

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

We maintain that Reformed heritage when we study the doctrines of scripture as they are formulated in our creeds. We maintain that Reformed heritage when we study what the leaders of the Reformed faith from the past have said. For this is part of the heritage that God has given us. How much time do we spend reading the Reformed fathers? If that Reformed doctrinal heritage is to be maintained we must consciously know it; and that is the duty not only of the theologian or minister but also of every member of the church. Are we in danger of losing our Reformed heritage because of the ignorance of so many of our people?

See "Fundamentalism and
our Reformed Heritage" — page 185

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

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

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

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

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Mr. H. Vander Wal, Bus. Mgr.
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MEDITATION

The Changing of Our Vile Body

Rev. M. Schipper

"Who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." Philippians 3:21

"For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ":

So the apostle had written in the verse immediately preceding our text. And there he is explaining how the citizenship of the children of God differs from that of the ungodly. The latter are the enemies of the

cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things. The ungodly, therefore, belong here in this present evil world, are under the polity of the prince of darkness, and with the wicked world shall be destroyed in both soul and body.

How different is it with the children of God!

Their kingdom, under whose polity they are governed, is the kingdom of heaven. Their God is the one only true God. Their glory is the glory of Christ in heaven. Their end is everlasting salvation in soul and body.

Because this is so, the real life of the children of God is in heaven. That's where their citizenship is. As the apostle in another place states it: They are risen with Christ, and seek the things above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Their life is hid with Christ in God. (Col. 3:1-3).

Strictly speaking, therefore, the children of God do not belong here in the present evil world. And so long as they are here, they are marked as aliens. If they walk as strangers and pilgrims in the world, their presence here may be denied them. Either the world will see to it that they have no place for the sole of their feet; or, God, Who is the King over the citizens of heaven, may call His subjects into His everlasting heavenly kingdom.

They belong to heaven, and to heaven they must go!

But the question arises: How could they ever dwell in the heavenly homeland the way they are?

Imagine for a moment that suddenly they should be transported to heaven as they are. Would they not feel themselves also there as aliens?

O, it is true, that in principle they possess the new life of Christ in their hearts, which life is heavenly and eternal as it is immortal. But do they not have this life in a body which is both earthly and corrupt? The eyes of their earthly bodies, which are adapted only to the earthly scene, could never sparkle with the delight of beholding the glories of heaven. Their ears, which are adapted only to the sounds that are peculiar to the earth, never would allow them to sense the lyric strains of the angelic realm and the hallelujah chorus of the redeemed. The mind of the flesh is both earthly and carnal, and could not appreciate the glory of heaven. Fact of the matter is, the body in which the saints now dwell would only be in their way, and deny them the privilege of seeing and hearing the beauties and joys of the heavenly kingdom.

What then?

The apostle furnishes the answer in the words of our text.

Who shall change our vile body . . . !

The Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour, Who has gone into heaven, from whence also we look for Him — He it is that will bring about the change in respect to our bodies.

Our vile body, or, better translated, the body of

our humiliation, looks simply at the effect of sin upon the body, not at the cause. It is true, of course, that our bodies are vile and corrupt. Death with all its attending circumstances is always working in them, and this vileness and corruption becomes most evident when death has finished its work.

But the apostle says something more significant than this. He is speaking of the body of our low estate, or the body of our humiliation. And this implies the fall. And the fall implies a higher estate. Hence, we have a body which once stood in a high estate. As one of the articles of faith expresses the truth concerning fallen man (Article 14), "Being in honor he understood it not, neither knew his excellency, but willingly subjected himself to sin and consequently to death and the curse," so it was. As an imagebearer of God man was able to reflect the image of God in a creatural way, and this, too, in body and soul. But through sin he is fallen into a low estate. He now possesses a body which has been truly humbled, in which the curse of death reigns.

The reality of this awful humiliation is always so much in evidence. The curse of death follows each one from the cradle to the grave. Our Reformed Fathers sensed this awful reality when they incorporated in the prayer before infant baptism these words: "that they may, with a comfortable sense of thy favor, leave this life which is nothing but a continual death. . . ." In our scientific age mothers are exhorted by the medical profession to take good care of their babies even before they are born. And what conscientious mother will not be willing to spend sleepless nights watching at the infant's crib after it is born and shows the least sign of sickness? And what begins with the infant continues throughout one's entire life-span. The multitude of medical journals and books which are published annually, the myriads of hospitals and health clinics which mushroom all about us are stark evidences of the reality of the humiliation of the body. All you have to do is sit in the waiting room of Cook County Hospital in Chicago for a half a day, and you will leave with the thought that the whole world is sick and dying. No closer does the reality come to us than when we behold the sickness and death of one who is very dear to us. Perhaps it started already when he or she was young. You took them from one doctor to another, but no one seemed to know the cause of the fevers. You listen to this neighbor and that friend who heard of a very special doctor many miles away. So you take your beloved to see him. He sends you home with nothing positive and a packet of pills. At last your beloved gives up and informs you it is all for nought. You also give up, and sit there watching him pine away and die. And then you bring him to his grave, where the work of humiliation is completed.

The humiliation of our bodies is not complete until death and the grave have done their work, until all that was earthly has completely dissolved, when the body returns to the dust from whence it came.

Such is the end of the body of our humiliation!

Awful reality!

But necessary it is for the change that must take place with respect to all the children of God. For flesh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven.

The humiliation of the body, however, is not the end, but the beginning.

The beginning of a glorious change!

We look for the Saviour from heaven, our Lord Jesus Christ, Who shall change the figure of our humiliated body, that is, Who will fashion anew the body of our humiliation that it may conform to the body of His glory.

Such is the plain teaching of our text.

Earlier in this epistle (2:6-11), the apostle had written concerning the Lord Jesus Christ in terms very similar to those he uses in our text. "Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." Note how He Who exists in the form of God took on Him the form of a servant, in which form He humbled Himself even to the death of the cross. And when you read that God highly exalted Him, you must understand that in human nature He is again changed in form.

The apostle Peter informs us (II Pet. 1:16ff) that he and other apostles were with Christ in the Mount of Transfiguration where they saw a prefigurement of the glory Christ would receive when He had first suffered the death of the cross, a glory that was so dazzling that they could not bear to look upon it. It was the glory of His resurrected and ascended body which He now possesses at God's right hand.

Into that glory must the body of our humiliation be changed.

The apostle in the preceding context aspired to attain to that glory (vss. 8-11). And in our text the apostle with the church expects it. We look to the heavens for the parousia, the coming of the Saviour,

the Lord Jesus Christ, Who shall change us into the glory which Christ now possesses.

Glorious change!

The glory of which must be seen in the sharp contrast between what we have now, and what we will become.

Paul writes of this drastic change in his extended dissertation on the resurrection (I Cor. 15). "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: Death is swallowed up in victory."

Such is indeed the change we look for with respect to the bodies of the children of God that have been planted in the earth. And if you are concerned about the bodies of those who shall be yet alive when the Saviour comes, the apostle also offers an explanation for that. "Behold, I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

... according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.

The resurrected and glorified Saviour has received energizing power to accomplish the change.

Yes, He has received such great power that He is enabled to put in subjection all things. Nothing is excluded from this subjection. All men, angels, and devils are made subject unto Him. All the powers in the creation, in heaven, on earth, and under the earth — all are under His dominion and power.

And therefore also our bodies!

And so we may safely entrust our bodies to the grave, in the hope of the complete change at the moment of His parousia.

Blessed confidence!

Glorious Saviour!

Heavenly and eternal glory!

**KNOW THE STANDARD AND FOLLOW IT.
READ THE STANDARD BEARER**

EDITORIALS

Clasping a Viper to the Bosom

(6)

Reformed Thought on the Sacrament of Baptism

Prof. H.C. Hoeksema

CLASPING A VIPER TO THE BOSOM

In this installment we continue our critique of the views of Dr. A. König, of South Africa, with respect to the doctrine of sovereign reprobation. He pays special attention to various passages in Romans 9; and in his treatment of these passages he makes it very plain that he wants nothing of the sovereign reprobation which is so plainly taught here.

As might be expected, attention is given to Romans 9:10-13: "And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."

Here is what Dr. König says about this passage:

Immediately Paul follows with another example to point out once more that God *freely chooses* the real (true) Israel. Even before twins were born to Rebecca, God, contrary to the custom, chose the younger above the elder (v. 10-13), and this He confirmed by distinguishing the peoples who proceeded from them. Verse 13 no longer refers to the *persons* of Jacob and Esau, as is clear from Mal. 1:2-4 from which v. 13 is quoted. In Malachi "Edom" (v. 4) is the nation that proceeded from Esau, and Jacob is Israel.

In the next paragraph he goes on to speak of the principle which motivates the Lord in His decision; but he speaks in this connection only of the motive of election, not of reprobation.

Notice the following in connection with the above quotation:

1. Dr. König is completely silent with respect to the hatred of Esau.

2. He denies that vs. 13 refers to the persons of Jacob and Esau. He always wants to minimize any personal predestination and to stress instead the election and rejection of nations. But, in the first place, this is plainly contrary to the passage in Romans and, in fact, to the whole purpose of Romans. The concern here is exactly with the fact that many *individuals* among the Jews (the vast majority of them) are outside of Christ. Not only that, but the apostle Paul quotes Malachi exactly in confirmation of God's election of Jacob and reprobation of Esau. And even in Malachi, which admittedly is concerned with the nations of Edom and Israel, the primary reference is nevertheless to the persons of Jacob and Esau. It is evident, however, that Dr. König wants nothing of the individual and sovereign reprobation of Esau.

3. Later in the discussion of Romans 9 Dr. König boldly denies that the salvation of Jacob and Esau was at stake in this sovereign action of God: "In Rom. 9:6-17 the *salvation* of Pharaoh is no issue at all, but this passage is concerned with their *place and function in the history of salvation*, i.e. the place they take in the history in which God reveals Himself unto the salvation of all nations — the history which culminates in the birth of Jesus Christ. When God sovereignly chooses between Isaac and Ishmael, it does not mean that Isaac will be saved or Ishmael lost, but it does mean that God's covenant people will proceed from Isaac and not from Ishmael. The same applies to Jacob and Esau. Their *salvation* is not at stake, only their place and function in the history of salvation. The same applies to Pharaoh." (pp. 30, 31) How it is possible to make a statement like this in the light of the fact that the whole concern of this chapter is with the fact that many of Paul's brethren according to the flesh were not saved and that all of the apostle's argumentation is addressed to this fact is

a riddle to me. But Dr. König simply makes loose statements, without ever offering any Scriptural and exegetical proof.

When it comes to the example of Pharaoh in Romans 9:17-18, it becomes abundantly plain that Dr. König simply wants nothing of God's sovereignty with respect to reprobation and hardening. This is all the more strange in the light of the fact that he *seems* to want to hold on to the sovereignty of God's mercy. Referring to vs. 15, 16, he writes (p. 29): "Paul then quotes a word of the LORD to Moses: 'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion', and he then concludes that election does not depend on any merit on man's behalf, but exclusively on God's mercy." However, he does not and will not make the same statement with respect to *hardening*, which is spoken of in the same terms in the same context, "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth," (v. 18). What happens to this passage in Dr. König's treatment? Note the following, pp. 29, 30:

God is so completely *free* in His election that He can even allow one, who by his own obduracy and sin deserves to be delivered to perdition (viz Pharaoh), to continue in order to show His power and glory to His chosen people, Israel (v. 17, 20-23). This example becomes more meaningful when one keeps in mind that Rom. 9:17 is a quotation from Exod. 9:16, and refers to God's allowing Pharaoh to recover and to continue *after the first six of the plagues*, although he deserved to die. God's dealings with Pharaoh are not primarily aimed against his person or his royal office, but against his *continued* resistance after the first plagues. Rom. 9:17 could also be translated: 'For this very reason I let you rise again' (viz from the preceding plagues).

Verses 18-21 state God's *freedom* to choose bluntly. He is God. He works teleological, i.e. to achieve His *purpose*. In this, Pharaoh cannot thwart Him. If Pharaoh is not willing to listen, to allow the people to depart, and thus to become serviceable to the honour of God, God will harden him, will allow him to offer resistance, and *yet* He will lead forth His people in order to show that He is stronger than Pharaoh (v. 17)."

A comparison of the above with the text in Romans 9:17 and with the entire history recorded in Exodus 4-12 should be sufficient to convince anyone able to read that Dr. König is far off base here. But let me briefly point out three items:

1. The suggested substitute translation of Dr. König cannot stand, either in the light of the Hebrew text of Exodus 9:16 or the Greek text of Romans 9:17.

2. Verse 18 speaks of a hardening which is as sovereign as God's mercy: "Therefore hath he mercy

on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." What does this hardening of "whom he will" become in the above quotation? It becomes dependent on *Pharaoh's* sovereign will: "If Pharaoh is not willing to listen, . . . God will harden him." And do not forget that by every rule of hermeneutics Dr. König must explain the first clause of vs. 18 in the same way, and make God's mercy dependent on those who are willing to accept that mercy. For the very same statement is made about mercy as about hardening: "He hath mercy on whom he will . . ."

3. Notice that in the light of Dr. König's explanation, the question of the objector in vs. 19 makes no sense and would, in fact, never be raised: "Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?" This, you understand, is the age-old argument that if you maintain God's sovereignty in reprobation and hardening, you must give up the responsibility of man and the *fault* or *blame*, of sin. But this question makes absolutely no sense — and it will not be asked — on the basis of a conditional reprobation and hardening.

As might be expected, Dr. König must engage in considerable exegetical gymnastics in order to escape the plain teachings of Romans 9:21-23: "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory."

Conveniently, first of all, the writer simply omits all reference to the figure of the potter and the clay and of his power to make of the same lump one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor. This, as we shall see, is a serious omission: for it leads Dr. König to deny that the vessels of wrath are fitted unto destruction by God Himself, as the sovereign Potter. In the second place, he conveniently makes (quite in accord with his desire to speak of nations rather than individuals) the vessels of wrath mean unbelieving Israel and the vessels of mercy mean the Gentiles who have come to the faith. But the context does not do this; it speaks of "us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles." But notice how he twists the passage at a very crucial point:

. . . But — and this is the striking turn he takes when he deals with *salvation* — the "vessels of wrath" are not instantly destroyed, but like Pharaoh, they are *endured with much patience*. (But the patience, or longsuffering, in this passage does not refer to the vessels of wrath; it refers to the vessels of mercy. God endures, or forbears, the vessels of wrath in His longsuffering toward the vessels of mercy. HCH) Notice that v. 22 does not say that God has prepared these

“vessels of wrath” for destruction (something which is said of the “vessels of mercy” in v. 23, though), but mentions “the vessels of wrath *made for* (fitted unto, HCH) destruction.” This can also be translated by (note this, HCH): “who (through their disobedience and sin) are ripe/ready for destruction”. It is their *own fault* that they are objects of wrath, not God’s eternal and unalterable predestination. It could not be otherwise, for Paul is not dealing with “people” in an abstract-theoretic way, but with *Israel* in a concrete and practical way – and Israel is the chosen people who by their own fault, viz by their rejection of the Messiah, ended up outside of the church and *rejected*. That against which Israel has been cautioned in the Old Testament, now happens, viz that God would reject the chosen people. (p. 31)

Notice again that at every point where Scripture speaks of the work of God in reprobation, Dr. König very deliberately changes the plain teaching of Scripture. It simply is not true that the words in question can be translated by, or even paraphrased by: “who (through their disobedience and sin) are ripe/ready for destruction.” This is nothing less than a deliberate changing of the teaching of Holy Scripture. This is especially true in the light of the reference in verse 21 to the potter who makes vessels unto dishonor. The “fitted unto destruction” can only refer to an action of the Divine Potter.

If there is left any doubt as to whether Dr. König denies sovereign reprobation, the following statements will remove that doubt:

... He does not elect because of any merit on the part of man, but He rejects because of sin, disobedience and hardening on the part of man. The cause of election resides in God, the cause of rejection in man. (p. 56)

... The inequality between election and rejection is of utmost importance. The testimony of the Bible is clear. According to Matt. 25:31-46 God has prepared for his sheep a kingdom to inherit *from the foundation of the world* (v. 34). When He comes to the goats, however, He – with due respect – sits with His hands in His hair not knowing what to do with them, because He has not prepared a place for them from the foundation of the world. Then He sends them (as an emergency measure!) “into the eternal fire prepared for the *devil and his angels*”. Expressions like “hands in His hair” and “an emergency measure” are not meant to infringe upon the glory and sovereignty of God (But they do, and they are blasphemous. HCH), but are intended to shed light upon the radical difference between election and reprobation. The same situation is found in Rom. 9:22, 23, which has already been dealt with. *God* has not determined the “objects of wrath” beforehand; they are “prepared” not only by God but by their own sins. On the contrary, He has prepared “the objects of mercy” to enjoy glory. (pp. 59, 60)

But if reprobation is of man’s determination, then

it must needs follow that being elect, as well as being non-elect, is also of man’s determination. Man is on the throne, and God is humbly bowing before Almighty Man!

If this poison is not dealt with promptly in the South African church – if it is not already too late – it will surely be fatal to the Reformed churches there.

REFORMED THOUGHT ON THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

In connection with our discussion of the subject of Baptism on the Mission Field we wish to present also the views of various Reformed theologians. We do this not because the views of Reformed dogmatists may be determinative of our stand: our standard must be Scripture and the Confessions. But these views are important from this viewpoint, that as a general rule our thinking ought to stand in the Reformed tradition; and when our views do not coincide with that of Reformed theologians generally, this should at least cause us to pause and to examine our position very, very carefully, in order to make certain that our position – as over against theirs – can stand the test of Scripture and the Confessions.

It might be objected that these theologians were not concerned with and were not faced by the problem of baptism on the mission field. In some cases this is true; in others it is not true. And even so, the objection is not valid. For, in the first place, in some instances they set forth principles which can well be applied to the concrete issue in question. And, in the second place, – as is also plain from their writings – they were indeed aware of the very same passages of Scripture which speak of various baptisms in the New Testament.

Our first quotation is from Dr. H. Bavinck. And part of its significance lies in the fact that Dr. Bavinck makes a direct reference to the subject of baptism on the mission field, makes a single exception in this regard, but limits it to baptism on the heathen mission field. Following is a translation of *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, IV, pp. 585, 586:

“Therefore there is also no reason to depart from the apostolic usage and to allow the administration of baptism in instances of need by persons other than the ministers of the congregation. In connection with this, the Reformed also took the position that baptism should be administered consistently in the midst of the congregation. Although in the New Testament the administration of baptism took place everywhere where there was water, Matthew 3:6, John 3:23, Acts 8:36, it nevertheless soon became the usage, when the believers obtained their own

meeting places, to have baptism take place in these. Nevertheless, exceptions were made in instances of need; in wintertime, in case of sickness, for princes and honorable persons, and the administration of baptism in private dwellings was permitted. This is certainly in conflict with the general rule which must obtain in the church. Although there are instances conceivable in which the administration of baptism may take place in homes, they cannot be and may not be anything else than the great exception, are not up to the judgment of the minister of the Word alone, but that of the entire consistory, and also then demand that the administration should not take place except in the presence of the consistory. For the administration of the sacrament is not a matter of the building, but indeed a matter of the gathering of the congregation. The sacrament is a constituent part of the public worship service, is a benefit which has been bestowed by Christ on His church, and must therefore

be administered with the Word openly in the congregation. For the sacrament is always united with the Word; Christ Himself has connected the administration of baptism with that of the Word, Matthew 28:19. In the case of the planting of the church among a non-Christian population baptism can, in the nature of the case, not immediately take place in the midst of the gathering of believers. But as soon as this is present, the administration of the Word and of the sacrament must be transferred to the congregation, for they are a constituent part of the public worship service and a property of the congregation. Thus in apostolic times communion was celebrated in the midst of the congregation, I Corinthians 11:20. And thus it is no less proper that this take place with baptism, which after all, is precisely a figure of the ingrafting into Christ and His church, I Corinthians 12:13, and therefore most properly is administered in the public gathering of believers."

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Spiritual Coldness

Rev. H. Veldman

In our preceding article (see Nov. 15, 1976), we concluded with a reference to Matt. 24:12: "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." These words appear in a chapter in which the Saviour speaks of His coming throughout the ages. In this twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew the Lord speaks of the end of all things. And He continues this description in the chapter that follows, concluding that chapter with the awesome scene of His return upon the clouds of heaven.

In that preceding article we also called attention to the error of the premillennarians. We consider this to be a very serious error. These premillennialists speak of a millennium, a period of one thousand years. In this millennium, which will occur after the great tribulation from which the faithful will be delivered because Christ will take them to Himself in the air immediately before it is visited upon the earth, Jesus will reign one thousand years in Jerusalem and there will be peace upon the earth. Apart now from the fact that this expression, "a thousand years," appears only once in the scriptures (Rev. 20), and that in this chapter of Rev. 20 these one thousand years are

described as beginning at the time John sees this vision, which indicates that this millennium is not to be viewed as a period lying in the future, would one not expect the Saviour to mention it in these chapters of Matthew? He is speaking here of the end of all things. He is speaking here of the things that must occur before His final return upon the clouds of heaven. Surely, if the premillennarians are correct in their view of a peace reign of one thousand years the Lord would mention it here. He speaks of so many signs of His final coming. And, yet, there is no mention whatsoever of such a view in these chapters of Matthew. Is this not striking? This is merely another indication that this view of the premillennarians has no support in the infallible Word of God. Indeed, how striking it is that in this wonderful discourse, which began when the Lord left Jerusalem with His disciples during that Passion Week, and they, coming out of the holy city, saw the rays of the setting sun upon the buildings of the temple, the Saviour does not in any sense refer to a future millennium of peace upon the face of the earth!

It is in verse 12 of this wonderful twenty-fourth

chapter of Matthew that the Lord declares that the love of many shall wax cold. In verse 2 the Saviour had spoken of the destruction of the temple at Jerusalem. This would occur, we know, in 70 A.D., when the holy city would be surrounded and destroyed by the Romans. And then the disciples ask the Lord concerning the end of the world and what would be the signs of His coming. Jesus replies that many would come in His name, saying, "I am Christ," and shall deceive many. And we shall hear of wars and rumours of war. However, we need not be troubled, inasmuch as all these things must come to pass before the final end of all things. To these signs of false Christs and of wars and rumours of war the Lord also adds in verse 7 the signs of famines, pestilences, and earthquakes.

Then, beginning in verse 9, we read of the affliction that will be inflicted upon the church of God. The people of the Lord shall be delivered up to be afflicted, and they shall be killed. God's people will be hated of all nations for "My name's sake." This hatred of the people of God will be universal, and we are reminded of what we read in Rev. 13:7: "And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations." In those days, the Saviour continues, many shall be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. How this prophecy of the Lord was fulfilled throughout the ages, also in the days when the Netherlands were subjected to the horrible persecution and torture inflicted upon them by the Spanish inquisition! Many will be offended, will be caused to stumble and fall. Even as Jesus' disciples were offended because of what Jesus had told them concerning his approaching suffering and death, inasmuch as they were carnal and therefore not receptive to this instruction of their Lord (later, of course, they were led by the Spirit into this mystery of the kingdom of God and of heaven), so also many will be offended in the days whereof the Saviour is speaking here in Matt. 24. The persecution of God's people will serve to reveal these others, bring them out into the open as enemies of God and of His kingdom. Indeed, appearing as people of God, they will now reveal themselves, be offended, stumble and fall, reveal themselves as hating the name of Christ. This is surely the crux of the matter. The people of God will be hated for "My name's sake." The servant is not greater than his master. They hated Him; they will also hate His disciples and servants.

Indeed, many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. This has been true throughout the ages. There were false prophets throughout the Old Dispensation. The distinction between a true and false prophet in the Old Dispensation (see Deut. 18: 19-22) was that the words of the true prophet were

fulfilled but the words of the false prophet did not come to pass. These false prophets shall deceive many, lead many astray. And then, because iniquity or lawlessness shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

How true this is today! How many there are today who claim to speak in Christ's name, saying, "I am Christ," or, "here is Christ." Of course they say this! Imagine if our modern revivalists, our so-called gospel preachers, would deny that they speak in the name of Christ. This would be the end of their revival meetings. But now they claim to speak in His name and to be busy in His work. However, we shall know them by their speech. It is surely true of them what was said to Simon Peter, according to Matt. 26:73: "for thy speech bewrayeth thee." How many there are today who claim to prophesy and speak in Jesus' name. How spectacular these revival meetings are! Bands and orchestras and soloists and professional sports heroes are all engaged in the task of the spreading of the gospel. Millions of dollars are spent in these revival meetings. How they are advertised! What huge preparations are made to assure their success! These preparations require months and months and months. A greater nonsense is inconceivable. How unnecessary and absurd are all these activities! All these bands and orchestras and soloists cannot bring a single sinner to Jesus, cannot prevail upon one single sinner to repent and turn unto the Lord. This repentance is exclusively the work of God's grace and Spirit. Besides, these so-called gospel preachers lack one thing: the gospel. And this is a very vital lack. They proclaim a gospel that can be written upon a thumb nail, and which centers in the free will of a sinner. Finally, all this modern sensationalism is utterly absurd because Christ is well able to gather His own. The growth and development of the kingdom of Christ and of heaven, the gathering of the Church of God (see the parables of the sower, the tares among the wheat, the mustard seed, and of the leaven — Matt. 13) are to be ascribed exclusively to the seed, the mighty, living Word of God, as God only can speak it, and which we hear through the preaching of the gospel. Indeed, of all these so-called gospel preachers, these pseudo-preachers who claim to speak in Christ's name, it is surely true that their speech betrays them. They can be recognized for what they truly are through the Holy Scriptures. Know the scriptures, and you will be able to recognize these false prophets. They have always been present, even throughout the ages. But they are especially present today. Today they abound. Our modern church world is full of them.

And the love of many shall wax cold. That the love of many shall wax cold is, according to verse 12, because iniquity shall abound. This word, "iniquity," is literally: lawlessness. This same word appears in passages such as Matt. 7:23, 13:41, 23:28. In the

light of these several passages, this “lawlessness” does not necessarily refer to outward forms of lawlessness, however prevalent this type of lawlessness may be in our present day and age. Indeed, the workers of this lawlessness, according to these passages, may very well appear as the elite of society. They are lawless in the sense that the law of God is not in all their hearts and minds; they are ungodly, haters of God and of His Christ. Besides, we must bear in mind that this abounding in lawlessness must be understood in the light of what we read in verses 10 and 11. Indeed, as the people of God shall be delivered to be afflicted and be killed because they will be hated for Jesus’ sake; and as, therefore, many shall be offended, shall stumble and fall, and reveal themselves, because of persecution, as they truly are, and that therefore the distinction between the true people of God and the pseudo people of God who merely appeared as such will become very evident, the love of many shall wax cold. Of course, this cannot mean that their love will really wax cold. It may be true that, as far as the people of God are concerned, their love can and will revive. But, love cannot wax cold. Love is a gift of God that will remain forever. That the love of these will wax cold refers to the love they professed. *Their* love will wax cold. The true love they never possessed. Love is from God and it can never fade away. This refers to the love which they professed to have. It waxes cold.

How strikingly true this applies to our present day and age! Indeed, there are so many today whose names are enrolled upon the church rolls. They are members of the church. They pride themselves in that fact. And today there are many who claim to love the truth, that they are completely and thoroughly ortho-

dox. They pride themselves in this, too. They resent it if you accuse them of being unorthodox. They claim to love the church of God. They are so busy in the things of God and His kingdom and covenant. They busy themselves in missions. They claim to be Calvinistic, and they claim that we must be the light of the world and the salt of the earth. They are busy in so many things. Jesus also speaks of them in His Sermon on the Mount, in a passage such as Matt. 7:21-23. Here the Saviour speaks of those who call upon Him as their Lord. They also prophesy in His name, cast out devils in His name, do many wonderful works in His name. They claim to love the cause of God and of His Christ and of His kingdom. And yet, their love has waxed cold. How little they are interested in the truth! It is impossible to engage them in any discussion of God’s Word and of His truth. In fact, they really do not care how the truth is denied, how the fundamental foundations of the church are being shaken and undermined. Scripture’s infallibility is being questioned and denied, divorce and remarriage are becoming increasingly common, the merger of churches is being discussed without emphasizing their differences. It appears that they could not care less. Such indifference and coldness characterize our present day and age, the church as it exists nominally today. These “believers” are spiritually cold and indifferent. This is what the Word of God calls the Great Apostasy. How prevalent today is this terrible phenomenon! Let us beware, be sober, watchful unto prayer. This sign speaks of the imminent return of Jesus Christ, our Lord. May we lift up our heads and through all these phenomena expect our Saviour from heaven, the Son of God, Who will then deliver us completely from the wrath to come.

IN HIS FEAR

Pure Religion

Rev. M. Joostens

James is pre-eminently the apostle who deals with good works from a practical, everyday point of view. He always speaks of good works as a vital and necessary function in our lives — so vital and necessary, that it is basic to our salvation. This is not to say, you understand, that James makes works a condition unto salvation. This is far from the truth. There is no discrepancy between Paul and James, although some think so. The misunderstanding is that it is not understood that both James and Paul approach the idea of

works from a different viewpoint. Paul’s emphasis is this, that our righteousness is never based upon our works but only upon the merit of the Savior. James, in perfect agreement, points out that having the righteousness of Christ through faith must needs become manifest in our walk, and this in the way of good works.

To speak bluntly, the message of James is that theory and practice cannot be divorced. If we profess to be Christians and to know the truth of salvation,

yet we do not manifest this in works of thanksgiving, then we are liars. Faith, of its inherent character, must produce good works.

Within the scope of this main emphasis of James, we want to explore religion. You say this is very broad, and I agree. Yet this need not dissuade us in any way, since James by the inspiration of the Spirit has the knack of infiltrating this principle so as to expose its inner and deepest principle. I have in mind the passage which is always much on my mind and very familiar, I am sure, to all of you. James 1:27: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." Extreme is the simplicity of these words; but at the same time their depth and calling are overwhelming.

What is religion? There are many books on my shelf that bear that title, and yet more that attempt to illucidate the concept. But James sounds an awesome warning to us. Religion not in the eyes of men nor according to their vacillating standard but "before God and the father." I emphasize this so we may take the proper approach to our subject. Ofttimes we have pious thoughts regarding religion, and even pride ourselves in various religious activities. We must put all this from us, because we stand before the face of God and are subject to His criterion as we discover religion.

Pure and undefiled religion, according to the standard of the Almighty, says James, is "to keep oneself unspotted from the world." True religion, therefore, is antithetical in nature. We must understand "world" here as referring to the domain of the prince of the power of the air. God's creation as it is enslaved to the Devil, that Old Serpent who was a liar from the beginning. This is the world that is ruled by the principle of sin. We ought to understand that there is indeed such a world where the Devil wields his power and influence, persuading men to seek themselves and their own glory and to manifest all hatred against God. Satan has access to the hearts of reprobate and ungodly men so as to make them seek and live the lie. It is in such spiritual corruption that man abuses the kingship that God gave him over this creation by no longer seeking the glory of God in it, but rather using God's creation to further his own selfish purposes. We see this in abundant clarity today; men use their bodies, inventions and technology, and the whole of God's wonderful creation to further the pride of life and steep themselves in sin. Little do they realize that God's measure of forbearance is quickly becoming full.

It is our calling to live antithetically. To be in this world but never to be of it. We, as God's people, are called to be pilgrims here below. Always we are

aliens. Always we are strangers. This is exactly why our lives are filled with opposites. It makes no difference which aspect of our lives we may bring under observation, it is always a question of the truth against the lie, the Kingdom or mammon, God or the Devil, the Word of God overagainst the words of men. It is materially no different now than it was at the beginning. Even Adam was called to live antithetically with regard to the two trees in the garden. And the opposites in our life are absolute! He who is a friend of the world is God's enemy. Christ tells us that we cannot serve God and mammon. Sometimes we imagine that there is some kind of a mutual ground to be found. But, there is no life style that pleases both Satan and God. It is impossible to be of the world and still maintain a backdoor entrance into heaven. Religion must be pure and undefiled!

James is quite emphatic about this antithetical principle. We must be pure in our religion by keeping ourselves unspotted from the world. This implies, and this we ought to understand, that the world has the characteristic of being able to spot and taint the child of God with its colors. The world has a tendency toward rubbing off on us if we associate and participate in its customs and ways. This is, of course, not so strange, because the principle of the world is sin. This terrible principle is engrained in their very nature and motivates and propels them in all their life and activity. The world stands outside of the sphere of God's grace! We can just imagine what happens to us when we engage ourselves with the world. We have our own sinful flesh to reckon with at all times. And our flesh loves the ways of the world; it loves the excitement of sin and corruption. And soon sin leaves its ugly sear upon us! To put it simply, if we play with fire, we're going to get burned. James puts it this way: "But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth death." Such is the horror of sin. To be caught in its tentacles without escape results in death. Let us keep ourselves unspotted from the world!

The question then is this: how can I continue to keep myself without blemish of the world? Certainly this does not mean that we must withdraw ourselves from the world. Cloisters and monasteries are not according to Scripture. Those who seek to escape from the influences of sin in this way are sadly disappointed in that they take their own sins with them behind the cloister walls. Most certainly, God calls us to be the light of the world. We are His witness before all men. Yet, in all this, we can and may not become one with the world in principle or practice. Our motivating principle is that of righteousness. For that is the characteristic of the citizen of heaven. Within us dwells a life that is heavenly. Now, it is this spirit-

ual principle within us that always seeks the good and never seeks sin or the enjoyment of it. But this is not the whole picture. There is another factor that greatly hinders our keeping ourselves unspotted from the world. That is our sinful and corrupt human nature. Therefore we must say with the apostle Paul, "... I keep under my body and bring it into subjection . . ." It is not so, that the flesh dominates the Spirit but the other way around. The Heidelberg Catechism calls this true conversion whereby we crucify the old man and his deeds and put on the new man in Christ. Practically speaking it means, that I say "no" to the sinful ways of the world that will defile me and "yes" to the ways of righteousness.

To mind comes the admonition of Paul to the Romans, "And be not conformed to this world but be ye transformed by the renewing of your

mind . . ." (12:2) If we adapt to the world and its mannerism, we become soiled and filthy, with the consequence that our religion is less than pure. We must be transformed to live according to the principle of the Spirit of Christ in the way of righteousness. The way that stands in direct opposition to the way of sin and worldliness. That is religion pure and undefiled in the eyes of our Father in heaven. And as His sons and daughters we walk in His fear.

This covers only about half of that which James has to say to us regarding "pure religion." In this article we have addressed ourselves chiefly to the negative aspect of this command. Next time, D.V., we would like to explore the positive example that James uses to illustrate that which we have briefly discussed above, that we visit the fatherless and orphans in their affliction.

MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE

Letter to the Members of the Church at Philadelphia

January 15, 1977

To the congregation of Philadelphia,

We shall have to get on with our discussion of this increasingly common tendency on the part of many in today's church world to separate from the church institute to form independent Bible study groups. Last time we discussed primarily the whole matter of "Bible Discussion Groups" and saw some of the dangers which participation in these groups can lead to. But we have not yet touched upon the heart of the problem. At the very basis of all these tendencies lies a certain despising of the Church as institute. And to this we must now turn our attention.

I want to write you about these things because of the serious threat which this movement constitutes for you. The danger is very real, and I would not have you be tempted by it. The danger is great for various reasons. In the first place, people who have followed this trend and have turned their backs on the church institute often speak in glowing terms of the tremendous blessings which they receive from such study of God's Word. They speak of the edification which they

receive as they come to know the Scriptures better. They speak of the closeness among the members of the small group of believers and the rich experiences of the communion of saints when a few gather together for a common purpose. They speak of rich joys of assurance which they never knew before. This all sounds very tempting — especially if you have a certain notion that your own spiritual life lacks warmth and vibrancy. In the second place, people who attend such groups often speak disparagingly of the Church which they once attended or still attend. They point out that the preaching is dry, unscriptural, doctrinal, without any real spiritual power. And they contrast their own rich experiences in their Bible study groups with the spiritual drought in the congregations where they were wont to attend. You may sometimes feel this way yourself, and may begin to think that these people really have something which you lack; and you may be tempted to follow their course of action.

But you must never do this. The dangers are great. The dangers are indeed dangers which involve the

very salvation of your soul. Whatever may be the reasons for doing what you do, they can never make right a forsaking of the church institute.

This lies at the heart of the matter. The real question is whether the church institute is the God-given institution for the salvation of our souls. Is there any other institution, or is there any other way in which we can be saved than through the means of the church institute? The answer is emphatically, No!

This position is sometimes said to be the position of Roman Catholicism. The Roman Catholic Church for many centuries laid claim to the fact that there was no salvation outside the church institute. And it could, no doubt, be pointed out that the Reformers of the Sixteenth Century inveighed against this notion and condemned it as a corrupt interpretation of Scripture. But the mistake of Rome was not in teaching that there was no salvation outside the church institute. The mistake was rather that Rome identified the church institute with the Roman Catholic Church only. This corrupt and depraved Church did not bear the marks of the true Church of Christ. Furthermore, Rome had an altogether wrong conception of what the institute really was. In Romish thought, the church institute was limited to the clergy arranged carefully in tiers: at the bottom of the pyramid was the priesthood; above the priests stood the bishops; above them the archbishops; above them the cardinals; and it all reached its pinnacle in the pope. But the point is that the people did not really belong to the church institute at all. The church was the *magisterium* — the teaching clergy. Against this the Reformers protested.

Beginning already with Huss in Bohemia and Wycliffe in England, the Reformers made a distinction between the Church as institute and the Church as the Body of Christ. These reformers defined the Church as the Body of Christ as being the full number of the elect in every place and in every time. Only membership in the Body of Christ meant salvation.

It is this idea which many have latched on to in support of their separation from the church institute. They claim that they are members of the body of Christ, and, therefore, their membership in the church institute is not necessary and can indeed be detrimental. I have met people like this. Perhaps you have, too. I recall meeting one such man in Yosemite National Park during a summer long ago. He was wandering around the campground with a Bible under his arm. He came to our picnic table and began to discuss with us his views. He called himself a cosmopolitan Bible student. He prided himself that he belonged to no Church, adopted no one's creed, was an independent Bible scholar, and enjoyed his membership in the Church as a member of the Body of Christ which

was universal and catholic in the true sense of the word.

I also recall in my ministry a man who regularly attended worship services, but who would not join the Church because he believed that membership in the universal and catholic Body of Christ was sufficient for him. He traveled widely and felt perfectly at home in all kinds of different congregations because his fellowship was with the Body of Christ, a body which transcended the narrow and confining local institutions of the Church and denominational distinctions. He was very offended when he could not celebrate the sacrament of communion with us as he had done in so many different churches.

This idea is really the doctrinal justification for the movements which we are discussing. Such people who participate in these movements justify their conduct by claiming that membership in the Body of Christ is the all-important thing. Membership in the church institute is only relatively important, something perhaps which is nice if the circumstances are right, but by no means crucial.

Now I do not want to go into the historical question in detail, for this would take us too far away from our discussion. But it is necessary to mention that while the Reformers indeed stressed the importance of the truth that the Church is the Body of Christ, they never once so much as hinted that this truth made the institute unimportant. Not only does the whole history of the Reformation contradict this assertion, but their own writings and the creeds produced during this period show how strongly they believed in the necessity of the institute of the Church.

The point that needs emphasis here is this: the Body of Christ which indeed includes the full number of the elect from every time and in every place comes to manifestation in this world in the church institute. The apostles did not merely gather the body of Christ when they performed their missionary labors; they established congregations. And in these congregations they ordained officebearers. They did so in such a way that those who were saved through the preaching of the apostles were brought into membership with the local congregations which were established in every place. Membership in the Body of Christ was expressed visibly by membership in the local congregations.

The emphasis here falls upon the local congregations. That is, each local congregation is a complete manifestation of the body of Christ. We can almost say that the local congregation is a kind of microcosm of the whole of the body. What is true of the Body of Christ as a whole is also true of each congregation. Nothing can be said concerning the Body as a whole which cannot also be said of the local congregation.

This is true especially from the viewpoint of the *offices* in the Church. We have not the time, nor is it necessary, to trace this idea through in detail. But the point is that Christ, the Head of the Church, is her chief and only Officebearer. Christ is the Prophet of the Church, for in Christ is all the fulness of the revelation of the truth of God. Christ is the Priest of the Church because only in Christ is that perfect consecration of holiness which made it possible for Christ to make the perfect sacrifice for sin and to make, on the basis of His blood, perfect intercession to the Father for us. Christ is the King of His Church because Christ has defeated all the enemies of God, has established the everlasting kingdom of heaven, and rules over His people as citizens of that kingdom by His Spirit and grace.

But Christ, as the chief and only Officebearer of the Church, gives all His people the Spirit whereby they also become prophets, priests, and kings. Lord's Day XII puts it very beautifully when it says: "But why art thou called a christain? Because I am a member of Christ by faith, and thus am partaker of his anointing; that so I may confess his name, and present myself a living sacrifice of thankfulness to him: and also that with a free and good conscience I may fight against sin and Satan in this life: and afterwards reign with him eternally, over all creatures." That is a description of the three-fold office as held by every believer.

Christ has also ordained that this three-fold office which is held by every believer should come to expression in the offices which Christ ordained in the Church. The office of prophet comes to expression in the office of minister; the office of priest comes to expression in the office of deacon; and the office of king comes to expression in the office of elder. That this is true is apparent from the fact that the apostles ordained these offices in the Churches which they established.

But why is this? Very briefly, the answer is that Christ is pleased to exercise the office which He alone holds through the offices which He ordains in His Church. He exercises His office of Prophet through the ministry of the Word. He exercises His office of Priest through the office of the deacons. He exercises His office of King through the office of elders. In this way Christ is the Shepherd of His Sheep, the Head of His Church, the fulness of the salvation of His people. There is no other way. This is the rule of Christ.

We shall have to wait with further discussion of this matter till our next letter. May the grace of Christ the Head of His Church be your possession.

Fraternally in Christ,
H. Hanko

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

A Delightful Prayer

Rev. John A. Heys

A man may, as Cain did, bring to God his finest gifts only to find, as Cain did, that these are an abomination to God. Man may perform deeds that to his fellow men look good, seem to breathe love and the very spirit of Christianity only to find, as some will and Jesus declares that they will, that God says to them, "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Matthew 7:23. What a blow that will be for those who said, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works?" Yet so it is, and we do well to take hold of the truth of Hebrews 11:6

that without faith it is impossible to please God, and of Romans 8:8 that they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

The upright, because God has given him faith and he is in Christ Jesus by that spiritual bond of faith, can and does do that which is pleasing in His sight. And the Scriptures teach us that his prayers are a delight to God. Solomon declares in Proverbs 15:8, "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord: but the prayer of the upright is His delight." He can and does offer up delightful prayers. In these God does find delight. To those who offer to Him such

prayers He also shows abounding patience and tender mercy.

Abraham was such an upright man as the friend of God whom God's grace had given the covenant blessing of faith, and by it uprightness. And when he prayed for Lot, God did not cut him off and shut him up with a curt and stinging command to be silent. He listened patiently while Abraham dropped from a plea to save the city of Sodom for fifty righteous to ten for whom the city would be spared. Before Abraham prayed for fifty, God knew that there were not even ten, yea not even five but only one. Yet, as the longsuffering and merciful God that He is, He listened through that whole prayer with its five revisions.

The incident recorded in Genesis 18 must have taken place some twenty years after Abraham and Lot separated. When they separated we read of no wife that Lot had. Even when some years later Abraham rescued Lot from the four kings of the north we read nothing of Lot's wife, unless it be that general remark in Genesis 14:16 that Abraham "brought again his brother Lot and his goods, and the women also, and the people." It would, however, seem as though, if one of these were the wife of Lot, she would be mentioned before his goods. At any rate Lot now has daughters old enough to marry and were betrothed to men of the city.

So easily we today as well move away from the church or from the churches where the truth is still maintained. For a job, for the flesh, we separate from those with whom we know we belong, and as Lot we find the consequences in our children. Lot's daughters are betrothed to unbelievers who receive not Lot's word when he told them of the message of the angels that they must flee Sodom before the wrath of God descended upon the city. Lot must have gotten a wife of the Sodomites. His first step of moving there for the greener fields led him to the next step of taking a wife of the unbelievers in the city. He was getting himself deeper and deeper into the world; and to do that he had to hide more and more of his spiritual identity. He vexed his righteous soul. Scripture tells us that, and therefore we believe it. But he also fed his sinful flesh, played with fire and got burned. In such a surrounding and under such circumstances, with such an help, who was not meet for him as a child of God, he tried to bring up his daughters. Having married a daughter of Sodom, he had put up no objections that his daughters be betrothed to sons of Sodom. A child of God he was. Scripture declares it. But a weak child of God he certainly was. Twenty years among the Sodomites had, because he put up no fight, made him conform more and more to Sodom's philosophy, so that the lines of the antithesis in his life were slowly being erased.

This also explains Abraham's prayer. He knew not

only that Lot was there in Sodom — he had at first moved only to the "cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom" — but also that he was putting up no fight and getting himself deeper and deeper in the clutches of the evil city. He is not even strong enough in the trial, when the men of the city crowded around his house, to put down the evil thought in his own mind of giving his daughters to these evil men in order to spare his guests. Yes, there was a spark of spiritual life, and he is to be commended for wanting to protect his guests and for abhorring the Sodomite's sin. But his offer of his daughters does not reveal a man who is fighting sin and bothered deeply enough by sin to condemn it in every form. Nor was he strong enough in the faith after the warning God gave him when he was captured with the ungodly, among whom he was numbered, by the four kings of the northern regions. He went right back there.

In the Heidelberg Catechism we are taught that the child of God who knows his misery and is brought to the joy of his redemption walks in thankfulness to God. Lot showed none of this. It must have been there, for Scripture says that he vexed his righteous soul in that filth and wickedness. But what thankfulness does the man show who, being saved out of the water, jumps back in again? Instead now of walking in God's law to show true gratitude, Lot moves in more closely to the spheres of sin from which he had already experienced some of its wages in that capture by the four kings. He vexed his righteous soul, but he did not learn very fast. And, as a clear picture of us as we are by nature, he had to be taken by the hand and had to be pulled out of the city before the fire of God descended upon the wicked. A weak brother he was. No shining light was he in the church. He vexed his righteous soul, but he was no paragon of righteousness. An example of what we are by nature he was, but he was no example for us to follow.

And for that man Abraham prayed. Would you? Would it not be time to write him off and call him hopeless? But not only does Abraham pray for such a weak Christian, such a frail child of the covenant, but God is so very patient when Abraham prays for such a member in the church. And is it not so that these are exactly the ones for whom we must pray and pray most earnestly? We pray for them all. We exclude no child of God in our prayers. And these who are so desperately weak, these who walk on the rim, who get so awfully close to the fire, who seem the most unworthy to be in the kingdom, are the ones for whom we must pray most often and who call for our most tender mercies. We have to walk the farthest to seek those who have walked farthest away from the fold. We have to double our efforts for those who have multiplied their sins.

Abraham is concerned in a love that he has for Lot as a child of God. And God delights in hearing Abraham pray for this weak child of His. We do have here a delightful prayer and one that sets a good example for us. Though Lot had mistreated him in years gone by, though he certainly deserved some suffering after not heeding the warning when he was rescued from the punishment that fell on these wicked, though before this he looked so much like the Sodomites that this is the first time that they became angry with him and objected to his judgment upon them — which apparently had been lacking till this night — Abraham does pray for him.

It was Lot for whom Abraham was praying all the time. He was not praying for the city but for the righteous who lived in that city. For Lot's sake he hoped against hope that there were fifty righteous so that the city might be spared. But he knew that there were not and soon came down to ten righteous. Were Lot and his wife, his daughters and their husbands all righteous, there still would have been only six. And though Abraham was concerned about all the righteous — had there been more — Lot was the one he knew; and it was for Lot and whatever unknown righteous in the city that he prayed.

What is more it was Lot's spiritual well-being that concerned him. Of course he did not want physical harm to come to him. Yet what he is praying for is Lot's spiritual well-being. For to die in those cities was to die under the wrath of God. To die with wicked Sodom was to go into the lake of fire with them. And though God's people often suffer excruciating pains, although in times of war they suffer brutal treatment along with the wicked and suffer torments and violence, though they die in earthquakes and perish in floods together with the world, they never die in the wrath of God upon them personally. What Abraham fears and does not want is that God deals with Lot as He deals with Sodom. He prays for salvation for Lot. He prays for God's covenant blessings upon Lot and upon whatever righteous men and women might yet be in the city.

And in all this Abraham typifies the very Christ Himself; and that explains why his prayer is a delight to God. To a degree that Abraham could never reach, Christ prays for His people. And rejoice in it that He prays for those walking on the edge of destruction, those playing so close to the fire. He came to seek and to save that which is lost. He came not to bring the righteous but sinners to repentance. He prayed and wept over Jerusalem that had departed so far from the living God. And today He prays for weak, feeble children in the Sodoms of this evil age. With a view to the fire of hell that will soon encompass the whole human race and bring all this world to destruction

Christ prays for every last sheep. And the prayer of God's beloved Son in Whom He is well pleased is pleasing to the Father. It is a delightful prayer and a delight for God to hear it. For these are also His sheep and He wrote their names in His book of life from eternity.

How He agrees with us then when we pray for the erring, when we pour out our hearts for those who compromise with the world, move closer and closer to that world, give up this point of truth and that principle of sanctification! Understand well that when we pray for the righteous in this world — and these are the only ones for whom we may pray — we are praying for those for whom Christ died. No one is righteous apart from the cross of Christ. Jesus Himself told His disciples, as He prayed to the Father in John 17:9, "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou has given Me." For these Abraham prays as well. He prays that the cities may be spared for the *righteous*, those redeemed by the blood of the Lamb of God. And it is Christ in Abraham by the Spirit of God that enables him so to pray. The delight of God in that prayer, the patient listening to that prayer, the tender mercy revealed in that tolerance is because God sees Christ in both Abraham and in Lot. Yes, in that miserably weak Lot too. God sees the cross of Christ that made Lot righteous — how else could he have a righteous soul to vex? — and He delights in that work of His Son. So pleased was He with it that He raised Him from the dead, thereby testifying that He had accepted all His obedience and suffering in our stead and that in Him we are righteous.

O indeed, the prayer of the upright is God's delight. For the upright will pray for the righteous. They will honour the cross of Christ and delight in it themselves. And how delightful it is to God to hear His people express interest in His delightful Son and be concerned about the well-being of all the citizens of His kingdom. Are your prayers a delight to God? Are you praying for the wayward? You own son or daughter who is drifting? Remember that when the upright pray for the righteous, not only do the angels in heaven sing, but God Himself is delighted.

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GUEST ARTICLE

Fundamentalism and our Reformed Heritage

Rev. Arie den Hartog

(2)

In our last article we discussed the major difference between the Reformed and Fundamentalist positions. Those differences can best be summed up in that we as Reformed insist on maintaining what we call a Reformed heritage of the doctrine of the scriptures. We insist that we must understand scripture in the light of that heritage. We insist that this heritage be preserved in the creeds of the church, that it must be passed down from generation to generation. We say that it is a very urgent matter that the purity of the doctrines of the Reformed faith be maintained and that we must grow and develop in those doctrines. Over against this the fundamentalist places very little if any emphasis on doctrine or on any heritage that comes down to them from preceding generations. Rather he approaches the scriptures as an individual without the need of a heritage of understanding and interpreting scripture. He is satisfied for the most part with dwelling upon the superficial fundamental truths of scripture without seeing the need of going any further to study the more profound truths of scripture. Therefore, for example, the doctrines of Calvinism or of predestination are not much an issue for him for he does not see any real need to know and confess these doctrines.

If we are indeed Reformed people and desire to remain Reformed people then we must thoroughly understand the urgency of maintaining our Reformed doctrinal heritage. The challenge of fundamentalism is this: cannot the Christian be satisfied with the mere fundamentals of scripture? Why does he have to know all those doctrines of scripture? Is it not true as far as the life and witness of God's people in the world are concerned, that really only the fundamentals of the faith are important? For example, is it not enough for the Christian simply to answer the question, "Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and are you willing to live for Him?" Is not the basic simple Christian life enough? Are not the doctrines that theologians spend much time discussing so far removed from our life that they have no significance, or they are far too difficult for the average person to understand anyway?

Why do we have such a great emphasis on the

maintenance of that Reformed heritage, on the instruction in doctrine, and on the discussion of doctrine, on the maintenance of the purity of that doctrine? To understand the answer to that question we must continually understand what doctrine is. The fundamentalist criticizes doctrine as being mere abstract theology. We must thoroughly understand that it is much more than this. Doctrine is the systematic setting forth of the blessed and wonderful knowledge of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ, Whom to know is life eternal. Doctrine is the understanding of that knowledge of God and our Lord Jesus Christ which the church possesses through the interpretation of the scriptures as a whole under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Doctrine is maintained when it is set forth in creeds of the church, when it is developed by each generation and when one generation passes on its understanding of the knowledge of God to the succeeding generation through the Holy Spirit Who leads and guides the church into all truth. The truths of scripture are rich and wonderful and very deep and profound. The fundamentalist, if he will admit this at all, simply gives lip service to it. When those profound and rich, wonderful truths of scripture are set forth in a systematic order, so that the child of God can appropriate them and retain them in his consciousness, then we usually call that doctrine. We believe that the whole truth of the scriptures, not only the simple truths but also the more profound and wonderful truths of scripture, must be consciously known and believed and confessed by the Christian.

If doctrine is indeed the knowledge of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ, then surely it is of utmost importance that the Christian know, believe, and confess it. Doctrine is not some sort of abstract science or philosophy of interest to theologians but not necessary for the knowledge of the Christian; for then surely it ought immediately to be abandoned as something that only causes useless wrangling and argumentation and division in the church. But if it is indeed the knowledge of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ, then every Christian must know and understand it, maintain it, and have a deep desire in his heart ever to increase in understanding of doctrine. The Christian

surely may not be satisfied with the mere superficial knowledge of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ that so much cheap Christianity in our day is offering and such as is presented in the mass evangelical movements of our day. Any Christian who is satisfied with that is doomed to die. To worship, adore, and love God, to trust in Him with living faith, to confess His name in the world, to serve Him in sincerity and in truth is all dependent on the knowledge of God and our Lord Jesus Christ that comes from an ever increasing appropriation of the wonderful doctrines of scripture.

The scriptures themselves urge upon us the necessity of ever growing and increasing in the knowledge and doctrine of God. God said through the prophet Hosea in chapter 4 verse 6, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no more priest to me: seeing thou hast forsaken the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children." This is surely an indictment against much of modern day Christendom and especially also of the cheap Christianity of the Fundamentalists. In Ephesians 4 the apostle Paul emphasizes that the church must be edified, built up "until we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the fulness of the stature of Christ." Ephesians 4:12-13. Hebrews 5:14 speaks of the need for the strong meat of the Word of God for the Christian. Very often in the epistles to Timothy, in which Paul instructs the minister of the Word of God, he emphasizes the importance of doctrine for the saints of God. The apostle Peter concludes his second epistle with the urgent exhortation, "but grow in grace and in knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

God has given the truth of the scriptures to the *church* — not merely to individuals but to the church as a whole. This is surely clear from the fact that the scriptures are addressed to the church. This is very obviously true of the epistles of Paul. For this reason the church is called the pillar and ground of the truth. From the beginning the church has possessed the whole of the truth. But under the guidance of the Holy Spirit she grows in her understanding and appropriation of the truth. Therefore there is such a thing as a heritage that is passed on through the history of the church. We cannot agree with the fundamentalist who sees no great need for the church, at least not as an institute. God gives the truth, the doctrines of the faith, not only to the church as organism but also to the church as institute in the world. This does not mean the same thing as the Roman Catholic doctrine of the church that teaches that the church has authority above and independent from the scriptures as far as the knowledge of the doctrines of salvation is con-

cerned. The church possesses the knowledge of the doctrines of God and the Lord Jesus Christ only as she appropriates them from the scriptures. If we may again return to the passage in Ephesians 4 then we surely find that this has reference to the church as institute. That is why there is mention of the various offices in the church. Through these offices, and therefore through the institute church, God causes His saints to be built up in the knowledge of Christ Jesus. As Reformed people we know the truth of scripture that the preaching of the Word is the chief means of grace; it is the chief means through which the saints are instructed in the doctrines of scripture. The child of God surely grows in the knowledge of the truth as he lives in living connection with the church as institute. He does not possess the truth individualistically but as a member of the church.

God preserves the true church in institutional manifestation here on earth where the three marks of the true church are manifest. The child of God must be a member of that church in order that he may grow in the knowledge of the true doctrine of salvation, that he may as a member of that true church give testimony of the true doctrine of God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Why is it so important then to maintain the purity of doctrine? The fundamentalist would say that all that is really important is to maintain the so-called fundamentals of the scriptures. All the rest is not so important and the insistence on maintaining the doctrine of scripture only brings division and strife in the church. The church is better off merely to give testimony to the fundamentals and not to worry so much about all that doctrine. Surely it is the calling of the church and of every individual member of that church to know the whole of the doctrine of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ, to believe it and to give testimony concerning all that doctrine in the midst of the world. The true worship of God and the glorification of God in the world is dependent upon the preservation of the true doctrine of God in the church and by the saints of God. To reject any doctrine, to consider it of little or no importance, is to limit and to deny the glory of God. As soon as the church or the saints of God hold to a false doctrine, they are essentially confessing another God than the true God Who reveals Himself in the scriptures.

The church is built on the foundation of the true doctrine of God. The church has the obligation to know, believe, and confess the whole counsel of God, all of the doctrines of salvation. By confessing the doctrine of God, the church glorifies the God to Whom she belongs. The church as a whole can be preserved only when she maintains the true doctrine. The Christian who is a member of the church has the obligation corporately with all the other members to

see that the doctrine of the church to which he belongs is pure and true according to the scriptures. When he does not do that, he becomes guilty of the false doctrines to which that church holds in reproach of the glory of God.

The fundamentalist is wrong when he thinks that both the Christian and the church can continue in the world by just maintaining the fundamentals and not being concerned about doctrine. The result of such a position is as Paul says in Ephesians 4 again, that the saints of God are cast about by every wind of doctrine by the slight of men and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive. The devil and wicked men do not usually attack directly the fundamentals of the faith. They come in a much more subtle way, pretending to hold to all the fundamentals of the faith as they are taught in scripture while in reality denying God and the Lord Jesus Christ. No church or individual who thinks that only what he calls the fundamentals are important shall be able to stand against those who attack the church and the Christian. Without the knowledge of sound doctrine he will very easily be led astray with the error of the wicked and, as Peter says, he shall fall from his steadfastness. History has abundant testimony of this.

Without exception false doctrine will lead to corruption in life. The fundamentalist may deny this, but it is always true that all those who hold to false doctrine will reveal it in the corruption of their life before God.

In conclusion we ought yet to say something about how we are to maintain that Reformed heritage over against the challenge of Fundamentalism in our day. It is maintained centrally by the truly Reformed preaching of the Word; preaching that is based on very careful and painstaking exegesis of the scriptures. That Reformed heritage is maintained when the preaching is doctrinal and when it is the exposition of the historic Reformed creeds. Surely most basic to maintaining that Reformed heritage is the careful study of the scriptures by every Reformed Christian. The Christian may not be satisfied with the very superficial and subjectivistic study of the scriptures which characterizes Fundamentalism. He must study the whole of the scriptures. He must study not only the New Testament, as is so often characteristic of Fundamentalism, but also the Old Testament. He must study the Old Testament not merely as Jewish history with perhaps a little moralism for our day,

but he must study it as the history of the realization of God's covenant with His people and as an integral part of the gospel of salvation in Christ Jesus. We maintain that Reformed heritage when we study the doctrines of scripture as they are formulated in our creeds. We maintain that Reformed heritage when we study what the leaders of the Reformed faith from the past have said. For this is part of the heritage that God has given us. How much time do we spend reading the Reformed fathers? If that Reformed doctrinal heritage is to be maintained we must consciously know it; and that is the duty not only of the theologian or minister but also of every member of the church. Are we in danger of losing our Reformed heritage because of the ignorance of so many of our people? We maintain that Reformed heritage when we zealously instruct our children in the doctrines of the Reformed faith.

If we are to maintain our Reformed heritage we must be thoroughly convinced that the doctrines of our Reformed faith are indeed the scriptures. We may not be satisfied that these doctrines were held and are held by our leaders and that therefore they must be the scriptures. Every member of the church is under the obligation to know that our Reformed heritage is truly the scriptures. He must consciously know that for himself and be able to give testimony concerning that in his confession.

That Reformed heritage will be maintained only when it is a living spiritual reality to Reformed Christians. There is always a great danger of making doctrine merely a matter of the intellect. We must confess that this has sometimes happened among us. Whenever that happens, then we have lost the challenge of Fundamentalism that doctrine is mere abstract theology, for then it indeed has become that. The Reformed Christian must make the doctrines of the Reformed heritage a living reality in all his life, in his confession and his walk. We must in our instruction of our children be sure that we teach by word and example that the Reformed heritage is indeed a living spiritual reality in our life. In that connection, think for instance of the beautiful Reformed truth of the covenant. This ought surely to be a living spiritual reality in our life and confession. How could it possibly be otherwise? Our testimony concerning the Reformed heritage ought to be such that it provokes others to jealousy.

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FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of the Book of Galatians

By Rev. G. Lubbers

PAUL MARVELS AT THE CONDUCT OF THE GALATIANS (Gal. 1:6)

Paul has a profound concern about the truth of the Gospel, and, therefore, has a sincere concern for the salvation and peace of the church of Christ. Writes he, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto a different gospel . . ." (vs. 6)

In the term "marvel" Paul expresses a great deal of feeling and of meaning. The term expresses in the intransitive form: to wonder, to be astonished, amazed. The meaning of this term is clearly illustrated in Matt. 8:10 where Jesus is stated to have "marvelled" at the faith of the centurion, who did not count himself worthy to come into the house where Jesus is, but bade Jesus to simply speak the word and that his son would be healed. Jesus "marvels" at such a faith. It is a faith which shows the great wonder of grace. The multitudes marvel that the wind and the sea obey Jesus' word. This is simply something unheard of among men. It seems so unbelievable and so impossible. Thus also the multitude marvelled when the demon is cast out of the dumb man so that he could speak. It was never so heard in Israel! (Cf. Matt. 8:10; 8:27; 9:33) Again the Pharisee marvels that Jesus did not first bathe himself before dinner. He expected Jesus to have done so. Nicodemus is told that he must not "marvel" at the news that he must be born from above to see the kingdom of heaven. And the disciples marvelled that Jesus was speaking with the Samaritan woman. (Luke 11:38; John 3:7; 4:27)

It seems so utterly strange and perplexing that the Galatians could do such a thing as turn away from the God, Who called them out of the darkness of heathendom into the marvelous light of the Gospel of the Cross. All the more this seems so utterly strange and uncalled for in that these Galatians "are removing themselves" from Him Who called them in the grace of Christ. The term here in the Greek text is in the middle voice present tense; to transfer self, to change over. If they were victims, they were *willing* victims. They were giving heed to the seducers. They were not

stocks and blocks. Besides, they were doing this with an unbelievable rapidity. No sooner were these deputies from Judaism come into their midst to preach their "different" teaching, but what the Galatians followed their teachings of Judaism, as if it were the same Gospel which Paul had preached, only improved upon, added to. And Paul shakes his head in disbelief; he marvels at so much stupidity.

Think of the magnitude of such folly and stupidity. One would think that they were bewitched. (Gal. 3:1) They were falling away from the great God Who had "called" them. Writes Paul, "from him that called you in the grace of Christ"! These Gentile saints had been "called" by the Gospel with a divine calling. It is quite sure that the caller here is God, the Father. Similar construction we have in Gal. 1:15 in the Greek, as well as in Gal. 2:8. There are those who would make the subject of the calling here Christ. However, that construction is too forced grammatically. Hence, we hold to our interpretation which fits perfectly well with the "in the grace of Christ." God called wholly "in grace of Christ," and not outside of this grace at all. He did not call at all in the sphere of "law" and according to the rule "the man that doeth the same shall live thereby." But in grace He called, the grace which becomes ours by means of the death of the Cross. The calling was entirely according to the truth of all the Scriptures, that Christ is the *end* of the law for righteousness unto all who believe. (Rom. 10:4) And now leave all of this grace of the Cross of Christ Jesus?! Such was the magnitude of this folly! And Paul marvels with a profound amazement.

God had called them to the wedding feast. All things are ready. It is all of grace in Christ. The messengers had come into the highways and the byways to find these Gentiles churches. (Matt. 22:3,9) And blessed are they that are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb. (Rev. 19:9) Blessed are They who sit at the table of the Lamb, which was slain, to be arrayed in fine linen, in the righteousness of the saints. This God is faithful Who called these Galatians into the fellowship of His Son, the crucified and risen

Christ. (I Cor. 1:9) From this the Galatians were removing themselves.

THE REAL TRUTH OF THE MATTER (Gal. 1:7)

The Galatians were not bettering themselves in removing themselves from God Who called them in grace in Christ. For the "gospel" which they are now turned to was a "different" gospel. It was wholly different in content and character. It was not in grace in Christ Jesus that men and women were called at all. It was entire specious, untrue in its very nature and intent. It was not "another" gospel at all. It was simply some malicious, wilful attempt of "some" who would trouble the consciences of saints in Galatia, confuse them with their talk of "another" Gospel. That it was wilful evil on the part of these would-be preachers, Paul states very clearly in the text.

For these men who came to Galatia from Jerusalem "were willing to pervert the Gospel." They represented themselves as being very concerned about the salvation of these saints. But they desired to shut Paul out, rob them of the Gospel, that these saints might seek them. (Gal. 4:17) Paul is not concerned about his own person. He *is* concerned about his office to which he was called, "to preach the Gospel among the Gentiles." Christ had called him, and *His* servant he is. And as Christ's servant he will defend the truth of the Gospel. And he will call a spade a spade. This coming of these "some" to the Galatians was a systematic and cunning attempt to corrupt the Gospel of grace, and of the justification which we have by faith in Christ. They would "pervert" it all. Their presentation would make the Gospel the word of man, dead legalism. The glad tidings is then no more the good news that the promise made to the fathers had been fulfilled in Christ's death and resurrection from the dead. It would be changed radically into something else. It would be changed through and through. There would be nothing of the Gospel left! That is the real truth of the matter! And it stirs Paul into holy action. He comes to maintain the *truth* of the Gospel.

THE ANATHEMA OF GOD UPON THE CORRUPTERS OF THE GOSPEL (Gal. 1:8,9)

We do not think that, in verses 8 and 9, Paul is merely giving vent to some hurt feelings, to a sinful vindictiveness. He is not out for personal revenge at all, to compensate for a waning influence among the Galatian churches. (John 3:22-29) Not at all! These are not explosive personal feelings, but this is an *official* announcement from the throne of God's dread majesty, Who maintains His own word in divine justice. God will not allow any man or angel to add or detract from His holy words, ordinances, and

statutes. (Deut. 4:1-8; Rev. 22:18,19)

Paul must have laid stress on this truth when he was in the midst of the Galatians. He speaks in the text of "as we have said before." Paul, in bringing this "anathema" against the falsifiers of the Gospel, is not telling the Galatians something which he neglected to tell them earlier. This should not come as a surprise to their ears. It should call them all the more to sanctified attention. Paul states this "anathema" twice in this text. He writes a conditional sentence which indicates the objective possibility that he, Paul, or one of the holy angels from heaven, Gabriel, could preach something which Paul had earlier not preached. It supposes that Paul would rebuild what he had once broken down in the name of the Lord. (Gal. 2:18) Paul selects himself, as the receiver of greater revelation concerning the grace of Christ than any other mortal before him (Eph. 3:1-13), and the angel who stands before God and who gave the heavenly Gospel to the shepherds, and gave the law to Moses. (Luke 2:1-10; Gal. 3:19) Conceivably he could not have selected two representatives, one from the circle of servants in the church on earth, and the other a ministering spirit in heaven, to underscore better the seriousness of his point, and that God is without respect of persons, be it in the world of angels or of men!

This verdict of heaven is not merely in general concerning the "Gospel," but it has reference to the Gospel which Paul preached to the Galatians, as the "Gospel among the Gentiles." (Gal. 1:16; 2:2) That is why he says, "than what I have evangelized among you." That was pinpointedly the issue at stake. It was underscored by Paul when he says "than what you have received." (vs. 8,9) Paul believes that the "Amen" which he put under his sermon, by which he ended them, stands forever. God is not mocked!

Let the Galatians give heed and let those who preach a "different gospel" beware. For to fall under the "anathema" of God is most dreadful. To be under the anathema means: to be placed under a curse, to be dedicated to the wrath and divine judgment of condemnation so that one is not redeemable. The term occurs in I Cor. 16:22 where we read the term "anathema" in the American Version. In other passages, such as Rom. 9:3; I Cor. 12:3, we read "accursed." The Greek term "anathema" meant among the Greeks "offered to the gods," a sacred something which was consecrated to the gods, a sacred gift or offering laid up or suspended in the temple of a god. In the Old Testament the Hebrew term (*cherem*) was the "devoted thing" (Lev. 27:27-29) and it was most holy to the Lord. Thus the entire city of Jericho was "devoted" to destruction by the Lord. The seriousness of the sin of Achan can only be adjudged in this light. (Joshua 7) What hap-

pened to Achan will surely happen in the just judgment of the Lord to those who corrupt the Gospel of God willingly. Such is not only the teaching of the Word of God in our text but that is the teaching of all of Scripture. God has reserved a place in hell for Satan, the father of the lie, and for all his false-teachers. (Rev. 20:10) Those who are assigned to the lake of fire and brimstone are under the anathema of God. And the divine judgment falls upon such. Paul is here speaking the verdict of God upon these false

prophets who present themselves as the mouthpiece of God in the midst of the Galatian churches. They have no credentials from God nor from the church. They will not get away with it before God. They are heretics who are condemned of their own conscience. (Titus 3:10)

Paul had a good conscience in this respect. He is called by God through Christ. He is the servant of Christ. He is a true prophet of the Lord, preaching the truth of the Gospel.

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BOOK REVIEW

MISSION TRENDS NO. 3, Gerald H. Anderson, Thomas F. Stransky, Editors. Wm. B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, no price given. Reviewed by Prof. Robert D. Decker

It is the contention of the editors of this volume that: "A radical theological realignment is taking place in the church today. The old centers of theological influence in Europe and North America are becoming the new peripheries. The new centers of vitality and importance in theological construction are in Asia, Africa and Latin America — where the majority of Christians will be living in the year 2000." They also contend that this fact is not widely recognized or

understood in the old centers. The theologians of the so-called "Third World" are neither well known nor widely read in the old centers.

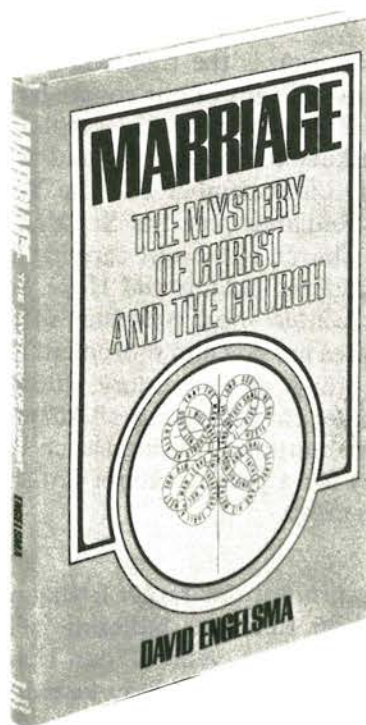
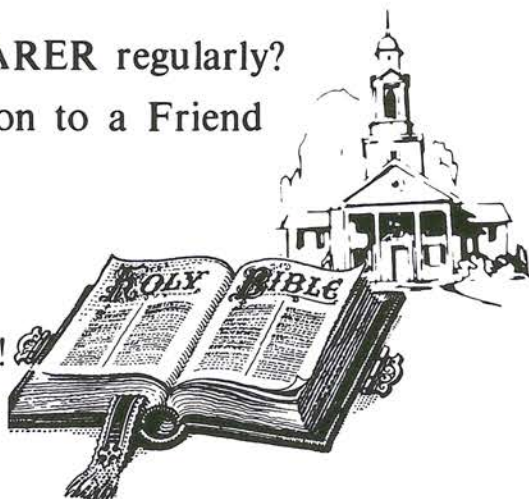
This book is intended to remedy the situation. It is a collection of essays and articles written by theologians of countries in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. These are on a wide variety of subjects. If one wishes to know what is being said and written theologically in the "Third World" he will want to read this book. If, however, one wishes to find something of value in the development of Reformed thought he will be disappointed in this book.

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MARRIAGE: The Mystery of Christ and the Church, by Rev. David Engelsma, is one of the more recent R.F.P.A. publications. In it the author explains the idea and principles of marriage, and he considers the various aspects of married life: the respective callings of husband and wife, sex, birth control, divorce, mixed marriages, and remarriage. It contains, therefore, abundant practical instruction for Christian husbands and wives. And it's thoroughly Scriptural throughout.

The book is inexpensive — only \$3.50. And, for a limited time only, the R.F.P.A. will give, free of charge with every purchase of Rev. Engelsma's book, a copy of *In the Beginning God . . .*, by Prof. Homer Hoeksema. The latter is a paperback containing an exposition and defense of the truth of creation as set forth by Scripture.

Order from the R.F.P.A. Publications Committee, P.O. Box 2006, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49501. (Include payment, please.) Offer good till March 1, 1977.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

In gratitude to God who has spared our parents for these many years, we are pleased to announce the 50th wedding anniversary of Mr. and Mrs. Thys Feenstra on Jan. 18, 1977. We pray that God will continue to bless them in their remaining years together.

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee" Isaiah 26:3a

Their children,
Mr. and Mrs. W.T. Feenstra
Mr. and Mrs. E. Van Voorthysen
Mr. and Mrs. W. Armstrong
Mr. and Mrs. K.J. Feenstra
Mr. and Mrs. G. Feenstra
Mr. and Mrs. D. Feenstra
Mr. M. Feenstra
25 Grandchildren
5 Great Grandchildren

ANNIVERSARY

In January, 1977, the Rev. Marinus Schipper will have completed forty years as a minister of the Word of God in the Protestant Reformed Churches in America. During this time the Rev. Schipper has served pastorates at Grand Haven, Mich., Second Grand Rapids, Mich., South Holland, Ill. and Southwest, Grand Rapids, Mich. For the past fourteen years he has faithfully served as our pastor at Southeast, Grand Rapids, Mich. We congratulate Rev. and Mrs. Schipper on this occasion, thanking God for the many labors he has accomplished in our midst, and praying that he may have joy and strength as he continues to minister unto us.

"And I will give you pastors according to my heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding." (Jer. 3:15).

The Consistory and Congregation
of Southeast Prot. Ref. Church

News From Our Churches

Rev. Mark Hoeksema was installed as the new pastor of our church in Hull, Iowa on December 17. Rev. Hoeksema's father, Prof. Homer Hoeksema, preached the installation sermon, and Rev. Marvin Kamps from Doon, Iowa, read the installation form. The following Sunday Rev. Hoeksema preached his inaugural sermon. Prof. Hoeksema led in worship at the afternoon service. On Monday evening, the 20th, the congregation planned a "welcome" for their new pastor and his family. The program began at 7:30 in the church. A social hour and refreshments followed at the school.

Late November and early December is the time of year when our churches schedule their annual congregation meetings. The agenda for these meetings includes the election of elders and deacons, adoption of a budget for the new year, and other items of importance. Among these "other items" we can include the following: Southwest Church in Wyoming, Michigan approved a proposal to change the time of their evening worship service from 7 to 6 PM; Randolph, Wisconsin rejected a proposal to change the time of their 2nd worship service from afternoon to evening during the summer months only.

Randolph has recently joined the growing number of our churches that have established a nursery for the care of small children during worship services. A Nursery Committee was appointed by the Consistory. Only those children under two years old may be taken to the nursery. Nursery attendants will be listed in the bulletin each week. Assignments will be made alphabetically and proceed through the church membership — each woman and girl in the 6th grade or older being asked to help. A real co-operative project!

Rev. B. Woudenberg was the speaker at the Michigan area Young People's Society Christmas Mass Meeting on Sunday afternoon, December 19. As Rev. Woudenberg is the 'new' minister in the Michigan area, (having been recently installed as the pastor of our church in Kalamazoo) he can probably expect several more invitations in the next several months to speak for various of our church "gatherings" such as lectures and Society League meetings.

Our Hudsonville congregation conducted the first

Sunday worship services in their new church building on December 19.

The Hull bulletin carried news of another one of those mysterious "Tasting Bees." Loveland also scheduled a tasting bee this fall. I have yet to learn what was "tasted" and whether the "tastees" left the "bee" smacking their lips with a smile on their faces.

The Christmas season is the time when we remember the elderly and shut-ins in our congregations. The young people of Faith Church went caroling and distributed fruit baskets to the elderly and widows of their congregation on December 23. The Young People's Society of Redlands and the Sr. Mr. and Mrs. Society of First Church also went caroling this year. The school choirs from Adams and Hope Schools in Grand Rapids presented short programs in a number of Grand Rapids area nursing and retirement homes recently. A small group of elementary students from Adams School under the leadership of Adams teacher Miss Ruth Dykstra continues to sing Dutch Psalms (in Dutch, of course) for a goodly number of shut-ins in the Grand Rapids area.

Rev. Kortering printed this rather fitting reflection in the December 26 Redlands bulletin: "This week brings to a close another year of our Lord, 1976. There have been changes. Some have tasted the dregs of sorrow through death, others have been cheered with the gift of life. Sickness and health has been our portion. The Lord brought changes in our congregation, in church and school. As we face this new year, may it be a beginning in the consciousness that though time brings changes, Jehovah is the Lord of time and He changes never. Through the changing time, He realizes His eternal promises to save His people in the way of the return of our Lord Jesus. May the Lord bless our homes, our school, our congregation, our churches and all His precious children till the return of our Lord and time will be no more and the former things will have passed away and we will inhabit the perfect tabernacle of God to praise Him forever."

K.G.V.