

The STANDARD BEARER

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

... Twelve months, fifty-two weeks, three hundred and sixty-six days once seemed like a long time; now they are vanished like a mere shadow.... They have left with God a record that will not be disclosed until the Books are opened at the Great White Throne in that great Day of days.

“Swift to its close ebbs out life’s little day,
Its joys grow dim, its glory fades away.
Change and decay in all around I see,
O thou who changest not, abide with me.”

See “Silent Unto God” – page 146

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MEDITATION

Silent Unto God

Rev. C. Hanko

"Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation. He only is my Rock and my Salvation: He is my defence: I shall not be greatly moved." Psalm 62:1,2.

December 31, 1976

Tonight, as the year 1976 fades into the irrevocable past, and a new year with its uncertain realities confronts us, "My soul waits upon God."

Truly my soul waits. Or better still, as the original expresses it, "Truly my soul is silent unto God." A perfect peace of heart and mind fills my soul with grateful hope and trust in my God.

Serenely I listen as a distant bell tolls the midnight hour. Another year has come and gone. Twelve months, fifty-two weeks, three hundred and sixty-six days once seemed like a long time; now they are vanished like a mere shadow. These months, weeks, and days have left with me many memories, pleasant and unpleasant, some of which will never be forgotten. They have left with God a record that will not

be disclosed until the Books are opened at the Great White Throne in that great Day of days.

“Swift to its close ebbs out life’s little day,
Its joys grow dim, its glory fades away.
Change and decay in all around I see,
O Thou who changest not, abide with me.”

My soul is silent unto God in an amazing tranquility, even while troubles round me swell, and fears and dangers throng.

This past year was not without its ominous signs in the world round about us. It has been a dry summer both in Europe and in America, with crops withering in the fields under the burning heat of the sun. Severe earthquakes have brought untold devastation and have taken many human lives. The mere fact that they did not strike us does not make them less significant. The national election brought changes in the administration that makes one wonder whether the threat of the unions and the closed shop may not make it increasingly difficult for the believer to obtain employment. The constant rise in the cost of living creates a growing concern to those whose weekly expenses include school tuition and contributions to the church, missions, and the needy. A shroud of gloom hangs over the heads of world commentators who foresee threats of bankruptcy confronting so many nations of the world. The fear is not unfounded that the citizens will arise with acts of violence when their accustomed affluence is taken from them. The Beast of Revelation 13 lifts its head and shows its claw, menacingly crowding in upon individual freedom with its government control in every sphere of life. Sad to say, so many in the church world ignore this, or even deny it. Yet there is a voice speaking to us from the holy Scriptures, “Behold, I have told you before.”

Blatant wickedness dominates every sphere of life. Not so many years ago our larger cities had their “red light district,” where the saloons, gambling dens, dope centers, and public houses were confined. Respectable people stayed away from there, because they did not want to be associated with the scum and corruption of society. Today that scum and corruption has spread out over the entire community, making our cities cesspools of iniquity. Almost everyone, no matter in which stratum of society, does what is right in his own eyes, defiantly transgressing every one of the ten commandments, as if there were no God in heaven who regards and takes vengeance. Once cohabiting created a scandal, divorce and remarriage were condemned as sin; but today the word sin is no longer known, so that evils are condoned even by counsellors and moral advisors. Once vandalism, armed robbery, and rape were virtually unknown, while today one is hardly safe on the

streets of our cities, day or night. Once lottery was frowned upon as gambling; today various States indulge in it. We are forced to ask: how much worse will the iniquity of the world become before the measure is full?

In our present day “church world” God is being dethroned and Man is exalted as if he were God. Religion has become purely man-centered. A social gospel finds its appeal to old and young alike, eagerly asking: How can the church improve our present society? The inerrant Scriptures, the righteousness of God, the atoning death of Christ, salvation to the elect only by sovereign grace, are doctrines that are relegated to mere theories that are not relevant to the enlightened, scientific times in which we are privileged to live. The knowledge and wisdom of man are exalted above the knowledge and wisdom of God. There is a form of godliness which denies the power of God, the only power unto salvation. The Jesus Who saves His people from their sins and Who is the only Lord over their lives is forgotten. A lethargic, complacent attitude settles upon the members of the church, with an air of, let us marry and give in marriage, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.

As my thoughts turn inward I realize that I myself am not without my daily struggles in this body of sin and death. The past year knew its trials, its disappointments, its own peculiar sorrows. At times my soul was overwhelmed, anxiously I asked whether God had forgotten to be kind, whether He was deliberately withholding His mercies from me. Psalm 39 came to mind. I was dumb, I dared not open my mouth, lest in doing so I should sin against the Most High. Yet pondering the ways of the Lord, I could finally say with the Psalmist, “I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it.”

I know my weaknesses which increase with the years. I am afraid. I am afraid of those three mortal enemies, referred to in our Heidelberg Catechism, the devil, the world, and my own sinful flesh. These wage war against me constantly in a bitter death struggle, as they seek to destroy my soul. I am weak, so weak that I cannot stand, no, not for a day, not for an hour, not for a minute, not even for a second. In the midst of these present miseries I complain,

O Lord, my God, o’erwhelmed in deep affliction,
Far from Thy rest, to Thee I lift my soul;
Deep callst to deep and storms of trouble thunder,
While o’er my head the waves and billows roll.

Yet even so, peace like a river pervades my weary soul. God is still on the throne; His power speaks through the silence of the night. For God is so very near. He holds me in the palm of His hand. He keeps me under His watchful eye. His ear is attentive to my

cry. His mouth breathes blessings upon me, even when I am least aware of it.

“Unto God.”

“My soul is silent unto God,” also now as I look out upon the darkness of the last night of the passing year, as I wait and long for the dawning of the new day. “To Thee I lift my soul. In Thee my trust repose.”

I will say of the LORD, “He only is my Rock and my Salvation; He is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved.”

My Rock! He is Jehovah, the covenant God, Who lives His own glorious and blessed covenant life within His own Being, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit fellowship together in intimate love and joy. He always reaches out His almighty arm to draw me from the stormy billows on to the solid Rock, Christ Jesus. He is my Rock, because He is my salvation. My heavenly Father sent His Son into the world, and placed Him under the fury of His consuming wrath, a curse for me. The Son willingly gave Himself to come into our world of sin and death, to suffer at my hands, to lay down His life for me, while I was still His enemy. The Son of God, our Jesus, is now risen from hell, death, and the grave to the highest heavens, where He is exalted in power and majesty, Lord over all, my Savior and my Lord. Even as He died for me, He now lives for me. He gives me His Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Christ dwelling in me. I live by the power of that Spirit; yet not I, Christ lives in me. The life I now live is the life of Christ, the new heavenly life of faith and hope, even while I am still in this body of death. I am God’s son by adoption; God’s heir by the new life of Christ within me. Though my sins rise up against me, prevailing day by day, I receive mercy, forgiveness, the assurance that sin does not actually have dominion, but that grace abounds. God Who has begun a good work in me will surely finish it in the day of Christ Jesus.

Yes, “Jesus is a Rock in a weary land, a shelter in the time of storm.” He has always been and always will be a safe refuge to all those who flee to Him for shelter. We need no letter of recommendation. We need no appointment. We always have our Advocate before the face of God, constantly interceding for us. Through Jesus we have boldness and access to the throne of grace to make all our needs known in prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving and with praise. Even when we cannot pray as we ought, when

words fail us because we do not know what is best for us, the Spirit within us prays with groanings that only He can utter. Father in heaven knows and understands and answers our prayers far beyond anything that we can ask or think. With Him is abundant mercy to forgive our sins every day anew. He fits us with the armor of salvation to fight the battle of faith against that triple alliance out of hell, the devil, the world of wickedness, and my own sinful flesh. Though I am weak, He is strong. Though I realize with increasing fears that without Him I can do nothing, He assures me that I can do all things through Christ Who strengthens me.

Truly my soul waits, waits upon the Almighty, “from Him cometh my salvation.”

In this coming year the nations will continue their ragings against God and His Anointed. Inflation, unemployment, labor disputes, international bankruptcy will only grow worse instead of better. The whole world is pressing blindly down a dead-end street, for their trust is in man rather than in the living God. Sooner or later chaos must result, and out of that chaos will arise the Man of Sin, the Antichrist, as if he knows the solution to all the world’s ills. Like Roosevelt in the 30s, who taught us how to spend our way to a sham prosperity that ends in bankruptcy, so also the antichrist will create an unprecedented period of prosperity that will plunge the whole world into swift confusion and despair. The Scriptures are being fulfilled before our eyes every day. They speak of the hastening judgment of God upon a world that hardens itself in wickedness and boldly refuses to show any semblance of repentance.

But we see Jesus crowned with glory and honor in the highest heavens. Even as we see Him with an eye of faith, we hear Him assure us, “Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.”

He tells us that Sion, His Church, is a safe refuge. The righteous flee into it and are safe. There they celebrate the Sabbath of the resurrection of our Lord, and there they fix longing eyes upon the Sabbath, the Rest that remains for the people of God in heavenly glory, as they breathe the prayer: Come, “Lord Jesus, yea, come quickly.”

Why, O my soul, art thou cast down within me,
Why art thou troubled and oppressed with grief?
Hope thou in God, the God of thy salvation,
Hope and the Lord will surely send relief.

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THE STANDARD BEARER**

EDITORIAL

Baptism on the Mission Field

(3)

Prof. H.C. Hoeksema

In this installment of our series on the above subject we wish to concentrate, as promised in our December 1 editorial, on the stipulation in the Form of Ordination of Missionaries which limits his baptizing anyone on the mission field, “. . . if it pleases God to make thy work fruitful unto the gathering of a church. . . .” Before turning to this question, however, I wish to make two items clear:

1) First of all, as to my motivation in these editorials, I trust that everyone understands that I am not disagreeing with the Study Report simply for the sake of disagreeing; nor am I disagreeing merely out of resistance to change as such—although it remains true that change should not take place lightly and easily, especially not when it concerns policies of long standing and when it concerns so important an element as the sacraments. I am concerned, as we all are and ought to be, that if our churches change their stand (and the stand of Reformed churches in the past) on this matter, this change must be made in full awareness of the implications and consequences and must be made on clear and indubitable grounds. And then I state frankly that, while I am open to conviction, at the moment I have not been convinced that we must go the course recommended by the Study Report; on the contrary, I have many reasons to disagree with said Report.

2) Secondly, I wish to make it plain that to me the issue is *not* whether there may and should ever be baptism on the mission field. On the contrary, I am thoroughly convinced that it is in harmony with the Form of Ordination, the Confessions, and Scripture that there be baptism on the mission field. To me, the question is: WHEN? Under what circumstances? May a missionary baptize so-called converts at any time and indiscriminately? May he baptize even when there is no outlook for and no guarantee of the organization of a congregation? This, unless I cannot read, seems to be the position of the Study Report,

both under II, where it discusses the Form of Ordination, and in its first item of advice: “Synod declare that the missionary has the authority, under the supervision of the sending church, when the Word of God is preached, to baptize those on the mission field who repent and believe, as well as their children, although the church institute is not yet established there, with a view to the instituting of a congregation.”

Before discussing this question, however, I wish to quote in full what the Study Report has to say on this subject, *Acts of Synod*, pp. 106, 107:

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

The second duty of the Form reads: “Secondly, thou art holden, if it pleases God to make thy work fruitful unto the gathering of a church, to administer the Sacraments of Holy Baptism according to the institution of the Lord and the requirement of the covenant.” The Synod of 1956 evidently understood the Form to mean: “if it pleases God to institute a congregation where you were laboring.” That this is not the meaning is plain from the fact that the Form goes on to say, “Furthermore, thou art called wherever it is necessary and possible to ordain elders and deacons . . .” showing that there is no institute as yet when the missionary is carrying out his second duty, namely, baptizing. “If it pleases God to make thy work fruitful unto the gathering of a church” means if God gives you the fruit on your preaching of sinners who repent and believe, which fruit has as its normal goal the gathering of a church in a certain place. The Form refers to the fruit of repentance and faith; the sense is, “If there are converts.” But it

views the conversion of sinners, correctly, as God's gathering of a church. It is not the Form's intent to prohibit the missionary from baptizing until a congregation is instituted. In addition to the fact that such an interpretation is ruled out by the Form's speaking of an instituted congregation only in the third duty, this is in conflict with the "institution of the Lord" appealed to by the Form, which "institution of the Lord," quoted by the Form during the actual ordaining is: "Go then . . . and teach all nations, baptizing them . . ."

Our Form reminds the missionary that the duty of baptizing on the mission field includes baptizing the children of believers when it states: "and the requirement of the covenant." This was done by the apostles, as Acts 16:14, 15 (the baptism of Lydia's household) and Acts 16:30-34 (the baptism of the house of the Philippian jailor) teach.

It is worthy of note that the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands, at their General Synod of Middelburg in 1965-66, adopted a "Form for the Ordination of Ministers of the Word for the Service of Missions" that makes indisputably clear that the missionary's task is baptizing converts, not after an institute is formed, but as part of the task of the missionary. (We translate) "The servants who are called to this task have to proclaim the gospel in other parts of the world to those who do not know Jesus Christ as their Savior. They must administer Holy Baptism to those who have confessed Jesus Christ as their Lord after they have given them instruction in the way of salvation. Moreover, they have the task to labor for the building up of the church there, too, where as yet no congregation is present, to help install office bearers. . . ." (Cf. "Generale Synode Middelburg 1965-66," pp. 19-22.)

For the time being, we will pass by the evaluation of the decision of 1956. Whether or not this decision was as incorrect as the Study Report pictures it to be is open to debate. However, at the moment this would lead us away from the main question. We will, therefore, return to the matter of the 1956 decision at a later time.

At present we must concentrate, first of all, on the Study Report's explanation of the clause, "If it pleases God to make thy work fruitful unto the gathering of a church." Concerning this limitation on the missionary's baptizing, the Report says the following:

1. It means: "if God gives you the fruit on your preaching of sinners who repent and believe, which fruit has as its normal goal the gathering of a church in a certain place."

2. This is simplified in the next statement to: ". . . the sense is, 'If there are converts.'" And "fruitful unto the gathering of a church" becomes: "But it views the conversion of sinners, correctly, as God's gathering of a church."

3. The Report makes the negative statement: "It is not the Form's intent to prohibit the missionary from baptizing until a congregation is instituted." With this statement I can agree if "is instituted" means "has been instituted." In other words, I believe that the Form plainly teaches that baptism need not wait until *after* organization. This, I remind you, is not the same as saying that baptism can take place at any time whatsoever, without limitation, *before* organization.

My objection to the interpretation offered under "1" and "2" is very simple: this is not the meaning of the language, first of all. Nor can it be shown from any dictionary that this is, or can be, the meaning of the language. "Vruchtbaar tot" and "fruitful unto" means the same as *productive of*, whether that refers to a crop or to other material things, or whether, as here, it refers to a spiritual activity and its concrete results. When is the labor of a farmer fruitful unto the gathering of a harvest? When the entire ripe crop stands in the field ready to be harvested. When is a householder's labor fruitful unto the building of a new house? When all his labors (the planning, the purchase of a lot, the saving of funds, the employment of a builder, etc.) have reached the point that the house is ready to go up. When is a missionary's labor fruitful unto the gathering of a church (congregation)? When a group of families of sufficient size and with sufficient material for elders and deacons, etc., is ready to be organized. This is the plain meaning of the language.

In close connection with this, in the second place, let me point out that if it had been the intention of the Form to say what the Study Report says, then it would have been very simple to do this; and then, too, the Form is guilty of gross ambiguity and obscurity in using the language which it does use. The Form could simply have said, "If it pleases God to make thy work fruitful unto the conversion of sinners. . . ."

In the third place, it simply is not true that the conversion of sinners is in every instance in which our missionary labors God's gathering of a church. That is precisely part of the problem! It may very well be that there are one or two or a few converts in a given place, and that it is not at all God's intention to gather a congregation there. And historically this is the background of our Form, which was originally a form for ordination of missionaries to the heathen. This Form carefully stipulates the duties of the missionary. What is he to do when there are converts in response to his preaching? May he immediately baptize? May he baptize converts indiscriminately, so that the result might be after a while that there are several baptized converts running around who have no church connection, who are merely *baptized individuals*, not *baptized church members*? Not at all!

The missionary must *wait*. When his work is fruitful unto the gathering of a *congregation*, then he may and must baptize these previously well-instructed converts. For a congregation cannot be instituted with unbaptized confessing members and elders and deacons.

As I have already suggested earlier, this is much less of a problem on the home mission field. Usually—there are exceptions, of course—the problem does not involve unbaptized adults. And while the baptism of infants could very well wait until after actual organization, there can be no objection to the baptism of infants at this same point in time, that is: when the missionary's labor has been fruitful unto the gathering of a church, and when, therefore, a congregation is *ready to be instituted*.

A couple of concluding remarks:

1. I do not believe that the Form has in mind

specifically the baptizing of children when it uses the phrase “and the requirement of the covenant.” It does not exclude the children (infants); but it does not point to them specifically. The simple fact is that baptism is “the requirement of the covenant” for adults as well as for infants. Why? Because baptism is the sacrament of our incorporation into the covenant and church of God. And that, by the way, is also the reason why baptism may not be administered to anyone except in the church or at the precise point when the church is about to be instituted.

2. While I do not have much esteem for a decision of the Gereformeerde Kerken which has a date as late as 1965-66 (surely not the most flourishing period of Reformed theology in the Netherlands!), I see no proof in the brief quotation given of the position of the Study Report. On the contrary, this quotation, it seems to me, is quite consistent with the position of our Form as I have explained it.

Publications Note

For a considerable length of time the little book *The Five Points of Calvinism*, originally published by our Mission Committee, has been out of print. The R.F.P.A. Publications Committee advertised a reprint in its latest catalog, expecting that the reprint would come from the press about the time when the catalog was ready. However, we were disappointed in this expectation.

We are now happy to announce that this book is again available. Printing errors have been corrected,

and a colorful paper binding in green and yellow, decorated with the Calvinist Tulip, makes this an attractive little book. The contents? Lectures by Prof. Hanko, Rev. G. Van Baren, and myself on the Five Points. If you do not have this book in your library, start the new year out by adding this latest R.F.P.A. publication — at a price of only \$1.95! Write to: Reformed Free Publishing Association, Box 2006, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49501.

H.C.H.

MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE

Letter to the Members of the Church at Philadelphia

January 1, 1977

To the members of the church at Philadelphia,

We were discussing together this increasingly common phenomenon in the church which is characterized by a withdrawal from the church institute for

the purpose of coming together with a small group of saints for Bible study and mutual edification.

It is necessary that you be warned of this, for it is a dangerous and evil practice. You must not participate

in these meetings, for the evil is so great that it jeopardizes your very salvation.

We have spent a little time in our last letter discussing a bit of the history of this movement; and that brief look at its history has already given us occasion to point out some of the evils which characterize this movement. But we must now do this in more detail and see how this movement is a violation of the teaching of Scripture.

I want to say a word first about groups which meet together in private meetings while the members of the groups retain their membership in local congregations, and even go to church rather regularly. There are several remarks which should be made about this first of all.

In the first place, we must be careful to make proper distinctions. There is a tendency, increasingly popular, to form what are often called "Discussion Groups." Perhaps your congregation has them. I know ours does. I do not want to criticize the people of God when, especially on Sunday evenings, these groups come together to discuss some worthwhile question of the truth of Scripture and how it relates to our walk and calling in the world. I think this is and can be a very good practice. After all, what possibly could be wrong with a practice of having people of God spend their time on Sunday evenings discussing matters of a spiritual character? I am in favor of such "Discussion Groups" and I far prefer them to what oftentimes goes on when people of God visit together on Sunday or during the week.

But there are dangers involved; and you must be aware of the dangers so that you can guard against them. History has shown that these groups, by whatever name you may call them, often deteriorate into groups which deal only with very subjective and mystical matters. If one is not on his guard, there is always a strong tendency to begin to speak of personal experiences of faith and to let the discussion go in directions of mysticism and subjectivism. This happened, e.g., when what the Dutch call "Gezelschappen" became meetings of the truly elect within the church. These individuals, who had had a conversion experience, came together to compare such experiences and to speak about them with others. Then you had a situation in which the "true kernel" of elect separated themselves from the "unconverted" in the congregation and became a church within a church. These groups were mystical and subjective and served to foster terrible pride. Others, yet unconverted, might come to these meetings, but they were expected to keep their mouths shut and learn from the experiences of those who had arrived at a height of holiness and assurance of faith to which many (if not most) in the congregation had not yet attained.

You may say that this is not a very great danger. Perhaps it is not; and I hope it is not. But you must be made aware of the fact nevertheless, that this danger is always lurking around the corner. I think the real point here is: what is your *reason* for forming such a group? Is the reason that you wish to spend an evening (especially a Sunday evening) in good fellowship with God's people to learn more of the Scriptures? If it is, well and good. May God bless you in your discussions. They are and can be spiritually edifying. Is your reason that you are dissatisfied with the preaching in your congregation? and think that you are not edified as you ought to be? Watch out! The dangers then are very great. You are then substituting these meetings for the preaching of the Word. That is dangerous business. Is your reason that you are dissatisfied with the low spiritual condition of the congregation as a whole? This can happen, you know. Especially in these times of worldliness and carnal materialism (evils which infect the lives of God's people too), it is possible to become dissatisfied with the spiritual condition of the members of the congregation. It seems to you that the congregation has lost her first love, has drifted into carnal security, has become so attracted to the things of the world that the spiritual life of the congregation is almost gone. Then, in despair over this sad state of affairs, you form such a group of people to discuss spiritual things, for you have learned to your chagrin that most of the things your fellow members talk about are worldly, earthly, carnal things, and you have no interest in them.

If this is your reason for forming such a group, watch out! You are running grave risks. You can see why this is so if you think about it a little. I am not saying that it is impossible for the Church to drift into such worldliness and carnality. I am not even saying that we have, so far, escaped from all this. I think it goes without saying that we all are, more or less, influenced for the bad by the worldly spirit of our times. Nevertheless, this may not be a motive for forming a Bible-study group. Why not? Well, in the first place, the formation of such a Bible-study group is not a solution to the problem. You do not cure the worldliness of the congregation by drawing off to the side by yourself and with a few like-minded people to study Scripture "met een boekje in 'n hoekje" ("with a book in a corner"). And your concern must always be for the congregation as a whole. But perhaps you say, I do not know how to solve the problem; nor does it seem to me that there is any improvement no matter how hard I or even the minister in his preaching tries to correct these evils. What am I to do?

Well, that brings me to the second place. It is exactly such a position as this which leads to the mysticism and subjectivism of which I spoke. You

can see that it is only a short jump to the notion that, because the congregation is so worldly, most of the members are also unconverted. And, because you protest such a situation, it must be that you and a few like you are truly converted. And, you see, there you have it.

This is closely connected with the idea of mysticism and subjectivism. This has repeatedly happened in the church. The church falls upon bad times. There are those within the church who are concerned – and justifiably so. But then the pendulum swings to the other extreme. The concerned people feel that there is insufficient evidence of a genuine spiritual life, of godliness, of piety, of the fear of the Lord. And while their concern may be correct and entirely justified, the reaction is often to go to the extreme of emphasizing such subjective piety as may be lacking in the lives of many. And so this piety is considered the crucial thing. Perhaps people complain that the Church has too long emphasized the doctrinal aspect of the truth and the intellectual part of faith, and the result has been a dead orthodoxy. And, in an effort to right the balance, the pendulum swings to piety divorced from knowledge and to “evidences of conversion.” Of course, knowledge without experience is barren and sterile. The knowledge of faith without the works of faith is, as James says, useless. But experience divorced from true knowledge of the Scriptures is subjective and mystical.

And these people who are concerned about the matter may go the next step – quite an easy step to take, and say: we who are concerned show by our concern that we are genuinely converted. The others live in carnal security; we properly emphasize the Christian walk. And there again you have it.

What then is the basic error of such Bible-study groups? The basic error is that the solution is sought in the wrong place. The solution is not to be found in a course of action which leads to gradual spiritual separation from the congregation. The solution cannot be found in establishing what amounts to a church within a church. The solution is to be found in exactly that place where all the solutions to the problems of the church are to be found: in the preaching of the Word.

But to this we shall return presently.

This brings up another question, however. Some groups which are formed within a congregation are formed out of a sense of hopelessness with the situation in the church of which they are members. This has happened in the past. It is happening today both in this country and in the Netherlands. These people are convinced that the situation within their con-

gregation and denomination is hopeless because their denomination has gone into false doctrine and officially adopted or condoned doctrines which are contrary to the Scriptures. These doctrines of a heretical nature have had their effect upon the whole life of the church. The result is that false doctrine has been and is being preached from the pulpits, and the preaching has become cold, lifeless, heretical, unedifying, and unable to feed the soul of him who hungers and thirsts after righteousness.

These people have attempted to have wrongs corrected in the normal ecclesiastical way of protest and appeal; but they have gotten exactly nowhere. Now they do not know what to do. But one thing they do not want to do is go through the bitter agony of church reformation and separation. They have decided that, at all costs, they are going to stay within their mother church. But they crave food for the soul. And so, while they stay within their mother church, they organize such Bible-study groups in order that they may have some means of spiritual nourishment and some way of edification.

Is not such a practice justified in the light of the circumstances?

Again, it is not.

Apart from the dangers which I mentioned above, these people become guilty of failure to perform their God-given calling as described, e.g., in Article XXVIII of the Confession of Faith. And they must not expect a blessing of God upon their activities when they will not obey God's commands to them.

This involves, of course, the whole question of church reformation. I do not want to talk about this matter at this time. It is an important enough question, and certainly it deserves some extended discussion. But the time is not now. I recommend to you, if you can read the Dutch language, A. Kuyper's book: "Tractaat van de Reformatie der Kerken." This is required reading for all who find themselves in such a position. But if you cannot read the Dutch, it will not be of much help to you. Perhaps sometime it will be made available in English.

I only want to say this – by way of conclusion to our present letter: if you take this position, you face the judgment of God which He pronounces in the second commandment: "I will visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me. . ." You will have to see the consequences of your disobedience to the command of the Lord in your children and children's children. And that is a dreadful thing. May God spare you that.

Fraternally in Christ,
H. Hanko

TRANSLATED TREASURES

Acts of the Synod of Dordrecht

Historical Foreword

(4)

Many among them also showed that this was their mandate from their Churches and also from the States of their Provinces. This division of judgment and advice constituted a new obstacle to the National Synod. For those who up to this time had been against the convening of the Synod, eagerly grasping this opportunity, worked in every way to the end that the convening of the Synod, although promised, might be prevented. In this gathering the other Professors and Ministers pleaded with Arminius most earnestly that he would reveal to them, his fellow ministers, freely and fraternally what he had against the doctrine expressed in the Confession and the Catechism. They promised that they would be diligent to give him full satisfaction. They promised that he might be reconciled with his colleagues under honorable conditions, and pleaded that they might from now on live peaceably. And they promised that they would say nothing of that which he would reveal outside of this meeting, if reconciliation were achieved. He, on the other hand, said that this was not advisable for him; and he claimed that he was not bound to do this, seeing that this gathering was not called for that purpose.

During the following summer, when they held the annual Synod of the South Holland Churches at Delft, Uitenbogaard was admonished to give account to Synod of the reasons why, in the giving of advice concerning the manner in which they would hold the National Synod, he had sided with Arminius and had differed with the other Ministers. The intention was that Synod would consider these reasons and pass judgment on this matter. Uitenbogaard answered that he was accountable only to the States, and not to the Synod. Having been requested to state what he had against the doctrine contained in the Confession and the Catechism of these Churches, he answered that it did not appear advisable to him to do this in that gathering, and that he was not prepared to do this. At this Synod inquiry was also made whether, according to the decision of the preceding Synod, any objections or comments concerning the Confession and the

Catechism were handed in to the Classis. Then the Delegates of each Classis answered that almost all the Ministers in the Classes had testified that they had no objections against the adopted doctrine, but that those who testified that they had some objections had not been willing to make them known, either because they said that they were not yet ready, or that they did not deem it advisable. On this account, the Synod again decided to order them anew that they, without any excuses, refusal, and postponement, should immediately reveal all the objections which they had against the adopted doctrine, each one in his own Classis.

It also became clear at the Synod that in every way the disagreements in the churches were increasing greatly. It became plain that young men, coming from the Academy of Leiden and the instruction of Arminius, having been called to the ministry of the Churches, when they were examined, hid their views by speaking ambiguously; but, having been admitted to the ministry, they immediately stirred up new disputes, stood for new ideas, and boasted that they had various objections against the adopted doctrine. It became manifest that in the Classes and Consistories bitter disagreements and disputes concerning many points of doctrine arose among the Ministers. It also became clear that among the people themselves, to the great damage and disturbance of the Churches, various wranglings and arguments concerning the doctrine were heard. Yea, the beginnings of schisms were noticed. Further, it came out that the Ministers who were siding with Arminius often secretly held various meetings where they laid plans concerning the advancements of their doctrinal views. And it became plain that the people everywhere were becoming more and more divided. On this account, the Synod, judging that the remedy for this evil might no longer be postponed, and seeing that the hope of gaining a National Synod was very uncertain on account of the divergence of advice and judgments, decided, upon the advice of the Delegates, to request of the States of Holland and West-Friesland that from the two

South and North-Holland Synods a Provincial Synod might be authorized at the first opportunity for the quieting and removal of these difficulties (as had been done before in similar difficulties). The Deputies of both Synods showed these daily increasing difficulties thoroughly to the States, and requested the immediate convening of this Provincial Synod for the removal of these difficulties. But although the Delegates, September 14, had given great hope, nevertheless they were not able to obtain a Provincial Synod, due to the fact that there were negotiations under way with the enemy concerning a truce, and the States, being busy on this account with very important matters of the Republic, had not been able to consider these ecclesiastical matters. Meanwhile Arminius, seeing that the Churches persisted in trying to resolve matters through lawful ecclesiastical judgment, wanted to escape this trap; and through requests to the States, April 30, 1608, he managed to get his case treated by the Counsellors in the High Council by politicians (in distinction from ecclesiastics, HCH); and on May 14, Gomarus was ordered to appear before them in conference with Arminius in the presence of the Ministers who recently had been in a preparatory gathering from South and North-Holland. The Deputies of the Churches, having understood this, again requested the States of Holland and West-Friesland that the Provincial Synod might be authorized instead of this conference before the High Council, in order that at this Synod they might take cognizance of and pass judgment concerning this ecclesiastical matter. Their reason was that ecclesiastical persons, experienced in these things and lawfully delegated by the churches and empowered to pass judgment, should deal with this matter. The States merely answered that to take cognizance of such matters was enjoined upon the High Council, and that judgment concerning these matters would thereafter be left to the Provincial or National Synod.

At this conference they first debated at length concerning the order of treatment. Arminius asserted that Gomarus must assume the position of accuser, and that he was only responsible to defend himself. Gomarus, on the contrary, thought that such a procedure was both unfair and improper, especially in an ecclesiastical matter before political Judges. Further, he said that he was indeed ready to show before a lawful Synod that Arminius had proposed doctrines which were in conflict with God's Word and with the Confession and the Catechism of the Netherlands Churches, but that this could not be done there without pre-judgment of the case. Gomarus believed that this conference, in order to adhere to the purpose of the States, could better be conducted thus, that without mutual accusations each of them should present and express clearly his views concerning every item of

doctrine. This would be the best way, according to him, to bring out clearly at this conference in what points they agreed or disagreed. He stated that as far as he was concerned, he would not refuse to declare his views concerning all matters of doctrine, as much as might be desired of anyone, to the full and forthrightly. But he said that also Arminius, if he wanted to present himself as a faithful Teacher, was obligated to declare his views in the same way and no longer to make use of such alibis. In spite of this, Arminius stuck to his original intention, so that he finally cried out that he was amazed, considering the various rumors of his false teachings flying through all the churches, and considering that they said that the fire kindled by him was now bursting out above the roofs of the Churches — that he was amazed that until now no one had been found who dared to present any accusation against him. In order to counteract this boldness of Arminius, Gomarus took it upon himself to prove that Arminius had taught one of the chief articles of our faith, namely, that of the justification of man before God, in such a way that his doctrine conflicted with God's Word and with the Confession of the Netherlands Churches. For proof of this he adduced Arminius' own words from a document written in his own hand, in which he asserted that in man's justification before God the righteousness of Christ is not reckoned for righteousness, but that faith itself, or the act of faith, through a gracious acceptance, is by God held and accounted for our righteousness whereby we are justified before God. When Arminius saw that he was trapped, and when he saw that because of the clear proof he could not deny this accusation, then he began to consent to a different method of procedure. He proposed that every one should put in writing and sign his opinions concerning the chief items of doctrine about which he believed there was disagreement, should comprehend these views in certain Articles, and that thereafter everyone would signify his objections from the opposite side. This Conference being ended, the Counsellors of the High Council gave a report of it to the States; and they said that they judged that, in so far as they had been able to gather from the Conference, the differences between these two Professors were not of such great importance, and that they consisted chiefly of some cunning disputes concerning predestination, which, through the exercise of mutual forbearance, could be overlooked. But Gomarus insisted that the difference in their views was so important that with the views of Arminius he would not dare appear in the judgment of God. Moreover, he warned that unless they would in due time seek to remedy matters, it was to be feared that in a short time the one Province would rise up against the other, the one Church against the other, the one City against the other, and the citizens against one an-

other. The States wanted the documents signed by both sides in this Conference to be kept in the High Council until the National Synod, and they wanted the contents of these documents imparted to no one. This Conference, however, had not removed the anxieties of the Churches, but rather increased them, the more so because what took place at the Conference was not made known to the Churches. For people judged, not without reason, that this was done to favor Arminius, in order that his views would not become revealed. The Churches meanwhile did not cease through their Deputies earnestly to petition the States that this ecclesiastical matter, which could not be postponed without great danger to the Churches, might be immediately investigated and disposed of in the gathering of a lawful Provincial or National Synod. When Arminius learned of this, he brought it about through Uitenbogaard, whose influence at that time was great with many Regents of the Fatherland, that the States also ordered even the annual Synods, both of South and North-Holland (the time of which was now approaching) to be postponed. Because this could not be done without extreme damage to the Churches, the Churches made known anew their

objections to the States. They requested either that both annual Synods, that of South as well as that of North-Holland, might be held as usual, or that from the two one Provincial Synod might immediately be authorized (as had also been requested previously). In answer to this request, the States, June 28, 1608, declared that they intended to convene a Provincial Synod for this purpose during the following October. When the Churches learned of this, all the Ministers siding with Arminius were again admonished, September 4 and 12, that they should reveal their objections everyone in his own Classis, in order that these might be lawfully brought to the coming Synod. But just as before, so also now everyone refused to do this, with the usual alibis. And when it was almost October and the Churches persisted in the convening of the promised Provincial Synod, it was again postponed for two months; and meanwhile the Churches were allowed to hold the annual particular Synods, both in South and in North-Holland, but with this condition, that the matter of Arminius should not be treated by them, because this was to be reserved for the Provincial Synod.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

For Ten That Are Righteous

Rev. John A. Heys

The Church of God is an innumerable host. Through the ages God reserves for Himself the seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal, nor kissed the Antichrist. And for ten righteous He will save a city and a kingdom. How else will you explain the rising of the sun each morning, the dawning of each new day, the years rolling by, and that all things continue as they were? If you were God, would you put up one minute longer with the bold and widespread evil that you meet everywhere you go?

When we say that the Church is an innumerable host we are speaking, as Scripture also does on this point, relatively and from the point of view of man. God knows exactly how many are in that Church; and Christ, the Good Shepherd knows every sheep by name. With Him it is not an innumerable host but a precious flock in which the care and need of every

sheep is fully known and completely His concern. And relatively, He Himself declared, she is a little flock, a handful in comparison with the host of unbelievers that are her avowed enemy. Yet it is a tremendously large Church that God has designed, and that will come to manifestation in the day of Christ. So great she is that no man can possibly count all her members. God is not forced to settle for a handful that "accept" His Son. He is not through the ages striving to get as big a church as He can; and He will not have to settle for a little bungalow whereas His desire was to build a great mansion. It will be a mansion. It will be a vast kingdom. It will be a perfect body with an exact number of members, all "hand-picked," all eternally chosen by God so that it is complete and beautiful in every detail.

At any given moment in time He has therefore His

seven thousand who have been kept faithful by Him. These are not seven thousand that managed to resist the devil successfully, made God's cause a success, and came forward to assist His faltering cause. Unto Elijah, when he became a despondent reformer after Jezebel threatened him with death, God said that He had left Himself seven thousand who remained faithful. The Almighty, Who needs no man, and upon Whom all the faithful depend for their faithfulness, reminded the despondent prophet that He reserves, that He keeps faithful, and that is why the number is seven thousand. This is an exact number, and although it must not be taken literally it must be taken as a testimony that God has determined a perfect and complete Church, and that this church is safe and sure because it is the church of the Almighty. Even here, however, seven thousand is a relatively small number in comparison with those who do bow the knee before Mammon and seek the things below. There were, if you please, four hundred and fifty Baal prophets in the land and four hundred prophets of the groves. That makes almost one thousand prophets and gives a little idea of how many were sinfully served by these false prophets.

But the point is that, because of the presence of these members of His Church upon this earth, God still upholds it in its present form, sends His rain and sunshine, seedtime and harvest, winter and summer follow in their proper order, and the day of judgment is not yet upon us. Does not Paul in Romans 8:28 say that all things work together for good to those that love God? And they work together only because God is working through and with them. There is a master plan behind all that happens. There is an extremely detailed counsel of God that is being executed by every drop of rain and flake of snow, by every virus and disease germ, by every event in history, yea by every creature, material and spiritual, solid, liquid, and gaseous, visible and invisible, large and small. And all this is for those that love God. The good that all these things serve is the good that God's love has designed for those that love Him: the everlasting fellowship of God's covenant in the new Jerusalem, when the tabernacle of God is with men and we know God in that we know by experience the blessedness of His love and grace, and thus have everlasting life. All is designed to bring us there. All is good because it serves that purpose. And nothing hinders, nothing delays, nothing even threatens our arrival in that glory because the Almighty is in it all, designed it all in inscrutable wisdom and executes flawlessly His eternal counsel. We may therefore be assured that all things will continue as they were until God has used them to bring His Church into that life in His kingdom. When He is through using them as means and tools to bring us there, He will discard them; and the wicked He will cast into everlasting punishment. He is

not, as Peter declares, slack concerning His promise as some men count slackness. He is willing — and He is never frustrated in that or in any other desire that He has — that all *of us*, to whom in Christ He is long-suffering, should enter into that glory. He will not destroy the world, or a city or a country, until this purpose of His is reached. Sin develops. Men become bold in their wickedness. Created in the image of God they behave more basely than the beasts of the field. But He waits, and meanwhile uses them, until He has worked all the things necessary for His people, who are affected by these things, to bring them into that blessedness of His covenant.

In that light we must also see Lot in Sodom, and Abraham praying for ten righteous in that godless city. Having told Abraham again, and Sarah personally, that they would bring forth Isaac through whom would come Him Who would bring true, spiritual laughter to all God's people, the Angel of the Lord also informed Abraham of the coming destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. These cities, and above all Sodom, were steeped in sexual perversity. It was not the "normal" driving passion of the flesh of the natural man that resulted in adultery and fornication in their simplest forms and what we might even call natural forms. But as the Apostle Paul reveals in Romans 1:26, "for this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust toward one another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet." We live in such a desperately wicked world—and this spills over into the church-world, sad to say—that the homosexual is rated less evil than the adulterer or fornicator who takes another man's wife or defiles a virgin. Such are called sick; and we are cautioned not to call such sinful. Such, we are told, may be considered for offices in the church; and each must be allowed to do his thing. All this in spite of the fact that Paul presents this as baser, more vile, more despicable in God's sight than adultery and fornication in their natural forms. Even Lot, a spiritually weak man, reveals his revulsion about such matters when he presents to the men of the city his daughters for them to commit what he considered the lesser sin. And it was not simply because these were strangers whom he must befriend. It was not simply that he would protect those who came to his home. He realized the awfulness of the sin, how revolting it is to God Who made man for other purposes and designed man's body for other reasons and purposes.

That the sin was not only great but practiced on an

almost unbelievably large scale is evident in that we read in Genesis 19:4 that “The men of the city, even the men of Sodom, compassed the house round about, both old and young, all the people from every quarter.” Yes, the young—and we may believe from the earliest ages of their ability to do so—were there with the old. Here we have not sin in that private bedroom, secluded spot in a dark corner, behind walls that hide from view, sin that one is — at least in years gone by—ashamed to have others know that one practices. There is such an awful boldness of sin here. They come like a herd of animals that know no shame before men, wear no clothes, seek no privacy, and are driven by nothing more than beastly passion.

Lot knows all about this. He had seen it all before. He dared, however, to try to bring up his daughters in that kind of environment; and were it not for the fact that Scripture says that he vexed his righteous soul, you would never guess it, except perhaps for the fact that he does here try to spare these “strangers” this vile treatment. And Abraham knew about it, and his thoughts often went forth to Lot in that wicked city. He had entertained angels unawares in his kindness and awareness of his calling before God. But his concern for this brother is Christ, this relative of his, he has not forgotten either. We must entertain strangers, but by all means we must pray for our brothers in Christ. And Abraham does.

Being told that God is through using Sodom, and is come to destroy them for their sins, Abraham begins to pray for fifty righteous in the city. He took in this quite an optimistic position not only but reveals that he was deeply concerned about Lot. He had to come down to only ten, in five steps, and further he dares not go being sure in his soul now that there were not more than ten. Whether he actually rested assured now that the city would be spared because there were ten righteous in it or not, we are not told. It is to be doubted that he had that confidence, for we read in

Genesis 19:27 that Abraham got up early in the morning to look and see whether the city were standing.

For the sake of His Church God would spare the city; and that is comforting to know, for judgment is coming upon this land of ours, and upon our cities because of their sins, some of which rival and surpass the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah. They had not the filthy magazines of today or the means to produce them. They had not the immoral TV programs and movies which are condoned by governmental regulations. Pornography is defended and presented as art. Scenes not to be seen by children, nor by anyone because they simply excite and incite to leaving the natural use of the sexual powers God has given man to burn for the flesh, are shown without shame, and posed for without qualms. Plastic devices for such sins which Sodom could not make are a million dollar business, all without governmental restraints or objections. With Sodom it was “young and old”; and in our land it is those in high offices over us as well as those of low social standing.

But the day will soon be here when there are not ten righteous on this earth; and most of the innumerable host are already in the glory of heaven. The God of this innumerable host, the God of this exact number of the figurative seven thousand, this Good Shepherd who knows each sheep, loves each one of these sheep. And when He will not spare the city and country because there are not the figurative ten righteous in them, He will perform another work. He will rescue that one, or those two or three, before He comes in the fire of His judgment. For ten righteous He will spare the city. The one righteous He will deliver out of that city before His wrath falls upon it. And this He will do because His wrath fell once on His Son for all the sins of that one, and because by His death and obedience He has made that one to be righteous. He makes us to be righteous; and He saves us for the sake of His righteous Son.

GUEST ARTICLE

Fundamentalism and Our Reformed Heritage

Rev. Arie den Hartog

One of the most significant phenomena of the modern church world is the increasing predominance of fundamentalism. We often see fundamentalist

churches growing rapidly while those churches which hold to the truly Reformed faith are often declining or struggling to maintain an existence. Furthermore

we often see many who have been historically Reformed leave the Reformed Churches for such fundamentalistic churches. In our area many who have left the Reformed churches have so swelled the numbers of one such fundamentalistic church in particular that it now has plans for the construction of a new building capable of holding 1500 people. Also we more and more see many Reformed churches forsaking their heritage to take on a more fundamentalistic character. Does fundamentalism pose a challenge to our Protestant Reformed Churches?

Before we answer that question let us briefly outline what is meant by fundamentalism. The adjective fundamentalist is usually used to describe those who hold to the fundamental or basic truths of the scripture such as the infallibility of the scriptures, the truth of creation, the virgin birth, the divinity of Christ, the atonement of Christ, salvation through faith in Christ alone, the resurrection of the dead, life everlasting, and the literal, personal return of Christ on the clouds of heaven. In this sense we surely would classify ourselves as fundamentalists, except that we would add to the list of fundamental truths many more truths, such as the truth of sovereign predestination, the truths of the five points of Calvinism, and the truth of the covenant. Nor would we criticize those churches that are fundamentalist churches for holding to these fundamental truths of scripture; in fact, in this regard these churches put to shame many churches who go under the name Reformed while denying these fundamental truths of scripture.

There is more to what is usually known as fundamentalism than this, however, and it is especially to this broader conception of fundamentalism that we wish to address ourselves in this article. We can best explain what fundamentalism is by describing some of the major characteristics of it. Most characteristic of fundamentalism is a disregard for the creeds and confessions of the church. They espouse the statement that no creeds are necessary for we have Christ and the scriptures and these are sufficient. Maintaining such creeds only brings about division in the churches, they say, and obstructs the free interpretation of the scriptures.

Related to this there is among fundamentalists a de-emphasis or even a disregard for the doctrines of scripture. The doctrines of scripture are perhaps something that belong to the theologians but they are of no significance or importance for the ordinary believer in this day to day life as a Christian. Doctrines for the most part are irrelevant. Furthermore, a persistent emphasis on doctrine only brings about division in the church that is not at all necessary. Many even make a mockery of doctrinal controversy in the church as being mere foolish wrangling.

The third characteristic of fundamentalism is the superficial way in which it interprets scripture. This is the result first of all of coming to the scriptures without a doctrinal basis or framework. The fundamentalist places great emphasis on learning isolated texts of scripture, but puts forth little if any effort to come to understand the scriptures as a whole, or even to understand one doctrine of scripture thoroughly. Often the fundamentalist takes texts completely out of the context of scripture in which they are found, in order to use such a text to support a particular notion he may have. One of the most classic examples of this kind of interpretation is the passage in Revelation 3:20, when this is interpreted as though Jesus is standing at the door of the heart of the sinner, knocking because He desires entrance. Furthermore, the fundamentalist is usually individualistic in his interpretation of scripture. That is, he cares not very much what others have said about a certain passage of scripture nor about the history of the understanding of scripture on a certain subject. The all important thing to him is, what does this text mean for me now. Related to this, he is often subjectivistic in his interpretation of scripture. More important than what the text of scripture really means and what all of the concepts mean in the text is the subjective question "what does it mean for me?" If you think this is too harsh a criticism, you need only to pick up one of the vast majority of books on the market today that are supposed to be used as study aids of scripture and you will find exactly that question over and over. The result of this method of interpretation is that there can be a host of different meanings given to a particular passage of scripture, with all of them being considered equally valid. The standard of what is right is merely what one happens to understand as the meaning of the text.

Characteristic of fundamentalism is also the great emphasis on the New Testament and the lack of emphasis on the Old Testament. The Old Testament is regarded as being, for the most part, for the nation of the Jews and no longer applicable to our present dispensation. In fundamentalist circles we therefore rarely find preaching on the Old Testament, or if there is such preaching it is reduced to a mere moral lesson or Sunday School story. There is very little understanding, if any, of the fact that the Old Testament in all of its pages also contains the gospel of Christ Jesus.

Another characteristic of fundamentalism is the lack of emphasis on or appreciation for the doctrine of the church as taught in scripture. Usually fundamentalist churches are undenominational churches because the whole question of denominations is considered unimportant. The various denominations are considered merely as different spokes of a wheel that

lead to the same hub. Which church one belongs to therefore is not considered of great moment, as long as one holds to the so-called fundamental truths of scripture. The whole notion of a church institute is not considered very important anyway. Much of the life of the Christian has nothing to do with the church as an institute. Also with respect to the doctrine of the church the fundamentalist is individualistic. He is a church for the most part by himself, or perhaps with two or three more of his fellow Christians. He does not need the rest of the church as institute and does not believe that the body of Christ and all its members exists in such a church. He does not feel a responsibility or obligation to a specific church institute, nor does he feel at all that he is corporately responsible for that which is taught at such a church.

Related to this characteristic is of course the de-emphasis on the special office in the church, and also for the preaching of the Word as the central means of grace. Much more important than the authoritative preaching of the Word of God from Sabbath to Sabbath are various Bible studies and fellowships that one is a member of and which one seeks as the source of his spiritual growth.

Finally, characteristic of fundamentalism is the great emphasis on evangelism. The chief calling of every individual is to be a preacher of the gospel. There is little regard for the ordained office in the church; almost anyone can be such a preacher of the gospel. The emphasis in this evangelism is to bring about as many conversions, or so-called decisions for Christ, as possible. To be sure, we do not criticize evangelism as such; there is surely a great urgency of the church to be engaged in evangelism. However, the emphasis is often so exclusively on evangelism that there is little regard for the equally urgent necessity for the Christian to grow daily in the faith and the knowledge of the scriptures, and that this growth is accomplished through growth in understanding the doctrines of the scriptures.

Let us now contrast this fundamentalism briefly with the relevant aspects of our Reformed faith or the Reformed heritage that we possess by the grace of God. We are a confessional church. We hold to the historic creeds of the Reformed churches, the three forms of unity: the Heidelberg Catechism, the Canons of Dordt, the Belgic Confession. These creeds are diligently taught to us. The Heidelberg Catechism is preached from Sunday to Sunday in our churches, and this preaching involves centrally the exposition of the Catechism. Our children are required to learn the Heidelberg Catechism in catechism classes. Our creeds are further emphasized when from time to time they are explained in our Standard Bearer, as Prof. Decker is presently doing for us. Further, in our interpreta-

tion and understanding of scripture there is continual reference made to our confessions.

Secondly there is in our midst a great emphasis on doctrine. We have much doctrine in our preaching. Our young people study Reformed doctrine in Catechism classes. Much labor in the seminary of our churches is spent in the maintenance and development of doctrine. Our magazines and other publications place great emphasis on doctrine. There is much controversy between us and other denominations and theologians on questions of doctrine. This doctrinal controversy is engaged in not only by the theologians and ministers of our churches but also by the laymen. We insist very strongly on the great importance of maintaining sound and pure doctrine.

In the interpretation of scripture great labors are spent by our ministers in carefully exegeting the scripture. Our ministers work within a doctrinal framework whenever they come to the scriptures. By the grace of God our ministers have been taught to exegete and expound the scriptures as few if any have been taught. In our interpretation of scripture we stress the importance of understanding the scriptures as a whole and of developing a complete understanding of the doctrines of scripture. In our understanding of scripture and the doctrines of scripture we cherish very highly what we call the Reformed heritage that has been passed down to us. By that we mean that we believe that the Holy Spirit, according to the promise of Jesus Christ, leads and guides the church into all truth through history. The result of this work of the Spirit is that the church through history possesses more and more an understanding of the riches of the doctrines of scripture. And each generation benefits from the understanding of the previous generation and so we develop in our understanding of scripture. It is therefore of great importance that, when we study the doctrines of scripture, we take into account the rich heritage of the faith that is handed down to us. When we exegete scripture we have been taught to labor diligently with each of the concepts in a text; and the standard of what the true interpretation of a passage of scripture is must be found in scripture itself.

We have in our churches much Old Testament preaching. The Old Testament is considered as important as the New Testament and as truly containing the gospel of salvation. Through the heritage of the Reformed Faith delivered unto us we have an understanding of and appreciation for the unfolding and realization of God's covenant, as this is so important in the understanding of the Old Testament.

We place a great emphasis on the doctrine of the church. We believe that the earthly and institutional manifestation of the church is of great importance for.

the life of the child of God. We insist that there is in history a church that is the closest manifestation of the true church here on earth and that it is the calling of the child of God to join himself with that church. To leave such a church is a very grave and serious matter. We consider it of great importance to maintain the doctrinal purity of this church, and we believe that this is the corporate responsibility of every member of the church. We consider the maintenance of doctrinal purity to be a matter of such great importance that we are willing to be excluded from many associations, even of Reformed churches, because of our insistence on doctrinal purity. We have insisted on the importance of doctrinal purity even when it often means that we stand alone as a separate and small denomination.

Furthermore, we believe that the institute church is the spiritual mother of the saints of God here on earth. The preaching of the Word is considered of central importance as the chief means of grace, and the life of the institute church stands at the very center of our lives as Christians in the world.

With respect to the question of evangelism, we consider evangelistic work to be of great importance but surely secondary to the daily spiritual nurture of the church of Christ that is already gathered. We believe that the church is not merely an aggregate of individuals but an organic whole of the body of Christ, chosen in Him from before the foundations of the world. Furthermore, we believe that the church of God according to the gracious covenant of God is

gathered centrally in the line of continued generations. Therefore we consider it of primary importance that the children of the covenant are first of all instructed in the doctrines of the Word of God and nurtured in the fear and love of the Lord. For this reason we place much emphasis on catechism classes and Christian Day Schools.

In a world in which we daily come into contact with so many other Christians and with so many different churches and find ourselves often so entirely unique, we always have to evaluate the validity of the Reformed heritage. Why do we place so much emphasis on the Reformed heritage and the various things that we mentioned? Why do we maintain so steadfastly the urgency of sound doctrine in the church? Does the child of God in the world really need to be concerned so much with doctrine? Could we not better busy ourselves with more important matters than with doctrinal controversy? Perhaps even more important, do we have a real appreciation for our Reformed heritage? Do we see the urgent need of maintaining it? Are we knowledgeable about that heritage and do we love and cherish it in our hearts and souls? Can we and do we give a living testimony of the Reformed heritage in our confession and life? How must we give such a testimony in an age of diminishing knowledge of the Word of God and lack of understanding of and appreciation for the Reformed Faith? It is only when we answer questions such as these that we can properly meet the challenge of fundamentalism in our day. In our next article we shall try to answer some of these questions.

Book Review

Prof. H. Hanko

PAUL: AN OUTLINE OF HIS THEOLOGY, by Herman Ridderbos; translated by John Richard de Witt; William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1975; \$12.95, 587 pp.

This massive work by Professor Ridderbos, professor of New Testament for many years in the Theological School of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands in Kampen, first appeared in the Dutch language under the title, *Paulus*. Already in the Dutch edition it created a considerable stir both in the Netherlands and in America. It will, no doubt, attract much more attention now that it has been translated into English. There is no doubt about it that it is an important work. Already several Reformed theo-

logians in this country have paid homage to some of the views advanced by Professor Ridderbos, and we may expect that the book will continue to have an impact upon theology in this country and abroad. Whether the influence of this book is good or bad is quite another question.

There are many interesting and excellent features about the book, and anyone interested in recent developments in theology will have to read it. The commendable aspects of the book are easily enumerated. It treats in some detail higher critical hermeneutics and has some important information to offer in this field. It is a thorough treatment of all the main themes in the writings of the apostle Paul and

summarizes what Paul's epistles have to say concerning many of the important articles of the Reformed faith. In some respects certain doctrines, emphasized in Paul's writings, are extensively treated and developed, and the book is a valuable aid in getting these doctrines clearly before one's mind. Perhaps the most interesting feature of the book, and also the most valuable, is the detailed exegesis of many passages in Paul's epistles. Oftentimes this exegesis contributes valuable insights in the meaning of the text. The book is a scholarly exegetical discussion, and shows Professor Ridderbos' profound exegetical skills. A detailed textual reference in the back of the book will aid the student of Scripture in finding those passages of Scripture which Ridderbos takes the time to explain.

E. g., I found the discussion on the following subjects of special interest: the discussion of Romans 5:12ff. which treats of the imputation of Adam's sin; the discussion of the forensic aspect of justification; the discussion of the relation of the church to the magistrates; and the discussion of the expression "body of Christ" as used by Paul, etc.

All these things and many more make the book instructive and fascinating. The rather steep price of the book is worth the investment.

Nevertheless, the book has serious faults. There are, of course, a number of places where one would disagree with Ridderbos' exegesis and with his interpretation of Paul's writings. This is bound to happen. No one can write a book with which every one would agree in all its details. We are not interested in these things; nor do they subtract from the significance of the book. But there are several very important faults in the book which are worth our closer attention. Two of these faults are wrong interpretations of Paul's writings at key points; one is what I consider to be a serious mistake in methodology. The first two have to do with Paul's doctrine of the old and new man and Paul's doctrine of eternal election. The third has to do with the whole approach to Scripture which is implied in "a theology of Paul." To each of these we turn our attention.

Dr. Anthony Hoekema, in his book "The Christian Looks At Himself," takes the position that the Christian makes a serious mistake if he thinks of himself as a wretched sinner. He must, asserts Hoekema, have a more positive opinion of himself. Hoekema correctly points out that this question involves an interpretation of Romans 7:14-25 where Paul concludes a discussion of his own spiritual experience with the words: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Hoekema tells us that this passage must be interpreted as a description of Paul prior to his regeneration. It is obvious that

Hoekema can maintain his thesis that a Christian must have a positive self-image only by interpreting Romans 7 in this way. In several articles in the *Reformed Journal* which formed the basis for Hoekema's book, he tells us that he gained this insight into Romans 7 from Ridderbos' book which we are now reviewing. Ridderbos writes:

Finally, as regards the much discussed difference of opinion – which to the present day has not been brought to a solution that is in some degree generally accepted – as to whether the discord delineated in Romans 7:14ff. is to be understood as pertaining to the remaining struggle against sin in the Christian life or whether Paul here intends to represent the importance of the ego outside Christ and the power of his Spirit, *we have elsewhere chosen with conviction for the latter view on the ground of a detailed analysis of the context and the text of Romans 7 and wish to maintain that with undiminished force.* (p. 126, italics is ours.)

It lies outside of the scope of this review to examine in detail the arguments which Ridderbos advances in support of his position. I have done this at some length in several articles in the *Theological Journal*, and the material need not be reproduced here. (Cf. *Theological Journal*, Vol. V, 1; VI, 1; VII, 1). There are, however, a couple of remarks concerning this that ought to be made. In the first place, it is interesting that Jacobus Arminius was first suspected of heresy by his colleague Plancius in the congregation of the Reformed Church in Amsterdam when he took the same position as Ridderbos on this passage of Romans 7. The views of Arminius and his followers were later condemned by the Synod of Dordrecht, 1618-'19. Interestingly, neither Ridderbos nor Hoekema makes any reference to this historical fact. Theological integrity within the sphere of the Reformed faith would seem to require that they would do this.

In the second place, it is really impossible to maintain the view that Paul is speaking in Romans 7 of himself before his regeneration unless one does become an Arminian in this key point of his theology. Paul writes: "For the good that I would I do not." If this is true of the unregenerated Paul, then it follows that Paul could will the good before he was regenerated. This is exactly Arminianism. And into this Arminianism Ridderbos falls. On p. 128 he writes:

In our judgment too little account is taken in this way of what we have already observed above concerning the differentiated and shaded picture that the apostle gives of the bondage of sin and its corrupting operation in man. Romans 7 does not fall outside that, but brings it out in still fuller relief. *The idea of and zeal for the good have not been quenched in the same way in all men, Jew and gentile, under the law and without the law. It is in harmony neither with*

the teaching of Jesus nor with that of Paul to *deny zeal for the law or desire for the good to every man outside Christ, or to consider such impossible in him.* (Italics ours)

By taking this position Ridderbos clearly agrees with the theology of Arminianism, and, to the extent that he does this, he puts himself outside of the camp of Reformed theology.

The second point that needs emphasis is Ridderbos' treatment of the doctrine of predestination.

There are one or two remarks about this which we ought to make before a more specific examination is made of Ridderbos' views. In the first place, it seems incredible that in a book written on the "theology of Paul" by a "Reformed" theologian, there are only about 15 pages at the most out of 560 dealing with what anyone knows to be the central doctrine of Paul's writings. This is more than passing strange. Even the relatively unimportant doctrine of the relation of the Christian to the magistrate receives almost 7 pages. In the second place, the discussion, especially when Ridderbos sets forth what he believes concerning predestination, is vague. It is not easy to know from what he writes exactly what his view is. This is strange when one is treating a doctrine which is so much the heart and core of the Reformed faith.

To turn more specifically to this question, one thing is clear: Ridderbos rejects the doctrine of eternal and sovereign predestination. His view is quite similar to that of Berkouwer. In fact, I have heard that Berkouwer was surprised and pleased to discover that Ridderbos did agree so closely with him on this matter because, as Berkouwer claims, both arrived at their views independently. However this may be, neither one of these two theologians, leaders in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, want this doctrine.

Ridderbos first of all denies that Romans 9 teaches election and reprobation. He writes:

(In this passage) a "natural" birth does take place, but God once more intervenes by designating, not the elder, Esau, but the younger, Jacob, contrary to all custom and expectation, as the continuation of the holy line of the people of God.

In a footnote to this passage, Ridderbos adds:

That this is the point in question and not "election and reprobation" as the denotation of the eternal destiny of both is clearly apparent from the words of the divine statement: "the elder shall serve the younger." In vs. 13, too, Jacob and Esau are spoken of as two peoples, in harmony with Mal. 1:2ff.

It is clear from this that Ridderbos denies not only that Romans 9 speaks of sovereign predestination, but that he also interprets this as many before him have done, as referring to God's choice of the nation of Israel as a special nation with a special destiny. This,

of course, not only implies a denial of reprobation, but implies an acceptance of the basic Arminian position on predestination. A few additional quotes will serve to bring this out.

God is free to have mercy on whom he will; on the other hand he is free to pass by others with this mercy and even to harden them in their sin. Paul is not guided here by an abstract concept of divine freedom, but by the freedom of God's grace as this has revealed itself in the history of Israel. The apostle observes a clear divine intention in it. . . . God is free to maintain the validity, not of human effort or strength, but of his grace only. He is also free, therefore, to make the resistance of others, in this case of Pharaoh, subservient to the sovereignty of his grace and the glory of his name revealed therein by hardening them in this resistance.

Although somewhat unclear, this is not so bad yet. But then he shows that he does not want to refer all this to an eternal decree when he writes:

If the potter is free to give the objects he makes of clay the destiny that seems best to him in the conduct of his work as a potter, would God then not be free, in order to show the power of his work and the riches of his glory on those whom he has destined to that end, *not as yet to give up immediately to judgment those to whom his wrath goes forth (because of their sin)* and who are therefore ripe for destruction, but first to demonstrate to them the power of his grace on his people?

The purport of Paul's argument is not to show that all that God does in history has been fore-ordained from eternity and therefore, so far as his mercy as well as his hardening is concerned, has an irresistible and inevitable issue. Rather, it is his intention to point out in the omnipotence of God's activity the real intention of his purpose. (p. 345, italics ours)

. . . It is evident that one may not identify the omnipotence and sovereignty of God's grace thus upheld on the one hand and of his reprobation and hardening on the other with irrevocable "eternal" decrees, in which God would once and forever have predestined the salvation or ruin of man. (p. 345)

In commenting on Ephesians 1:4, he writes:

Here again it is a matter, as always with election, not simply of a decree of God that only later comes to realization, but of the actual appropriation of the church to himself before the foundation of the world. (p. 347)

What prompts Paul to hark back again and again to the divine purpose is not an abstract predestinarianism or reference back to God's decrees as the final cause in the chain of events, but the designation of sovereign, divine grace as the sole motive of his work of redemption in history. (p. 350)

When — as, for example, in the so-called *catena aurea* (golden chain, HH) of Romans 8:29ff. — Paul

joins God's purpose, predestination, calling, justification, and glorification in one indissoluble bond, this is not an abstract pronouncement concerning the immutability of the number of those predestined to salvation, but a pastoral encouragement for the persecuted and embattled church, based on the fixed and unassailable character of the divine work of redemption. This fixed character does not rest on the fact that the church belongs to a certain "number," but that it belongs to Christ, from before the foundation of the world. (p. 350)

From these quotes it is obvious: 1) That Ridderbos maintains that Romans 9 speaks neither of sovereign election nor of sovereign predestination, but of a choice of a nation for a definite historical purpose; 2) that Ridderbos denies sovereign reprobation, and will speak of reprobation, if at all, only as conditional. This is Arminian theology. 3) That even election does not refer to an immutable decree of God which fixes eternally the number of the elect and who they are, but only emphasizes that salvation is by grace. How Ridderbos harmonizes salvation by grace with an Arminian conception of predestination is not explained in the book. 4) That even Romans 8:29ff. is not dealing with predestination as such, but is only "pastoral encouragement." How there can be any "pastoral encouragement" for the people of God if their salvation is not rooted in the certainty of God's eternal and unchangeable decree, is a question which Ridderbos does not face.

By this flagrant denial of sovereign predestination Ridderbos has broken with the Reformed heritage of the truth, and without really coming with anything new, has reverted back to the old error of Arminius.

Finally, we must say something in this review concerning Ridderbos' methodology.

It is becoming increasingly popular today in the field of theology to abandon the time-honored method of "Systematic Theology" or Dogmatics which "systematizes" the truth of all Scripture, and to develop the truth of a particular part of the Word of God. George Eldon Ladd's "The Theology of the New Testament" is an example of this; so also is the book of Ridderbos. The question is whether it is proper and in keeping with Scripture itself to speak of a "theology" of only a part of Scripture. It is my contention that it is *not*.

This must be clearly understood. In a certain limited sense it is not wrong to discuss in a book what e.g., the New Testament teaches in distinction from the Old. Nor, I suppose, would it be wrong in itself to discuss in a book some of the chief doctrines which the epistles of Paul treat. But one must be very careful when one does this, for the dangers are very great. And it is quite a different matter to develop a "theology" of the New Testament, and a "theology"

of Paul. There is an underlying assumption here which is wrong.

The underlying assumption is that Scripture is *not* an *organic* whole. Or, to state the matter positively, the underlying assumption is that Scripture can be chopped up into segments, each of which can be discussed independently from the rest of the Word of God. This assumption is wrong.

We ought to develop this a bit more.

The truth concerning the organic unity of Scripture, in brief, is this. Scripture taken as a whole is one book, though it contains many different parts. The principle of this organic unity of Scripture is the truth that Scripture is the infallible record of the revelation of God in Christ. Even as all the revelation of God is in Christ, so also is Christ Himself the one principle of the whole of Scripture. All Scripture speaks only and everywhere of Christ.

It is true that Scripture is the record of a revelation that is progressive. Principally and seminally all the revelation of God in Christ was given already in those first words spoken to our fallen parents through God's Word to the serpent: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed . . ." Genesis 3:15. All revelation from that point on was the progressive development of that fundamental and principle truth until all revelation was fulfilled in Christ Himself Who came into our flesh, suffered and died for the sins of His people, and rose again and ascended into heaven from whence He shall come at the end of time to judge the living and the dead. Because Scripture is progressive, the Scriptures record that revelation in a progressive way. But this does not alter the fact that the one principle of unity in the whole of Scripture is Jesus Christ, the fulness of the revelation of God.

Furthermore, the organic unity of Scripture means that the whole truth of God always comes to expression in every single passage of Scripture. No individual text can be interpreted without taking into account the whole of the Bible. The whole Word of God comes to its own unique focus in every text. And the central truth is again, Christ, the revelation of God as the God of our salvation. One does serious injustice to a text when one interprets a given text only as it stands by itself. One does serious injustice to a text when one interprets a text only in the light of its immediate context. Even, one does serious injustice to a text when one interprets a text in the light of only part of Scripture. In Hermeneutics class in Seminary we stress the fact that every text must be interpreted in the light of its context, in the light of the book in which it was written, in the light of the Testament in which it appears, but also in the light of the whole of Scripture. This follows from Scripture's organic unity.

An approach to Scripture which speaks of a theology of the New Testament, or a theology of the apostle Paul denies this by its very methodology. And because this is denied, serious errors follow — errors which are also evident in this book by Ridderbos.

What are these errors?

In the first place, there is an implicit denial of the truth of inspiration. How can this be? Consider the fact that there is, according to Ridderbos, a “theology of Paul.” This means that there is also a theology of Peter, a theology of James, a theology of Matthew, a theology of Isaiah, etc. But is this true? Where, in all this, is there room left for the most important of all? — a theology of the Holy Spirit? Is not the Scripture God’s infallible record of His own revelation? Is not the Scripture therefore God’s “theology”? — a theology which He reveals of Himself?

It is very striking that there is, in this entire book, not one single reference which I found which emphasizes that God is speaking in Paul’s writings. We have repeatedly what Paul teaches, but there is never any reference to what God teaches. The doctrine of inspiration and the fact that Scripture is God’s Word to us is, so far as I could determine, not so much as mentioned.

You may perhaps argue that this is all implied, that it is, after all, a truth assumed. But this is not the case. There are several references in the book which clearly indicate that Ridderbos does not accept the doctrine of infallible inspiration as this has been traditionally accepted by the Church. I cannot go into detail on this, but a few instances will suffice. On p. 489 Ridderbos speaks of the fact that Paul had a mistaken notion concerning the nearness of Christ’s coming: “. . . Romans 13:1ff. . . points to the fact that the apostle did not expect Christ’s coming to be in the distant future.” Paul’s erroneous conception of Christ’s coming, therefore, has crept into the Scripture. On p. 521 Ridderbos asserts that we cannot identify the man of sin spoken of in Thessalonians because of the genre of apocalyptic writings which Paul uses here. On p. 533 Ridderbos writes: “In the manner of apocalypses it places these within the framework of the world picture of that day.”

The point is that if one emphasizes to the exclusion of the authorship of the Holy Spirit that these letters are *Paul’s* letters from which can be discovered *Paul’s* theology, then one will also find that, because Paul was mistaken on certain points, there are errors in Scripture. In other words, the only way to defend the truth of inspiration as Scripture is to emphasize that God through the Holy Spirit of Christ is the Author of Scripture. A “theology of Paul” rests upon an assumption which denies this.

In the second place, there is very little in the whole book about our Reformed Confessions. Ridderbos might object and say: I was not writing about the Confessions; I was writing about Paul’s epistles. And that, of course, is obvious. But it remains a fact that no Reformed man can write theology and not pay attention to the Confessions. This approach is un-Reformed. A Reformed man comes to Scripture with the confessions. He does this, not because he gives to the Confessions an authority higher than Scripture, but because the Confessions are the fruit of the work of the Spirit of truth Who led the Church in the past to the knowledge of the truth of Scripture.

But Ridderbos’ approach, by definition, precludes the possibility of using the Confessions. How can he use the Confessions? The Confessions, profoundly aware of the organic unity of Scripture, carefully develop each doctrine of the Christian faith as that doctrine is taught in the whole of Scripture. If Ridderbos wants to write a theology of a part of Scripture, it is obvious that he can make no use of the Confessions. But the Confessions are right; Ridderbos is wrong. Scripture may not be chopped up into small parts — each with its own theology.

In the third place, this approach must necessarily lead to an incomplete development of Scriptural truth. When one reads Ridderbos, one continuously gets the feeling that there is only a partial treatment of key Scriptural doctrines. There is an incompleteness and there are always important questions unanswered. Ridderbos is talking about Paul’s theology all the time, not the theology of the Holy Spirit. And Paul’s theology is a partial and incomplete theology. Ridderbos’ fear of going beyond anything which Paul says leads to this incomplete treatment of the truth. One keeps wondering if perhaps Paul’s theology does not *conflict* with the theology of Peter or James in certain important areas.

And so we must conclude by saying that Ridderbos’ methodology is basically a denial of the true character of Scripture. Therefore, this book, while in many ways fascinating reading, does not stand in the tradition of, nor does it contain *Reformed* theology. It is, especially in the points discussed above, an innovation, a heretical innovation.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On December 19, 1976, our parents, Prof. and Mrs. H.C. Hoeksema, celebrated their 30th wedding anniversary. We turn to our covenant Father in thanks for He has spared them these many years that they might see His covenant faithfulness revealed from generation to generation. Our prayer is that the Lord will continue to bestow on them His richest blessings.

Rev. and Mrs. Mark Hoeksema
 Stephen and Michael
 Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Kuiper
 Mr. and Mrs. Carey Kamps
 Matthew
 Candace.

ALL AROUND US

The Awfulness of Abortion Bureaucratic Intrusions

Rev. G. Van Baren

THE AWFULNESS OF ABORTION

A horrible crime is being committed daily in our land. Lives are being snuffed out. Well over a million lives are destroyed annually. Why is so little heard of it?

We decry the horrors of the concentration camp and the executions of Nazi Germany. Rightly so. We speak of those who had perpetrated such crimes as "criminals" and (to put it mildly) "uncivilized." And who would disagree?

Yet millions are being destroyed in our land — and who says much of it?

Organizations rally to fight to prevent the taking away of the life of one criminal in Utah. It is said that capital punishment does not preserve the "dignity" of life. His case is reported in all the newspapers and news broadcasts. It is remarked that should this one man be executed, hundreds more sentenced to die might soon be led also to their legally appointed death.

But these millions? Who defends them? How can such crimes be perpetrated daily — and little is done to stop the horror? What blood already rests upon the soul of the nation! Where are the noted lawyers of the land who are so ready to defend the poor and helpless criminal? Where is the righteousness of this land which has by so many been labeled "Christian"?

The blood of the destroyed unborn cries out to heaven. And the consequences of such awful crime are yet fully to be seen within the land.

Even those who at first advocated the right of abortion, are having second thoughts. Some of these changing attitudes were reported in the March 1976 issue of *Good Housekeeping*. Some of the comments were as follows:

One of the most dramatic turnabouts in recent years is that of Dr. Bernard N. Nathanson. Once a militant crusader for abortion on demand and director of a pioneer clinic where upwards of 100 pregnancies were terminated each day, Nathanson now marches to a very different tune.

He has come to believe that abortion "is the taking of human life," and that a legal climate that is "completely permissive" on that issue may be a threat to the very fabric of our society.

Dr. Nathanson is now associated with St. Luke's

Woman's Hospital in New York City, where he oversees a special medical unit devoted to the sophisticated testing of unborn babies in the wombs of their mothers.

Dr. Nathanson, in the beginning, took the position that "what was in the womb was a 'blueprint,' a model for what would be, but not the real thing." In New York, the Legislature passed a law in 1970 allowing abortion on demand up to the twenty-fourth week of pregnancy. Nathanson became director of one of the largest abortion clinics in New York.

But things did not go well within the clinic. Those who thought that the aborted fetus was not the "real thing," nevertheless showed some signs of uneasy consciences.

"The pressures, external as well as internal, on everyone were just enormous," (Nathanson) recalls. Doctors regularly worked 12-hour shifts.

But it wasn't just a matter of overwork. Psychological factors, stemming perhaps from subconscious guilt and inner misgivings, must also have been playing a part. Doctors began "losing their nerve in the operating room," Nathanson says.

"I remember one sweating profusely, shaking badly, nipping drinks between procedures." Heavy drinking became a problem with several. Some doctors and nurses complained of deep depression, and some were plagued by terrifying recurring nightmares. One doctor's worried wife cornered Nathanson at a party and anxiously reported that her husband was dreaming continually of blood.

The doctor had second thoughts. He took another position, where his task was rather to preserve the lives of the fetuses. He began to wonder why, on the one hand, so many of these could simply be destroyed, while, on the other hand, so much effort would be expended to preserve them in other situations. His attitudes changed. Although he does not take any sort of a Christian position on the subject, he has realized some of the evils of the murder which is abortion.

"I said to myself: 'All that propaganda you've been spewing out about abortion not involving the taking of human life is nonsense. If that thing in the uterus is *nothing*, why are we spending all this time and money on it?'"

"I became convinced that as director of the clinic I had in fact presided over 60,000 deaths."

He elaborates: "As early as six weeks we can detect heart function in embryos, with an electrocardiograph. We can record brain activity at eight weeks.

"Our capacity to measure signs of life is becoming more sophisticated every day, and as time goes by we will undoubtedly be able to isolate these signs at earlier and earlier stages in fetal development. To vehemently deny that life begins when conception begins is absurd!

"The product of conception is a human being in a special time of its development, part of a continuum that begins in the uterus, passes through childhood, adolescence and adulthood, and ends in death.

"The fact that a fetus depends on the placenta for life and can't survive independently doesn't nullify its existence as a human being. A diabetic is wholly dependent on insulin, but that doesn't make him less human."

BUREAUCRATIC INTRUSIONS

Christianity Today, Nov. 5, 1976, contains an article entitled, "Of Equal Opportunity and Other Bureaucratic Intrusions" by Dennis F. Kinlaw. The article contains some interesting observations concerning governmental intrusion into higher education. We, perhaps, do not always recognize the extent of governmental control and regulation in such institutions. Often we consider governmental assistance to our own schools as an ideal way of lifting some of the financial burden from Christian parents. And perhaps even now we have already received enough governmental assistance which will permit government to demand increasing controls over our schools as well. The article points out that a little more than 20 years ago, our government tried to steer clear of support of higher education:

As late as the 1930s the federal government had little or no control over higher education. Laws such as those providing for social security, workmen's compensation, and unemployment insurance, binding upon almost every other sector of society, specifically exempted educational institutions.

Just a little over two decades ago the Commission on Financing Higher Education declared that the strength of higher education was in its freedom and that this freedom "must be protected at all costs." It predicted that federal financing would bring federal controls that would be destructive to originality and diversity and would finally produce uniformity, mediocrity, and compliance.

Soon, however, changes were seen. Increasingly, government was asked to help institutions of higher learning. And they gave this help — albeit, with attendant controls. And even the institutions which shunned this assistance, found that the government insisted upon controls over them as well. The author writes:

But the careful respect by the government for the independence of the educational world is long gone. Non-involvement has changed to intrusion, respect to financial and regulatory control. The extent is frightening.

President Bok reports that compliance with federal regulations in 1974-75 at Harvard consumed over 60,000 hours of faculty time. President Willis Weatherford of Berea College says that one-fourth of his time this past year has been spent on governmental matters

Someone may say that the schools deserve their fate because they were foolish enough to accept federal funds. A number of administrators felt that with federal money would come controls, and so they courageously resisted the urge to enjoy the benefits of government aid. It is instructive to see how they have fared. One regulation from the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare on July 21, 1975, simply redefined the term "recipient" of federal financial assistance. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 declared any institution to which "federal financial assistance was extended directly or *through another recipient*" (italics by author) to be officially and legally a recipient of federal aid and thus bound by all the governmental regulations that control such recipients. To have one veteran attending on the G.I. bill puts the institution in the "recipient" category. No institution is now exempt. President Kingman Brewster of Yale suggested that the government's philosophy is, "Now that I have bought the button, I have a right to design the coat."

The article points out that now our government "is becoming the judge of matters of deep religious import." An institution receiving government assistance may not inquire into the marital status of its employees. Pregnancy outside marriage of any of the employees may be considered only as a "temporary disability," not basis for dismissal from a job. None may discriminate against an employee or applicant for "termination of pregnancy." One may not legally make distinction in work between male and female. In short, governmental regulations prevent institutions receiving governmental assistance from operating according to Scriptural principles in many instances. The author concludes:

Academic freedom and religious liberty have been vital parts of the atmosphere that has enabled American democracy to flourish. Both are fragile and need some protection. It is an illusion to think that political liberty will long survive if these freedoms go. Today the balance that has made possible American academic freedom and American religious liberty, to the envy of much of the world, is threatened. How tragic if in the fight for social reform, very valid in its own right, we should destroy the integrity of the institutions essential for achieving social justice and equal opportunity.

News From Our Churches

It is of course normal practice for our churches to schedule Thanksgiving Day services on the morning of Thanksgiving Day. This year our church in Hull, Iowa scheduled their Thanksgiving service on Thanksgiving eve. The reason for this seemingly strange schedule is that Hull was without a pastor at this time. Rev. Kamps from the neighboring congregation in Doon agreed to conduct services in Hull on the night before Thanksgiving. Hull's pastor elect, Rev. Mark Hoeksema, plans to arrive in Hull on December 14. The installation service is scheduled for December 17. The congregation scheduled a welcome program for December 20. To get everything in good order, the annual church cleaning was planned for December 7 in Hull. This must be quite an event as even dinner is provided for the "cleaners."

Our church in South Holland, Illinois has had an active evangelism committee for some time. The committee has been engaged in radio broadcasting in the DeMotte, Indiana area for a time. The first feature of the radio series was a number of broadcasts on the general topic of "Fundamentals of the Reformed Faith." This was followed by a number of messages originally prepared by their pastor, Rev. David Engelsma, for the "Reformed Witness Hour." The last series of messages concerned the topic, "The Doctrine of the Last Things." In a recent newsletter to the congregation the committee says that they "did not expect that we would be overwhelmed by response to these broadcasts, we did expect that there would be at least an inkling of some interest in such vital and timely topics. This especially in light of the fact that we were convinced that the programs were broadcast in an area where we expected the listening audience to be composed of those we like to refer to as the 'Reformed Community.' However, the response was practically non-existent. Consequently, we have decided to switch our coverage from the DeMotte area to an area roughly covering the western suburbs of Chicago. We are at the present time attempting to locate a station which can give us the radio time we desire." A series of sermons originally preached by Rev. Engelsma was broadcast by the Family Radio Network of stations on the East and West coasts. To this series of broadcasts the committee received an excellent response. The sermons were on marriage and family life as based on the book of Ephesians. The committee plans to prepare another series of tapes for this work.

The "Reformed Witness Committee" of our Hope Church in Walker, Michigan also issued a newsletter concerning their work of late. The committee had been publishing a series of meditations in area shopping newspapers. This program was canceled by the committee last September. "It was not that the meditation didn't meet our expectations, or do a good job of witnessing, but rather that we could not continue financing its enormous appetite. The reason for this is that our tape program has grown to such an extent that continued financing of each program was decidedly impossible. Rather than cutting down on both of them, we decided to drop one, and expand our efforts in the field which showed the most promise. That field, is a field which has expanded across the globe and which is now bringing the truths of God's word to those who appreciate it and thirst after it." The tape packages which the committee sends out consist of transcriptions of the Hope Church Sunday services, the Reformed Witness Hour, and lectures of our ministers and professors. These are sent to New Zealand, South Africa, Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong, Australia, and Indonesia as well as from Maine to Montana in the U.S. As regards practical matters, the committee states that "these efforts, although they may bring peace and contentment to the recipients, also bring bills to us. Our tape program currently costs approximately \$70 per week." Both of these committees are putting a lot of effort into their work, but they also seem to be enjoying some "fruit" on their labors.

Several of our churches have enjoyed Singspirations of late. The South Holland Ladies' Auxiliary sponsored a Singspiration featuring special numbers by the Choral Society and the Men's Quartet. The Randolph Ladies' Society sponsored a Thanksgiving Singspiration (held on the Friday evening after the holiday) which featured congregational singing, and a special speaker, Mr. Truett Hugg. Mr. Hugg is now enrolled in our Seminary. The Loveland Ladies' Circle also sponsored a Singspiration in November. Our correspondent there reports that this was a "German" style event, with no director, and all songs sung sitting down. Perhaps they could invite Mr. Ed Ophoff some time to lead them in a "Grand Rapids-Dutch-American" style spirited singspiration!