive us in all our life to the preaching. The preaching quickens within us the desire to study God's Word and to pray. But the opposite is also true. When Scripture reading and study along with prayer occupy an important place in our lives, then too, this very exercise of faith quick-

ens within us the desire to go up to God's house to hear His Word proclaimed every Lord's Day.

The same thing may be said of Christian witnessing. I think sometimes that we have made here a mistake of emphasis. We have emphasized so strongly the efficacy of preaching as the sole means of salvation that we have all but discouraged God's people from Christian witnessing. The heart of the question is really whether or not the witnessing of the people of God is effectively used by God in the salvation of those who hear such witnessing. Does God use the witness of the individual members of the Church to save those whom he has ordained to eternal life? May we expect that God will so use us in our calling to be faithful witnesses of His Word to bring to conversion those who are numbered among God's people?

To me the only answer to that question has got to be: Yes. The Scriptures, it seems to me, are clear on this point. Christ Himself tells us: "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

It is also simply a fact that in the early history of the post-apostolic Church there were almost no missionaries. And yet the Church spread rapidly throughout the whole Roman empire. The rapid spread of the Church is to be explained in large measure by the faithful witness of the early Christians who witnessed to their faith even in the face of death.

God's people are called again and again to be witnesses to His truth — both in their confession with their mouth and in all their walk. Peter presupposes that this is indeed the kind of life God's people live when he admonishes those who are pilgrims and strangers in the earth: "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." I Peter 3:15. No one will ever ask us for a reason for the hope that is within us unless that hope comes to expression in the witness of our mouth and lives.

We must be witnesses to our faith. We sin when we are not witnesses. There is no option here on our part. The calling to witness is insistent and compelling. But we may confidently expect that the Lord will also use that witness. We need not think that our witnessing is little else than a kind of going through the motions. God will use it as a means to gather His Church.



Does all this mean that there are therefore two ways in which God gathers His Church: the preaching of the Word and the witness of God's people? No, it does not mean that — not, at any rate, if you make a separation between the two. It is totally and utterly impossible for the Christian to witness to the truth unless he himself faithfully attend to the preaching of the Word. All his power to be a witness comes to him only through the preaching. If he should cut himself off from the preaching in any way, he will never succeed in the calling to witness to the truth. Then the power of his witness is the power of the preached Word applied by the Holy Spirit as spoken by him.

But even this is not all. His witnessing must never be aimed at any other purpose than to bring those to whom he witnesses to the Church. He may not witness just to bring someone to Christ — as the saying goes; and have no more regard for the relation of that man to the Church. He may not witness and then simply leave it to the person's own choice whether he will go to church or not, or whether he will go to one

church or another — something like: "Go to the church of your choice." That witnessing will achieve its purpose when such a person who is brought to the knowledge of the truth comes himself under the preaching. There is the official proclamation of the Word and the work of the Holy Spirit to work faith in the hearts of those who belong to Christ. In this way there is an inseparable connection between the preaching and the witnessing of God's people.

But it must be remembered at the same time that just as the preaching itself is a savour of life unto life not only, but also a savour of death unto death, so is it with the faithful witnessing of God's people. That witness can also harden, and it often does. But God accomplishes His purpose. And that is all that matters.

And now we have come to the end of another letter. May God make you all faithful witnesses to His glorious truth.

Fraternally,  
H. Hanko

## IN HIS FEAR

# Pure Religion

*Rev. M. Joostens*

(2)

In the first installment of this two part series on the topic of "Pure Religion" we came to grips with the negative admonition of James. Pure religion before the face of God, James told us, consists of keeping ourselves unspotted from the world. We are called to be in the world, but never may we be one in principle and practice with the world. It is our calling not to become defiled with the filth and corruption that belongs to the world because they lie under the power of darkness. As we saw last time, this means that, from a positive point of view, we continually say no to the ways and temptations of sin and walk in the fear of God. Yet, James is not satisfied with our treatment so far. His treatment in James 1:27 demands that we add yet another dimension to the explanation of pure religion. You see, so far we have illucidated the principle of pure religion; but as we said at the outset of the last article, James is interested in uniting theory or principle and practice. So we, with James must turn to practical application of the principle of non-defilement and true religion.

We must visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction. Before we continue, let us remind ourselves of the viewpoint here. James is not stating for us a

sort of eleventh commandment. There is a danger of so approaching this text and missing the point. We must not consider the visitation of the fatherless and widows as the totality of the positive aspect of non-defilement. There is more to pure religion than visiting. And simply doing this does not put one beyond reproach as far as religion is concerned. That's not James's point at all. Rather, James desires to take one small aspect of our life, place it under the scrutiny of the criterion of pure religion and so illustrate how we must function in every sphere of our Christian life. In other words, he singles out one example to illustrate his point.

This is a very fitting example! Orphans and widows must be visited. It is in this very example that the antithesis between ourselves and the world is pointed out. They who are the objects of our visiting are by and large despised by the world. The fatherless and the widows are the outcast ones in society. They are the so-called nonproductive members and can only be a burden or liability. Whereas in the communion of the saints these are the recipients of the joyful distribution of the mercies of Jesus Christ, they are the problems to the world. Add to this the fact that they



are orphans and widows "in their affliction." These are certainly the ones that the world could do without but grudgingly tolerates. This is understandable, because the friendship of the world is based upon carnal considerations. One who can bolster someone's position, influence, and wealth is an ideal friend in the eyes of the world. But we who are the children of God do not use this worldly and carnal criterion to determine our friendship. We know that principally that which unites us to each other as saints is our common lot of being hated by the world. And it is the affection of this friendship and not carnal advancement that motivates our visiting. We would rather visit a lonely widow and experience Christian kinship than participate in the revellings of the ungodly, though it bring us carnal and earthly advancement! For we would rather lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven than to amass unto ourselves the things that must needs perish.

Such activity is an inherent part of pure religion. We ought to make this a point of emphasis. Let us for a moment consider the example James chooses to use, in order that the principle which ought to govern the whole of our life in every sphere be understood. All of us, young and old, participate in the communion of the saints in our particular congregation. There are in the midst of all of these churches "the orphans and widows in their affliction." Now we must not quickly begin to find excuse in the word "affliction." It is true that sometimes, due to physical-material lack, the affliction of some is especially great and difficult. But apart from this, it must be realized that simply being a widow, widower, or orphan is suffering. Loneliness makes hours and days seem as if they last forever, and being parentless makes growing up difficult and frightening. James says, visit them! This is clearly our Christian responsibility. Officebearers and pastors must be exemplary in this; yet they must never be the only ones who do the visiting. To make the point of James clear, we must connect this thought with the non-defilement of which we spoke previously. Then we are admonished never to let worldly friendship stand in the way of visiting the orphans and lonely. Sometimes I fear that we have our priorities mixed up. We are ever so busy, there are scarcely enough hours in the day. Yet, how many are not the visits that are spent with those who are not of the household of faith! And the hours we spend on various business appointments pressure our lives to excess. But we have to admit that all these visits and appointments are times that further only material goals. Business appointments render only new accounts! It is true, of course, that we have to run our businesses and must fulfill the obligation of our various callings; but these may not crowd out this chief and vital characteristic of pure religion. Though

there is nothing carnal to be gained by visiting the indigent and afflicted ones, it is our calling to cast our lot with them in their affliction by perhaps giving up a few wage-earning hours for the spiritual benefit of the body of Jesus Christ. "Pure religion and undefiled . . . is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction."

The example illustrates the principle. The essence and character of religion is found in the idea of the covenant — especially as this idea has been beautifully and particularly developed in our churches as the idea of friendship between God and His people. As we abide in that friendship with God, we stand in hatred against the world and its carnal drives and values. And as we, by the grace of God, stand in such covenant friendship, we live a sanctified life of non-defilement in fulfilling our part of God's covenant with us. One small but not so insignificant part of such a sanctified life consists in visiting the orphans and widows in their affliction. The well-being of God's covenant and kingdom ought not be infringed upon by the lusts of the flesh and the things of this world which are designated only as a means toward the fulfillment of the kingdom and covenant of God.

The apostle John makes somewhat the same point, but from a slightly different viewpoint. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar." (1 John 4:20) If we confess that we abide in the love of God and are comprehended in His covenant, yet this love does not penetrate the activities of my daily life, then I had better reevaluate my confession. I may be a very pious Christian. I may even be considered a model as I sit in the pew from Sunday to Sunday. But if I consider not the brother, nor care about the indigent and lonely, then my Christianity is vain. Then my life is defiled by the values of this world, and its filth has made obscure my care for the body of Jesus Christ, the Church. In the words of James, we must be more than just hearers of God's Word who soon forget that Word and find no application for it in their life! Theory or, if you will, the doctrine we confess, finds its expression in practice!

It is only in the combining of theory and practice, confession and life, that we are pleasing before the face of God. As we stated previously, this is the only criterion that we ought to regard. It is of no import what men may think. To be esteemed in the eyes of men as a good Christian hardly assures one a place in heaven. Men may be impressed by philanthropy, Sunday Christianity, etc. But God demands truth in the inward parts. That which He has given in our hearts must come to expression in our conduct. What does God, Who is our Father, think of us His sons and daughters? Do we reflect His love to those round about us, especially those of the household of faith who are His chosen? He rejoices in His children when



the friendship of the world does not stand in the way of the friendship of the communion of the saints, and when the oneness and mutual concern of the body of

Christ becomes manifest in deed. Let us visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, remaining unspotted from the world, and so live in His fear.

## ALL AROUND US

### “They’d Rather Fight Than Pay” “If at first you don’t succeed . . .” “Receding Common Grace” Independence for Canadian C.R.C.

Rev. G. Van Baren

A striking article with this catchy title appeared in *Liberty*, a magazine of the Seventh Day Adventist Church. The article gives an account of two members of the Seventh Day Adventist Church who are fighting in court the requirement that they join the union or lose their jobs. The union was willing to “compromise” to the extent of demanding of them union dues without their becoming union members. The two individuals rightly refused to do this, for they reasoned that they were also then supporting the union. The union refused them work as “conscientious objectors,” paying the equivalent of their dues to some charitable organization.

The Seventh Day Adventist Church, evidently, opposes union membership — much on the same grounds as we do. This church claims that its members have the right to be exempted from union membership requirements because of religious conscientious convictions against the support of *organized* labor.

One of the individuals in this struggle had himself been a union member earlier in life. He says, “I can still remember how we used to call those people finks, scabs, freeloaders, and a lot of unprintable obscenities. Tension ran high. Fist fights broke out over the name-calling, and I know that some of the things I did and said contributed to the violence.”

The case came to Federal Court in the Northern District of Texas, Fort Worth Division, on April 11, 1974. This court decided in favor of the union in a decision which suggested:

1. While the plaintiffs’ beliefs were granted to be sincere, the court did not feel that the union security agreement discriminated against them in the exercise of their religious beliefs and observances. They were not required to subscribe to any tenets or doctrines

of unionism or to engage in any strikes or violence against their employers.

2. The dues exacted from the plaintiffs were merely a “tax” to support the union’s collective bargaining activities, from which the plaintiffs had obviously benefited financially and in job security.

3. To urge that by paying the equivalent of union dues the plaintiffs were supporting violence against their neighbors and transgressing the commandment to love their neighbors was as specious as urging that the plaintiffs contributed to violence against their neighbors by performing their occupational tasks, namely, the assembly and manufacture of component parts for military aircraft.

The case was then taken to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit (New Orleans) on November 11, 1975. “The Equal Employment Opportunities Commission presented an oral argument in favor of the plaintiffs. The Attorney General of Ohio filed an *amicus* brief in favor of the plaintiffs. The court considered the case to be of such importance that no time limit was set on the hearing, as is generally done in appeals courts.” Then, according to this article:

In a stunning reversal, the Fifth Circuit held on June 9, 1976, that the religion clauses of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended by the Equal Employment Opportunities Act of 1972, protect “all forms and aspects of religion, however eccentric . . . except those that cannot be, in practice and with honest effort, reconciled with a businesslike operation.” The court said such protection extended to an employee’s religious-based beliefs that prohibited him from paying dues to a labor organization.

The court remanded the case to the Federal District Court to determine whether General Dynamics and the labor organization can accommodate Howard Hopkins’ and Rita Coleman’s religious beliefs without



undue hardship to the company's business or the labor organization's operations.

The article suggests that this case might go to the Supreme Court. It may well be a case worth watching. Many of our own people know what it means to lose a job rather than joining the union. One would hope that perhaps, for a time, some relief would be provided in this regard.

### "If at first you don't succeed . . ."

The old saying has certainly been taken literally by the Synod of the Reformed Church in America with regard to women serving in the ministry. For the fifth straight year, the Synod has voted its approval of women as ministers within their churches. This vote, however, requires the subsequent approval of two thirds of their classes in order to become a regulation of the denomination. Recently, and for the fifth consecutive time, the classes failed to approve by a two thirds vote. The final vote would be: 29 in favor, 15 opposed, and one tie (counted with the negative votes). So, legally, women may not serve in the ministry in the R.C.A. But, next Synod will present a sixth opportunity to try again. In the meantime, there is already one woman ordained into the ministry in the Reformed Church in spite of the present rule against this.

### "Receding common grace"

Dr. Louis Praamsma, in *Calvinist Contact*, Dec. 31, 1976, is apparently approaching the position of the Protestant Reformed Churches who deny the existence of any "common grace." Dr. Praamsma still is convinced that common grace was operative in past ages but, for some reason, is not as apparent anymore. He speaks of a "recess in common grace." He writes:

Since that time much has happened, we have experienced two world wars, we have heard theologians say that there is no God, we have heard of an atheistic theology and of a new horizontalism.

In the same time we seem to live in a time of a gradual withdrawal of God's common grace. I was certainly struck by that thought when I read my daily paper in the last week of November.

One headline read: "It was adultery but now it's called swinging." . . .

That was the judgment of present-day science. The judgment of the Word of God is different: "God will judge the immoral and adulterous" (Hebrews 13:4).

A recess in common grace.

A great deal of common opinion judges that there is nothing wrong with adultery.

A great deal of that opinion judges that there is nothing wrong with abortion.

A great deal of public opinion judges that there is nothing wrong with nudism.

A great deal of public opinion judges that there is nothing wrong with premarital sex.

"In the last days there will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive . . . lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God" (2 Tim. 3:1-4).

When reading such an opinion, one can not wonder what the difficulty must be. If there is common grace, does God give less of it today than before? Or, is man increasingly able to resist it successfully? Or is it just possible that Dr. Praamsma is coming to an awareness that there is really no such thing as "common grace"?

### More Concern about Television

In the *Presbyterian Journal* of Dec. 8, 1976, an article about the dangers of television presents timely warning to us also:

The increase of "soft core" pornography in television and the mass media is beginning to disturb even those who once fought to defend freedom of expression, according to recent news articles.

"Having opened the door to sex for art's sake, they have found that it is no longer possible to close it against sex for profit's sake," said Walter Goodman in a *New York Times* report.

He said that "as pornography has proliferated across the land, from centers of sexual technology such as New York and Los Angeles to less advanced communities, a suspicion that something may be awry has begun to nag at even that enlightened vanguard which once strove to save Lady Chatterley from the Philistines."

In another *Times* article headlined "Soft-Core Porn is Sneaking into Prime Time," John J. O'Connor echoed the observations of many TV watchers that an increasing amount of program material is verging on the pornographic.

The *Times'* critic noted that themes bordering on the pornographic "have become commonplace on the evening schedule, usually in the sincerity-laden guise of social concerns. . . ."

### Independence for Canadian C.R.C.?

The *Calvinist Contact* of Nov. 26, 1976 reports on what it calls "a step toward independence" for the Canadian Christian Reformed Churches. This past November, the groundwork was laid for a Christian college in Ontario. But also, the Council of Christian Reformed Churches in Canada is seeking a full time, salaried, executive director. This Council is not "answerable to Synod. It will operate totally independent of the yearly meeting of Synod." It appears that there is a deliberate effort to bring the Canadian C.R.C. into closer union, hopefully to become "independent" at some future date, from the churches in the U.S.



## 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

## STUDENT AID INFORMATION

Students who have been accepted by The Protestant Reformed Theological School Board and are in need of financial support should contact Mr. Theodore Engelsma, 2333 Clyde Park, S.W., Grand Rapids, MI 49509, Telephone CH 54706, or, Mr. Gerrit Pipe, 1463 Ardmore, S.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49507, Telephone CH 56145.

## WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On March 4, 1977, the Lord willing, our parents, MR. AND MRS. HENRY HOLSTEGE, will celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary. We thank our covenant God for their many years together and our Christian home and training through them. We earnestly pray that they may be continually blest in their remaining years.

Their children,  
Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Holstege  
Mr. and Mrs. Jay Holstege  
Mr. and Mrs. Larry Lubbers  
Mr. and Mrs. Harvey Holstege  
Mr. and Mrs. Clair Holstege  
and 20 grandchildren.

## NOTICE

Classis East will meet in regular session on April 6th, 1977 at Southeast Prot. Ref. Church. Material to be treated in this session must be in the hands of the Stated Clerk at least ten days prior to the convening of the session.

Jon Huisken  
Stated Clerk

## NOTICE

The Protestant Reformed Christian School, South Holland, will be in need of two teachers for the 1977/78 school year. Applications can be made by writing to (The Educational Committee, Mr. Adrian Lenting, Jr., Secretary, 16511 South Park Avenue, South Holland, Illinois 60473).

## WALKER'S COMPREHENSIVE BIBLE CONCORDANCE BOOK REVIEW

J.B.R. Walker; Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, Michigan  
968 pp., \$12.95 (Reviewed by Prof. H.C.Hoeksema)

One of the tools which every Bible student needs is a good concordance. This is even more necessary than a commentary: for it is a tool necessary for independent study of Scripture, in which the comparing of Scripture with Scripture is a fundamental principle. Moreover, for most of our readers, I take it, a concordance which follows the King James Version is a necessity.

This recently reprinted concordance by J.B.R. Walker will be a good addition to your library. The promotional "blurb" on the dust jacket makes several claims to excellence, such as: being a text-finder, rigid alphabetical order, passages and references being in strict Biblical order, including 50,000 more passages than Cruden's, etc. This is not, of course, the type of book one sits down and reads through. Nor have I checked the number of references in comparison with other concordances. However, I have done some spot checking; and I find this to be indeed a very thorough and accurate concordance.

The book is neatly and attractively executed. The price is attractive, too: \$12.95 for a book of almost 1000 pages is a good bargain.

Recommended.





## News From Our Churches

Rev. Arie den Hartog of our Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Prospect Park, New Jersey has received a call from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church of Christchurch, New Zealand to come over and help them. Should Rev. den Hartog accept this call, he would remain a minister in the Protestant Reformed Churches, but be 'on loan' to the church in New Zealand. Decisions on these matters were made by the Synod of our churches in 1976.

The congregation of our Southeast Church in Grand Rapids planned a special program on January 28 to commemorate the 40th anniversary of their pastor, Rev. Marinus Schipper, in the ministry of God's Word. The Church Council sponsored the event which included a brief program followed by a social hour with refreshments in the church basement. However, due to the rather severe winter weather experienced in Western Michigan (and elsewhere), the program was postponed until February 4.

The severe weather the last week of January necessitated the cancellation or postponement of numerous activities. Because a 'snow emergency' was declared in Ottawa County, Holland and Hudsonville Churches canceled their worship services on January 30.

A little information from our Jamaican emissaries, Elder and Mrs. J.M. Faber and Rev. and Mrs. John Heys was included in the First Church bulletin on January 30. Mr. Faber reports that they arrived safely in Jamaica. After some difficulties, they located an apartment in which they are now staying. The temperature is in the 80's (quite a contrast to Michigan, where the temperature did not get above freezing for seven weeks); they have some difficulty with mosquitoes and other insects. They report that they are struggling also with some of the problems within the Jamaican churches.

Classical appointments for a vacant church can be the cause of quite a bit of travel on the part of our ministers. Rev. Lubbers of our church in Pella, Iowa, spent three Sundays in Forbes, North Dakota. Rev. Lubbers also traveled to Isabel, South Dakota on January 18 and lectured for our congregation there on the topic, "The Decalogue in Reformation." Rev.

Engelsma of South Holland, Illinois, preached for Rev. Lubbers' congregation in Pella on January 16 to help them during the absence of their pastor. Rev. Engelsma also lectured in Pella during his visit there. Professor H. Hanko journeyed from Grand Rapids to South Holland to occupy Rev. Engelsma's pulpit during his absence.

Some time ago you may recall that we expressed mystification as to what a 'tasting bee' consisted of. One of the kind ladies whose group sponsored one of these 'tasting bees' in one of our churches kindly sent along several recipes for some of the delicious foods that were 'tasted' in their 'bee'. So, that mystery is solved. However, a new mystery has taken its place. The ladies in South Holland are sponsoring a 'bakeless bake sale.' Now what do you suppose that is?

The following important news appeared in the First Church bulletin: "The Mission Committee (a standing committee of the Synod of our Churches) decided this past Tuesday (February 8) to grant the request for organization of a congregation at Houston, Texas. Though the group is small, there is evidence that a faithful congregation can be established. There were many questions the Mission Committee considered before arriving at its decision. It believes that the decision taken is in harmony with God's will, and for the benefit of God's people there and our churches generally. Hope, Grand Rapids, consistory was appointed to carry out the organization — which they expect to do this coming Tuesday (February 15), the Lord willing. Pray God's blessing on this new congregation — and be sure to visit with them if you are ever in that part of the country."

Rev. Robert Harbach, missionary pastor in Houston, writes that the group there enjoyed the Lord's faithfulness and goodness in this third year there. He continues, "So it's been, too, with the little hand of saints in our seed-form church. Small we are, and, no doubt strange to many. But the Lord revives and refreshes us, enabling us to continue in His pure worship and hearing of His Word. . . . His Word never returns to Him void, but shall accomplish what He pleases where He sends it. (Isaiah 55:11)"

K.G.V.