

# The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

The all-out emphasis on the Almighty sovereignty of Jehovah God is the truth and beauty of Calvinism. . . . The emphatic proclamation of sovereign grace is the power and comfort of Calvinism. Touch this, and you are not guarding against hyper-Calvinism, but rather are creating Pelagianism and Arminianism.

See "Hyper-Calvinism" and  
the Call of the Gospel — Page 81

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## THE STANDARD BEARER

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## MEDITATION

## Lazarus: One Whom God Helps

Rev. C. Hanko

*“But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.” Luke 16:25.*

## PATIENT WAITING

The parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus confronts us with an amazing paradox.

The rich man, esteemed by men, remains nameless even in hell. The poor, despised beggar is given a

name, a most beautiful name. “One Whom God Helps.”

To all appearances the rich man should have had that name. Of him we are told, that “he was clothed in purple, and fared sumptuously every day.” As with a brush-stroke of a master artist, Jesus pictures to us a



man who occupies a palatial dwelling, who is surrounded by a host of servants waiting upon his whims and wants. The rich man appears in public in costly attire as a man of means who knows how to use his resources to his best advantage. His well-supplied table is rarely lacking of guests of the highest rank of society. In one word, the rich man lives a flamboyant life, in an attitude of "let us eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow it is all over." Seemingly he had not a care in the world; he was well cared for.

There was also "a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table; moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores." Someone, whoever that may have been, tossed this thin, weak, ugly, festering, reeking beggar, like an unwanted dog, at the gate of the rich man in the hope that the poor fellow might find some help and sympathy there. His very presence in the gutter of the streets of Jerusalem was a sad commentary on the spiritual condition of the church of that day. The laws of Moses prohibited having beggars in the land, since it was the duty of those who loved Jehovah to manifest that love to the neighbor, either directly or through the priesthood. Yet at the time of Jesus there seems to have been an exceptionally large number of lepers haunting the hills and caves outside of the cities; and even in the Holy City one beggar sat for some time at the very gate of the temple. The rich man likely shrugged off his obligation to the miserable wretch at his threshold with the thought that it was a crying shame that the proper authorities cared so little about the imposition placed upon him, one of their esteemed citizens. It never occurred to him that God had laid the beggar there. Nor did he give it any thought that some people had entertained angels unawares. Lazarus was only an undesirable, who was better off dead than alive.

The paradox is intensified by the fact that both the rich man and Lazarus were descendants of Abraham, and members, as it were, of the same church. The rich man was very proud to be able to claim Abraham as his father. He was born of Jewish parents, had been circumcised on the eighth day according to the law of Moses, possibly belonged to the highly respected sect of the Pharisees, and was esteemed among the elite of society as one who knew and scrupulously kept the letter of the law. Even after he is dead he still addresses Abraham as "Father," and Abraham refers to him as "son." Lazarus was also born of Jewish parents, was circumcised, and was brought up in the instruction of the Scriptures. Whatever may have befallen him, his lot on earth was that he had become desperately helpless, dependent, and miserable, until he had no friend in the world. The only companionship and compassion he knew came from the dogs

which ran their healing tongues over his painful, festering sores. Even his name seems like a contradiction. To all outward appearances the rich man received all the help from God, and Lazarus none. If there were such a thing as "common grace" in this world, the rich man had a goodly share of it, and Lazarus was left out. Yet man judges by outward appearance; God knows the heart. (Verse 15).

The real difference between the rich man and Lazarus is centered in the heart. The rich man had one cardinal sin that became evident through the presence of the beggar at his gate. One might say that his sin was Lazarus. The rich man was a proud, selfish, cruel, mammon worshipper. God used Lazarus to expose that evil heart. The rich man was forced to turn his head every time he stepped over that sorry, hungry spectacle. He was compelled to banish the sight of that emaciated face from his mind, lest it spoil his appetite for the delicious abundance of bread and wine that weighed down his table. Why spoil his dinner with unpleasant thoughts?

Lazarus knew how to put his trust in God. At the portal of the affluent, with the fragrant odor of steaming hot dishes wafting past his nostrils, he might well have felt like Asaph of Psalm 73, when Asaph saw the prosperity of the wicked and keenly felt his own oppression renewed every morning. His feet might well have slipped from the way of quiet trust, had he allowed himself to be needled to envy by all that extravagance. But like Asaph, Lazarus went into the sanctuary, that is, out there in the gutter he turned to God in prayer, seeking the answer to his many questions in the inscrutable wisdom, the almighty power, and boundless goodness of his God. Lazarus had far more reason than we to ask, as we so often do at the slightest provocation, Has God forgotten to be kind? Will He withhold His mercies forever? The beggar had nothing; yet he would have been content with very little. All he desired was a crumb of bread from the rich man's table to ease his hunger pangs for a moment. He knew that the little that the righteous hold is better far than all the wealth of wicked men. His humble prayer was but for bread, bread enough for the day, until God would take his weary soul into the Rest. He had his treasure stowed away in heaven, for with an eye of faith he saw the better things that God had prepared for him, with eager hands he reached out for that perfect communion with God that now in a small way eased his loneliness and suffering. Lazarus was rich, far richer than the rich man, even though "evil things" were his lot in this life. He was rich in faith, faith in his God Who loved him so intensely that in His longsuffering He was willing to suffer along with Lazarus, measuring out each day's afflictions to work an eternal glory. Lazarus was rich in his God, with Whom he



tasted intimate fellowship, in Whom he trusted, knowing that God made his every need His care.

### BLESSED COMFORT

Death is often an enemy. Death can also be a welcome friend.

The rich man died. In spite of his own plans for the future, and in spite of every effort of the doctors to keep him alive, he died. Succinctly Jesus adds, "And was buried." Relatives and friends bemoaned the loss for them and the church. The officiating "minister" at his funeral spoke long and tender eulogies of the departed, assuring the family that he was now entered into his reward. A large entourage followed his casket to the costly tomb carved out of a hill, where he was gently laid to rest. Yet the rich man knew nothing about this. He could not even enjoy it, for, being "in hell he lifted up his eyes in torment." The expression "lifted up his eyes to heaven" is a figure of speech in harmony with the parable, but the place of hell and the torment with its hot fire, its gnawing of the tongue and gnashing of teeth is a very real and bitter experience. Immediately after death the wicked go to their appointed place under the righteous judgment of the living God, Who judges every man according to the deeds done in the body, whether good or evil.

Lazarus, on the other hand, "was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." Some consider this a bit of gloss that he was carried by angels to heaven. I am inclined to think that this is very real, that the angels do accompany the souls of the departed into their mansion in Father's House, just as an entire angel host accompanied Jesus at His exaltation into heaven. Lazarus' resting in Abraham's bosom is, of course, a figurative expression, but it does express a blessed reality. God has carried out His promise to Abraham, "I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." The father of believers sees his real spiritual children gathered round about him in the intimate fellowship of the saints about the throne. He receives poor Lazarus, who suffered so much here below, into his bosom, that Lazarus may lay his weary head on his shoulder to have the last vestige of his tears wiped from his eyes. Now he realizes that every hunger pang, every tear, every cringe of pain, even every cold and sleepless night was measured out to him as a proper dosage of medicine in the exact amount that was necessary for him by the concerned Pharmacist, Who cares as a Father for His children. The man whom God helps is not given a few trinkets that may appeal to the eye, but receives treasures of eternal value. Lazarus now fully realizes

that He Who spared not His own Son from the accursed death of the cross to save us from our sins, also grants us with Him all things.

### HIS GLORIOUS REWARD

When the rich man opens his eyes he sees Lazarus. The man whose name appears nowhere in the Book of Life sees him whose name is so plainly written there. He whom the rich man did not deign to help, was and always will be helped of God. He who was so highly esteemed among men is rejected of God, for God sees the heart. He who despised God and His Word, because he preferred to have mammon supply his needs, is despised of God. He who showed no mercy receives no mercy. Yet this rich man ventures to make a small request, a very small one. He asks father Abraham to remember that the rich man was born of a Jewish family, was circumcised on the eighth day according to the law of Moses, and had scrupulously kept that law with his tithes and sacrifices and prayers. Is not that sufficient reason to send Lazarus, who knew so well what misery was, to carry a drop of water, no more than a mere drop, on the tip of his finger, to lay it soothingly on the tongue, even the tip of the tongue of the rich man, that for a split second he might experience a bit of relief, ever so small, from his bitter agony. Lazarus knew what it was to want a crumb of bread; the rich man wants but a drop of water from Lazarus.

Even that small respite is refused him. Why? Because he was in the natural sense of the word a son of Abraham, a member of the church. He spoke to his own condemnation, for he showed plainly that he had known the way and had not walked in it. He knew that God demanded mercy, and not sacrifice, love, and not pretense, love to God manifested in caring for one of these little ones. Through the corridors of hell rang and still rings that terrible indictment: "Son, remember!" If only the clock would stop its monotonous ticking; if only the voice of conscience would keep silence; if only that constant remembrance of Lazarus could be blotted out! But there is an impassable gulf between heaven and hell; both heaven and hell are so final.

Lazarus also has his reward as the reward of grace. He who was faithful to his God even unto death enjoys the crown of life. He who put his trust in God was not put to shame. He who fixed his hope on treasures that have real and lasting value has gone into the Rest. He is and remains a lasting testimony that Lazarus, the man whom God helps, is always blessed, for the poor in spirit inherit the Kingdom.

Blessed Lazarus!

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



## EDITORIALS

## About Books and Parchments Baptism On the Mission Field

*Prof. H.C. Hoeksema*

Do you read?

Do you read worthwhile books?

Do you read our Protestant Reformed literature, published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association?

Do you train your children, as they grow up into young people, to read?

Is the complete list of our R.F.P.A. publications found on your home library shelf? And are those books more than mere decorations on your shelf? Do they show the signs of being used?

The fear is not unwarranted that in too many of our Protestant Reformed homes the answers to the above questions are negative. The statistics concerning inventory and sales of our Publications Committee prove that as many as almost 50% of our Protestant Reformed families do not have some of our recently published books in their homes, much less read them and study them. This is not good! We live in a day when it is necessary for our very survival as a communion of Reformed believers that we be thoroughly founded in the truth of the Word of God according to our Reformed creeds. Everything round about us and from within us militates against our profession. To maintain that profession we must be well-equipped. We must understand and grow in the truth. We must understand and be equipped to withstand the lie. This is true with respect to the doctrines of our Reformed faith as such; it is also true with respect to the application of those truths to our life in the midst of the world. And one of the best and most trustworthy means of growing in the knowledge of the truth and of becoming well-equipped for the battle of faith is the good reading material offered by our R.F.P.A.

Hence, if you are not a spontaneous reader, I strongly urge that you set up a reading program for yourself, and then stick to it. Set aside a certain time

each week — whether that be on a Sunday afternoon, or whether it be some evening during the week — which you devote to worthwhile reading. Steadfastly refuse to turn on your TV during that time; apart from any other considerations, television is far too much of a time-robber in far too many homes anyway. And make up your mind that you are going to devote that set time to reading. And put first on your list our R.F.P.A. publications.

But there are other, more practical considerations for the advisability of your adding our Protestant Reformed literature to your library.

How often have I not heard the question: where can I find some dependable study materials on this or that? Where can I find a good guide on the Parables? Where can I find answers to my questions about the Book of Revelation? Our minister gave us study-questions or a written assignment in connection with the Heidelberg Catechism or for our Essentials of Reformed Doctrine class; where can I look up the answers to these questions? Where can I find an explanation of this or that text? Where can I find a good exposition of the covenant and of the place of children in the covenant?

Over the past ten years or so the R.F.P.A. has made available in our various publications a veritable gold-mine of such study materials. Do you own them? Do you use them?

You young people who are courting and contemplating marriage, have you considered that you ought to read and study that gem of a book, *Marriage, The Mystery of Christ and the Church*? You parents with little children, are you concerned to train your children in the fear of the Lord? Have you studied together *Peaceable Fruit (For the Nurture of Covenant Youth)*?

And so I could offer more such suggestions.

But there is another consideration. Our R.F.P.A. Publications Committee (Its official name is Perma-



ment Committee For The Publication of Protestant Reformed Literature.) is dependent chiefly on you, our Protestant Reformed readers, for its financial ability to publish more books. We are a non-profit organization; and we operate in such a way that our income from the sales of earlier publications is supposed to provide the money to publish new books. Thus, for example, if we sell 1000 copies of *Behold, He Cometh!* for \$9.95 each, this will provide us with \$9,950.00 to publish our next book. Ever since publication of *Reformed Dogmatics* this has worked out well. In most instances the sale of each new book to our own people was each time sufficient to recover our original investment and to finance our next publication. But at present we are in somewhat of a bind. Due to various circumstances, we have so much of our money tied up in inventory (of previous publications and reprints) that we do not have sufficient assets for new publications.

And one of the chief reasons for this is the fact that a large percentage of our own people simply have not purchased some of our recent publications. Our records prove this.

We believe that this publishing project is a good work and that it ought to continue.

We are not asking for gifts.

We only ask that you, our primary market, buy our publications. By doing so you will kill two birds with one stone: you will help yourself to good literature, and you will make possible the continuation of our publishing work.

To give you an incentive and to hold this work before you, we intend to advertise our books in these pages on a regular basis. And we also intend from time to time to offer you some special bargains. Look for these ads, beginning with this issue.

And remember, too, that Christmas is coming. And a good book makes a good gift!

### A Word Of Introduction

As we promised some time ago, we intend to reflect editorially on this question and, in connection therewith, on the material presented by the Synodical Study Committee. Our last Synod referred the report of the Study Committee to the churches for study. And these editorial comments have as their purpose to assist that study. Meanwhile, we trust that our people, and especially our consistories, will indeed study this matter. If and when our Synod makes a declaration on this matter, that synodical decision must not be a mere declaration "from the top down" and it must not merely be based on the fact that a small study committee did, or did not, present plausible and convincing argumentation. The ultimate decision must be the expression of the mind of the

churches; otherwise it is not more than a dead letter. For that reason also, our consistories should express themselves, if necessary, by way of overture to Synod. I do not mean that consistories should merely inform synod that they are in favor of the Study Report or that they are against it. This is meaningless; it helps no one; and Synod should pay no attention whatsoever to such communications. If overtures are to be helpful, they must suggest changes, better formulations, clarifications, reasons for disagreement, etc.

As suggested before, all of us should read and study carefully the Report of the Study Committee and the attached documents. These are found in the 1976 Acts of Synod, pages 103, ff. They will not be repeated in the *Standard Bearer*, except that from time to time in the course of these editorials specific portions will be quoted.

### A Bit Of History

One of the items committed for study in this connection was our *Form for Ordination of Missionaries* (*The Psalter*, pp. 74-76). It is, of course, proper that this Form be consulted: for our Liturgical Forms are "confessions of a secondary order," and as such are binding in the churches.

It is important, I believe, that this Form for Ordination of Missionaries be studied in the light of history. As I hope to point out later, this history will help us understand certain things contained in the Form which are pertinent to this question of baptism.

As far as that history is concerned, it proved almost impossible to obtain any specific information about this Form. One looked in vain for any information in some of the better known works on Reformed Liturgics. Kuyper's *Onze Eeredienst*, Biesterveld's *Gereformeerde Kerkboek*, and Heyns's *Liturgiek* do not mention it. We finally found some information in a syllabus on Liturgics written by Dr. H. Beuker, one of the early professors at Calvin Seminary. This syllabus is a very interesting piece of work, by the way: it was reproduced by means of *handwritten* mimeograph stencils (and in a beautiful and clear handwriting, too!). From this syllabus we learn that this is not a Form which came down to us from the early years of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands and is not a Form which, as do many of our forms, has the stamp of approval of the Synod of Dordrecht. Here is the story of this Form as quoted from H. Beuker, pp. 47, 48 (we translate):

"This form is undeniably the youngest of all our ecclesiastical forms. The Christian Reformed church in the Netherlands had taken in hand the mission work among the Mohammedans and the Heathen. She had also learned to see that the sending out to the



Heathen of so-called 'missionaries' who were not ordained as ministers of the Word in the homeland, but who were appointed and sent out to minister the Word and Sacrament among the heathen, apart from the church, by societies and individuals, was not according to the Word of God. The Christian Reformed church realized that he who would be minister of the Word of God in a foreign country also had to be a lawful minister in the homeland and in his own church. They felt indeed that *the field of labor* differed from that in the home church, but that *the office* had to be one and the same. They felt that the ordinary Form for Ordination did not wholly fit this entirely special work. When in 1873 brother Enno Haan (later a Christian Reformed minister in America, HCH) was to be sent in behalf of the aforementioned church to Java (Quitang near Batavia), he first had to be ordained as minister of the Word and Sacraments. They instructed Rev. H. Beuker (the same man who wrote this Liturgics and who came to America and was professor at Calvin Seminary, HCH), at that time minister at Haarlingen and vice-president of the Mission Committee to prepare a concept-form for that purpose. He fulfilled this mandate. In preparing this form he adhered, in so far as the nature of the case permitted, to the existing form for the ordination of the minister of the Word who was called to labor in the home churches. Where the particular field of labor required something different, he tried to hold as strictly as possible to God's Word. The concept-form was first approved by the Mission Committee and later also by the General Synod of the Christian Reformed Church. With the use of this form Rev. E. Haan was ordained that same year in the congregation of Kampen by the author. It has re-

mained in use in the Netherlands until now, and was taken over in the Christian Reformed Church in America. One can find it in the back of the new edition of the Church Order and the Synodical Regulations which was published in 1897 by J.B. Hulst."

Bear in mind, however, that this Form was originally only a Form for Ordination of Missionaries to the Heathen. If you want to see this Form as it was originally, you must omit the entire section entitled "To The Dispersed." The latter was added by the Christian Reformed Church in America at a later date. The earliest reference to this addition which I could find was in a 1905 edition of the Church Order, where it appears with the footnote: "The above Form came from the late Prof. Dr. H. Beuker. Since there was great need, we took the liberty to change it and to expand it in so far as was necessary in order that it can be used also for the ordination of Ministers of the Word for Home Missions. — The Committee."

And thus we inherited the Form in our Protestant Reformed Churches.

This is the story, therefore. This was a Form for Ordination of Missionaries to the Heathen. To this Form was added a section to adapt it for use in the Ordination of Home Missionaries. Apart from a few words in the beginning of the Form, the only change that was made was the addition of that section entitled "To The Dispersed." For the rest, we are using a Form originally designed for Missionaries to the Heathen.

How this affects the Form and what it has to do with the question under discussion we shall point out next time, the Lord willing.

## QUESTION BOX

# About Retirement of Ministers

*Prof. H.C. Hoeksema*

From a Michigan reader I received the following questions: "How can we determine when a minister should retire? Who should take the initiative when such a case does arise? Should our churches develop a policy that would deal uniformly and impartially with all retiring ministers?"

## Reply

That's quite an order! To answer fully and to explore all the possibilities would surely require more than one article. But I will try to make a few suggestions.

Perhaps the first thing we ought to do is to get



before us the data of our Church Order on this subject. Article 13 of our Church Order lays down the governing principles: "Ministers, who by reason of age, sickness, or otherwise, are rendered incapable of performing the duties of their office, shall nevertheless retain the honor and title of a minister, and the church which they have served shall provide honorably for them in their need (likewise for the orphans and widows of ministers) out of the common fund of the churches, according to the general ecclesiastical ordinances in this matter." Article 14 is also pertinent in part: "If any minister, for the aforesaid or any other reason, is compelled to discontinue his service for a time, which shall not take place without the advice of the consistory, he shall nevertheless at all times be and remain subject to the call of the congregation." Finally, there is the Constitution of the Emeritus Committee (a misnomer, by the way!), which regulates much more than the work of a committee. It does two things: 1) It regulates the procedure to be followed in retiring (Articles 3 and 4). 2) It regulates the procedure to be followed by all concerned in the granting of retirement support. As to procedure in retiring, it is worth noting that Article 3 of the Constitution seems to be more restrictive than the Church Order itself: "The minister shall present his request for emeritation to his consistory who shall decide upon his request with approbation of classis and synod..." (Incidentally, *emeritation* is not a word; neither is *emeritate*.) For the rest, the Constitution deals mostly with various regulations and restrictions which are not pertinent to this discussion.

Let me begin with the last question of my questioner. I take it for granted that we all understand that to an extent we already have a uniform and impartial policy; that is, all cases of retirement must be dealt with in the same way under the Church Order and the Constitution of the Emeritus Committee. Besides, it may be expected that our churches will also deal even-handedly, under these rules, from a financial point of view: "...the church which they have served shall provide honorably for them in their need..." There is one aspect of retirement, however, in which we have no policy: retirement on account of age. Our churches have set no age at which retirement becomes *permissible*; neither have they set an age at which retirement becomes *mandatory*. The question is: should we have a uniform policy in this regard? And if so, what should the policy be? Should we, for example, adopt a rule that any minister *may* retire when he is 65 years old, and that he *must* retire when he reaches the age of 70? Or should we, perhaps, simply have a flat rule requiring retirement at the age of 65?

Most denominations, I think, have some kind of rule about this matter. And I believe that in most

instances the rule has been adopted in order to meet some problem. In some instances the problem has been a surplus of candidates, and mandatory retirement served to clear the old men out of congregations and to provide places for the young. This problem we have never had as yet. In some instances a rule is adopted in order to prevent the abuse of *early* retirement: ministers who are not truly dedicated and who look for a life of ease may be tempted to retire when they are still fully capable of working. In such instances churches found it necessary to say: you may not retire (if you are healthy) until you reach the age of 65. Also this problem we have not as yet had in our churches. A third possibility is, of course, that a rule like this is adopted in order to relieve all concerned (minister, consistory, and congregation) of the necessity of making a decision in this matter. It can readily be understood, I think, that the matter of retirement can be rather traumatic and even embarrassing. This is possible for a minister, especially for a minister who is thoroughly dedicated to the service of God and who has worked and battled hard for many years. On the one hand, it may look good to him to lay down his labors and to enjoy some leisure; but perhaps his sense of dedication (rightly or wrongly) holds him back. On the other hand, it may not look attractive to him suddenly to be "put out to pasture." He may also be of the opinion — even when others have a different opinion — that he is quite capable of doing his work very efficiently, perhaps even better than "those young whippersnappers." He may even reach the stage that he boasts a bit that he feels well enough to go on for a few more years, and fail to note that his boast is not met with enthusiastic agreement from those to whom he speaks. And it is also possible that a man simply reaches the stage that he does not know enough to retire when it is perfectly obvious to everyone else. And thus, of course, it can ultimately become very embarrassing for a consistory and congregation, when there is no fixed retirement age, to feel that it is getting to be time for their minister to retire, when he does not seem to realize it or does not want to admit it, and to be very reluctant to talk to him about it or to ask him to retire. From this point of view, I can see merit in adopting a fixed retirement age. This will avoid problems, and it will avoid any possible charge of partiality.

The other side of the coin, of course, is the fact that a rule of this kind holds for *all*; and it is a fact that there are also men who are very capable of doing fruitful work even well after they have reached the age of 70. The solution to that, however, might be in the fact that retirement does not mean that a minister may not be called upon to do *some* work, either in his congregation or for the churches at large.



Nevertheless, we have no such rule at this time; and the only way in which we can get such a rule is by overture to synod. Perhaps our churches should consider this. Personally, I have mixed feelings about it.

There is one area, however, in which I feel strongly that we should have a fixed retirement age, namely: in the seminary. Why there? My reason is, in the first place, that in a school there must be continuity, and therefore advance planning and provision. This is especially true when the faculty is small. If suddenly a faculty member is incapacitated in our seminary, this means that one-third of the curriculum cannot be taught. Now this can happen, of course, in case of illness or accident; but it *need* not happen because of old age *if* there is mandatory retirement. Then the Theological School Committee and Synod can plan in advance that in such and such a year Professor X will retire and must be replaced. If in such a case Professor X is still quite capable of teaching well and vigorously, then he can be engaged on a year by year basis to teach a limited amount; and this will also give the new professor time to break in. My reason is, in the second place, that twice in our history the instruction of our school was seriously disrupted by the infirmities of age, so that twice emergency provision had to be made, and twice professors had to be called pell-mell. This can be avoided, and it ought to be avoided. Moreover, the time to make this rule is *now*, when it cannot be said that the making of any such rule is aimed at getting rid of any man, because all our professors are either young or comfortably middle-aged.

The next question is: who should take the initiative in the matter of retirement? The answer, under our rules, is that as long as we have no fixed retirement age, it is the minister himself who must apply

for the status of emeritus when he is rendered incapable of performing the duties of his office by reason of age, sickness, or otherwise. We may note in this connection that our rules (Constitution of the Emeritus Committee) are more restrictive than the Church Order. The Church Order itself says nothing about the question who initiates the procedure. Our rules state: "The minister shall present his request for emeritation to his consistory. . ." I call your attention to the fact that this rule as it stands is *too restrictive*. For example, it does not allow for a case of a minister who is in an auto accident and who becomes an unconscious invalid, or for a case of a minister who has a stroke and is left senseless and speechless, or for someone who becomes insane, or for someone who becomes senile. It is perfectly obvious in all such instances that another party must take the initiative; and the proper party is undoubtedly the consistory. And this leads me to point out that after all it is the *consistory* (with the judgment of classis and synod) which has the deciding voice in this matter. The consistory is the governing body in the congregation; and the minister is also subject to the rule of the consistory. And this implies, too, it seems to me, that if instance arises in which a minister ought to retire (whether because of age or other reason) but does not apply for retirement, then it becomes incumbent upon the consistory to act. Of course, such action must be with the necessary discretion and sympathetic understanding. But a consistory must also remember that the all-important thing is the good of the congregation. The congregation may not be allowed to suffer damage by reason of the fact that the work of the ministry is not being properly and adequately and fully done.

The last question — about the *how* — will have to wait until the next issue.

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## TAKING HEED TO THE DOCTRINE

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

(22)

*Rev. David Engelsma*

The reality of the threat of hyper-Calvinism is also indicated by the Scriptures. Scripture warns that the gospel of grace has two outstanding enemies: the

teaching that man saves himself by his own working or willing, and the teaching that salvation by grace alone implies carelessness of life or even licentious-



ness. As Toplady wrote somewhere, in his characteristically vivid manner: "Christ is always crucified between two thieves. Antinomianism and Pharisaism." Those who know and love the truth must beware of the former error, as well as the latter.

Strictly speaking, antinomianism is the heresy that denies that the believer ought to obey the law of God. The word itself is composed of two Greek words: *anti*, which means "against," and *nomos*, which means "law." It refers to a teaching that is opposed to the law of God. Specifically, the teaching is opposed to the law of God as the rule of the thankful life of the redeemed child of God. Since God's people are saved by grace alone, the antinomian argues, they need not obey the law; indeed, it is treason to the gospel to command God's people to keep the commandments. Although the antinomian would allow for the law's function of teaching men their misery, he opposes that use of the law which consists of its being a positive standard for holy living. When he appears in the Reformed tradition — as he does!, he is very strong on the first part of the Heidelberg Catechism and very weak on the third part. Essential to this false doctrine is its opposition to the law *in the name of the gospel*. It does not simply reject the law, as the ungodly world also rejects the law, but it rejects the law *because the people of God are saved by grace without the works of the law*. Thus, the gospel of grace itself is made the ground of laxity and immorality.

Scripture both warns that this error will always harass the gospel and passes judgment upon it as false doctrine. Already in the Old Testament, the prophet Jeremiah had to contend with Israelites who declared, "We are delivered to do all these abominations," i.e., steal, murder, commit adultery, and practise idolatry (Jer. 7:9, 10). The Word of the Lord condemned this doctrine as "lying words, that cannot profit" (Jer. 7:8).

Antinomianism is explicitly repudiated by Paul. In Romans 3:31, he asks, "Do we then make void the law through faith?" His reply is a vehement "God forbid: yea, we establish the law." Having proclaimed a righteousness by faith only, altogether apart from man's works, he asks, in Romans 6:1, whether this doctrine implies wickedness of life: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" Again, his answer is a ringing renunciation of the antinomian error: "God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (vs. 2) He admonishes the Galatian saints not to use the liberty of grace for an occasion to the flesh, but to exercise liberty in the only appropriate way, namely, by the keeping of God's law (Gal. 5:13, 14).

In a broader sense, antinomianism is the error that interprets God's sovereignty as the weakening, or

denial, of man's responsibility and that applies the truth of sovereign grace in such a way as to minimize, or deny, the calling of the church and of the saved sinner. It is this that constitutes the error of hyper-Calvinism. Many would-be critics of hyper-Calvinism fail to see this. They think to find hyper-Calvinism's essential error in an over-emphasis on the sovereignty of God, especially in the work of salvation. Accordingly, one alleges that it is supralapsarianism that constitutes hyper-Calvinism; another puts the finger on eternal justification; and still another identifies the culprit as the doctrine of an unconditional covenant. The effect of these critics' going to war against "an over-emphasis on the sovereignty of God" is that they become foes, not of hyper-Calvinism, but of Calvinism itself.

For one cannot emphasize the sovereignty of God strongly enough! The all-out emphasis on the almighty sovereignty of Jehovah God is the truth and beauty of Calvinism. Nor can one stress sufficiently that the salvation of God's elect is, from beginning to end, a matter of sovereign, free grace! The emphatic proclamation of sovereign grace is the power and comfort of Calvinism. Touch this, and you are not guarding against hyper-Calvinism, but rather are creating Pelagianism and Arminianism. Not in an emphasis on God's sovereignty, but in a denial of man's responsibility must the characteristic flaw of hyper-Calvinism be located.

It must be quickly added that the mere fact that a man, or a church, is charged with hyper-Calvinism does not prove that the man, or the church, is, indeed guilty of the heresy. Hyper-Calvinism, we have said, is a form of antinomianism, and Scripture teaches that every defender of the sovereignty of God's grace in salvation will be falsely accused of antinomianism. Of Paul himself, it was reported, though slanderously, that he taught the doctrine, "Let us do evil, that good may come" (Rom. 3:8), the sheer falsity of which slander is shown in Romans 6, 8, and 12-16. Such has ever been one of Rome's main attacks on the Reformed faith: the preaching of *sola gratia* makes men careless and profane. Again and again, the Reformed creeds refer to this charge in order to repudiate it. Question 64 of the Heidelberg Catechism is an instance. Regarding the truth of justification by faith alone, the Catechism asks: "But doth not this doctrine make men careless and profane?" The answer: "By no means: for it is impossible that those, who are implanted into Christ by a true faith, should not bring forth fruits of thankfulness."

In a way, the label, "Antinomian — Hyper-Calvinist," tagged on the staunch Calvinist by Calvinism's open or secret enemies, is a badge of honor — much as the Calvinist repudiates the charge. So labelled (libelled, really!), he stands in good com-



pany, the company of all those who have even consistently and uncompromisingly stood for the sovereignty of God and salvation by pure grace.

We cannot ignore, in this connection, the allegation that a denial of human responsibility appeared in the theology of Herman Hoeksema. A.C. De Jong supposed that he saw this in a well-known and much-reported statement by Hoeksema: "I always say, beloved: Give me God, if I must make a choice. If I must make a choice to lose God or man, give me God. Let me lose man. It's all right to me: no danger there. Give me God! That's Reformed! And that's especially Protestant Reformed!"<sup>1</sup>

But this dramatic "here I stand" in no way represented a denial, or even a weakening, of the Biblical truth of man's responsibility. The statement occurred in an address given in June, 1953, in the heat of the battle of the Protestant Reformed Churches against the doctrine of a conditional covenant and a conditional promise. The doctrine with which Hoeksema was contending was not an affirmation of man's responsibility, not even a *strong* affirmation of man's responsibility, but a denial of sovereign grace. However, the denial of God's sovereignty was being introduced in the guise of a defense of man's responsibility. In that context and in the heat of that battle, when not only the Protestant Reformed Churches, but also the truth of sovereign grace were at stake, Hoeksema cried out, "Give me God, *if* I must make a choice. *If* I must make a choice to lose God or man, give me God." The man who does not recognize in this trumpet-blast the call to give glory to God in the face of another assault on that glory by man, and thrill to it, is to be pitied.

The sentence that immediately precedes — not quoted by De Jong — refers to "the Pelagian, the very superficial, the individualistic, the modernistic Pelagian, *that always emphasizes man rather than God*" (my emphasis — D.E.).<sup>2</sup> In contrast to the Pelagian, Hoeksema will emphasize God rather than man. In no way is the statement a denial of human responsibility. The entire address is exactly the presentation, in clear, strong terms, of the historic Reformed teaching of the full responsibility of both fallen and saved men — and is well worth reading on this account.

Fact is, Reformed theologians have made the very same point, in almost the very same language, down through the ages. Abraham Kuyper is an example. In the course of his defense of particular grace, he writes that "those who reject particular grace, on their part, give *man* his due, but only so that they may detract from that which is *God's* due . . . In order to maintain the moral attributes of man inviolate, they abandon part of the attributes of the Being of the living God.

Over against this, we would now allow ourselves this question: If you are not able to harmonize the activity of men and the activity of God in the work of salvation, and for this reason you suppose that you have to take away something either from man or from God, would it then not be more humble for man, more appropriate, and safer, rather to give himself up than in the slightest to detract anything from the inviolability of the Being and the attributes of God? And if this would appear advisable to you in general, does this not become a yet much stronger obligation, when there is mention no longer of man's inviolability, but of the activity of a *sinner*, i.e., of a human being, which is *no longer* sound and undamaged? This leads to the conclusion that if something must be abandoned, either from our side or from God's side, the man who fears God is always inclined rather to give up everything of himself than to take away even one thing from the full and inviolate Majesty of his God."<sup>3</sup>

This sounds familiar — "...the modernistic Pelagian always emphasizes man rather than God. I always say, beloved: Give me God, if I must make a choice. If I must make a choice to lose God or man, give me God . . . Give me God: there is no salvation in man!"

This is Reformed language. It is the language, as Kuyper says, of the man who fears God. To interpret this language, now, as a denial of man's responsibility is enough to make one who knows Abraham Kuyper and Herman Hoeksema, smile.

Nevertheless, a denial of man's responsibility has appeared, again and again, in the Calvinistic camp; antinomianism's dirty head has protruded, again and again, to strike at the heel of the gospel of grace. And hyper-Calvinism is antinomianism with reference to the preaching of the gospel, especially to the imperative of the gospel, and with reference to the duty of men so addressed.

(patience, gentle reader: the end is in sight — to be concluded)

<sup>1</sup>Quoted by A.C. De Jong, *The Well-Meant Gospel-Offer*, p. 81.

<sup>2</sup>*The Standard Bearer*, Vol. 29, "Man's Freedom and Responsibility," p. 415.

<sup>3</sup>*Uit Het Woord*, Vol. I (*Dat de genade particulier is*), pp. 326, 327.

## *The Mysteries of the Kingdom: An Exposition of the Parables*

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## ALL AROUND US

### Union Church--A First for RCA-CRC A New Exploration of the Doctrine of Election Sunday Labor Victory for a Christian School

Rev. G. Van Baren

The Banner of Oct. 8, 1976, reports on a "first" for the Christian Reformed Church and the Reformed Church in America. A church of each of these two denominations was located in Nardin Park in Detroit. When the Nardin Park Community Church (Christian Reformed) lost its building to an urban renewal project in that area, it made arrangements to unite with the Nardin Park Reformed Church, located a short distance away. The Reformed Church was "really too small to afford a pastor's salary." But these had the facilities. So these two churches united on April 4. The union was unique within these two denominations in that the church retains ties with both denominations. It is a "union" church. In the past, union churches arose when two denominations failed in their attempts to unite — while individual local churches wanted that union anyway. Union churches often also precede renewed or beginning attempts toward denominational unity. Such union churches exist in spite of denominational differences. The report does suggest that "many ecclesiastical questions will have to be answered." One does wonder, though, what such a union church confesses concerning lodge membership or what is its confession on necessity of Christian School education. It also seems very strange that such a union can take place without synodical approval — at least there is no indication in the report that such approval had been gained. One can well wonder to what such an attempt will ultimately lead for these two denominations.

#### A NEW EXPLORATION OF THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

Dr. Nicholas Wolterstorff, professor at Calvin College, gives advice in "A Letter to a Young Theologian" in the *Reformed Journal* of Sept. 1976. He suggests seven areas where a young theologian might work. Some of his suggestions are rather frightening — as he himself admits at one point. Following his suggestions would result in a system of doctrine bearing little or no resemblance to Reformed doctrine as

currently taught. One of his proposals suggests a re-examination of the doctrine of election. Of course, if churches deny the truth of reprobation, then necessarily the truth of election also must be re-evaluated. Wolterstorff writes:

I think the doctrine of election needs to be explored anew. (When didn't it?) As I see it, Reformed theologians have thought of election as God's making persons be and do something. God's producing conversion in a person, say. That conception of election accounts for vast stretches of Reformed thought. But in the Scriptures there is another — and I would guess by far the dominant — way of thinking of election. Election consists of God's *choosing* a person (or a people) to do or become something. It consists of God's *calling* a person (or a people) to do or become something. And to such a choice, such a call, there are many biblical examples of the called person's saying "No." I don't know where a doctrine of election thus conceived would go. But it seems to me to bear the promise both of being more faithful to the Scriptures than the concept of election as God's making someone do or be something, and of delivering us from a morass of traditional impasses.

One wonders what Wolterstorff would recommend doing with the Reformed creeds. One could be concerned also about the kind of theologians that will be arising within the church — if Wolterstorff's advice is followed.

#### SUNDAY LABOR

The following report is presented in the *Presbyterian Journal* of Sept. 22, 1976:

In a potentially significant variation upon a growing theme, a store employee who claims she was fired because she refused to work on Sundays has filed a suit in U.S. District Court here against the store that fired her.

Most such suits in recent years have been filed against firms demanding their employees work on Saturdays. And most such contests, when filed on religious grounds of conscience, have been won by the discharged employees.



Carolyn Dalrymple of Winston-Salem alleges that her employment with a K-Mart store in High Point, N.C. was terminated after the store began staying open on Sunday afternoons and she informed the management she would not be able to work on the grounds of religious convictions she held.

The suit, which seeks damages totalling \$32,250, was filed against the S.S. Kresge Co., as owners of K-Mart.

The plaintiff alleges that in March of last year the High Point City Council amended the city code to permit retail stores to open for business on Sundays. She says she and other employees were told they would have to work from 1 to 6 p.m. on Sundays.

She says that when she told store officials she could not work because of her religious beliefs, they told her there could be no exceptions and subsequently they fired her.

### VICTORY FOR A CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

Increasingly, it becomes difficult for parental Christian Schools to operate. In some states particularly, state regulations are so strict as to make continued operation difficult. A report of such an instance was printed in the *Christian Beacon* of Sept. 2, 1976. The report was a reprint from the Orlando *Sentinel Star*. This account spoke of a certain Rev. Levi Whisner and co-defendants in a court case for the Tabernacle Christian School vs. the State of Ohio. The report stated: "The State of Ohio marshalled its power not through a civil proceeding, but through criminal prosecution, in an effort to punish a handful of parents for a dreadful crime against the state. The parents had dared to send their children to an unchartered private school!"

The case began some three years ago. The school was small but modern. It had about 60 students. The education given the children was very adequate. But in addition, the "children were receiving something else also — a pervasive indoctrination in the Bible and in the simple, unsophisticated religious faith of their

parents." The report continued:

Brother Levi's flock created their own school in 1973 to meet their religious needs. The question of accreditation immediately arose. Without a state charter, the school could not continue; but in order to obtain a state charter, the school would have to meet "all" requirements of the state's Minimum Standards for Ohio Elementary Schools. The Rev. Wiz read these standards and balked. He thus got himself arrested on Criminal charges.

Justice Celebrezze (of the state supreme court) found the Minimum Standards "pervasive and all-encompassing." The regulations allocated instructional time "almost to the minute," with the result that no time could be set aside for religious instruction. The rules demanded that "all" school activities must conform "to policies adopted by the board of education." Under the Minimum Standards, the Christian Tabernacle School would be compelled to submit constant written evidence of its "cooperation and interaction" with the community.

Within this little school house, the state decreed, "organized group life of all typēs must act in accordance with established rules of social relationships and a system of social controls."

The supreme court of Ohio dismissed the case, supporting the contention of the school. In its decision, the court stated that the comprehensive Minimum Standards could result in "the absolute suffocation of independent thought and educational policy." The effect of the standards is "to obliterate the philosophy of the school and to impose that of the state."

So one can see how a state will seek to impose such restrictive standards upon a Christian School that it can not continue to function in harmony with its avowed purpose. In this case, the state lost — and the school won. But doubtlessly, these sorts of pressures will be placed against Christian education till finally such might not be permitted at all anymore. Let us be faithful, then, while we have the opportunity, to instruct our children in the fear of God's Name.

## FROM HOLY WRIT

# Exposition of the Epistle to the Galatians (1)

Rev. G. Lubbers

### EXPOSITION OF THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS (1)

Many excellent commentaries have been written on this great polemic of Paul to the churches in Galatia.

It is not our desire to excel these worthies in the breadth of their vision, the acuteness of their insights; rather it is our purpose to offer a simple exposition of this letter so that the readers of the *STANDARD*



*BEARER* may see the standard of faith and life for the Christian in the world held aloft, that the proper course of the Gospel may be pursued in our battle of faith.

Let it be well understood that Paul, in this letter, is waging a mighty polemic for the truth of the Gospel. He is not interested in his own person, his fleshy and worldly pride and self-exaltation, but he is interested in the well-being of the church of God. (Gal. 2:6) His sole concern is that the "truth of the Gospel may continue with you." When we now set ourselves to write on this exalted and instructive letter, our prayer is that this aim of Paul may also be ours, and that we with Paul may finally say, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith, henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness. . ." (II Tim. 4:7, 8) That is our guiding consideration in this study; less we may not seek and more we cannot desire.

We ask only one thing from all the readers, for myself and for all who contribute to our various rubrics: pray for us that we may have boldness to write and teach the Word of God as we ought to do. We live in days when each day a minister of the Gospel does well to read and heed the charge of Paul to Timothy: "I charge thee in the sight of God, and Christ Jesus, who shall judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and kingdom: preach the word; be urgent in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching, for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but having itching ears will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts. . ." (II Tim. 4:1-3) We must hold to the "pattern" of sound words.

One thing more. Sometimes the readers are kind enough to write a word of real genuine appreciation for what one writes. Your appraisal and criticism are welcome, as is, of course, any positive criticism. Paul says, "and the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets." (I Cor. 14:32)

Let us then now turn our attention to this letter of Paul to the Galatians. The issue at stake is the very heart of the Gospel. It was whether Christianity, faith in Christ crucified and risen, was sufficient or whether it must be supplemented by Judaism, that is, whether Jewish ceremonialism was to be added to the spiritual gospel of liberty as preached by Paul. The alternatives are either *God* or *man*!

#### PAUL'S APOSTOLIC SALUTATION TO THE GALATIAN CHURCHES (Gal. 1:1-5)

The question should be asked: who are these churches in Galatia? In the letter itself Paul speaks of these Galatians twice, here in this text and in Gal. 3:1. The name "Galatians" is of interest to the Bible

student. It is derived from the name "Galli" (Gaul) and "Celtic." According to historians, cited by both Lightfoot and Meyer in their respective Commentaries on Galatians, these peoples came about three centuries before Christ to these regions in Asia from the West, from France and Spain, as a mighty warlike people, which subdued the nations, and dwelt in the land. They were an independent people till they were conquered by the power of the Romans. Historians speak of these Galatians as being worshippers of idols and that they were a very fickle people. There are two views held by interpreters, as to which Galatians these were. Some hold that these were the churches in "Southern Galatia," the churches which Paul and Barnabas visited on Paul's first missionary journey. It would then refer to the churches in Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe, in which journey Paul was stoned and must have received some of his "marks of the Lord Jesus in his body." (Gal. 6:17) Others hold that these churches were in northern Galatia, which is really Galatia proper. The arguments for this presupposition one can read in Lightfoot and Meyer, in their Commentaries. There is an excellent article in the *I.S. Bible Encyclopaedia*, by George G. Findlay. Vol. I. If this view of the churches of the Galatians is correct, then these churches were the ones visited by Paul on his second Missionary journey, before he went into Macedonia in obedience to the man in the vision, who said, "Come over and help us." It is of interest to notice that Peter calls Galatia a province next to Pontus, Capadocia, Asia, and Bythynia. Most ancient interpreters believe that these churches were in Northern Galatia, the territory invaded and conquered by the Galli some centuries before.

It should be remembered that the question as to who these Galatians were becomes quite clear from this letter itself at various points in the argument and polemic of Paul. We will not take the time and effort at this time to show this, but we will do so from time to time as opportunity is given. For our purpose they are "churches" of Christ Jesus, who had been called by the Gospel into the freedom of grace. They are no longer heathen, but they have come to know God, yea, they are known of God. (Gal. 1:2; 4:9) They have not yet wholly fallen from grace; they are still called "brethren." That is the last word in this letter. (Gal. 6:18) But their position is, from the viewpoint of the error which is being preached in their midst, very dangerous and precarious. This is a matter of grave concern for the apostle. It is a "little leaven" which will leaven the whole lump. (Gal. 5:9) It is the principle of legalism, the weak and beggarly principles of the Old Testament laws and shadows. And that must be rooted out, root and branch. These brethren are in danger of falling away from the living God.



Paul's salutation is geared according to this either-or call of the hour. It is either the Gospel or it is law; it is works or it is grace. It cannot be both. Notice that Paul begins this letter with a veritable trumpet-sound. In this salutation we have virtually the entire positive message of the Gospel, as we trust will become evident presently. It is the truth of the Gospel in a nutshell. It reminds us of what Paul said in Antioch of Pisidia, "Be it known unto you, brethren, that through this man is proclaimed unto you remission of sins, and by him every one that believeth is justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses." (Acts 13:38, 39) Paul, even in this Salutation, is "set unto the defense (*apologian*) of the Gospel." (Phil. 1:17)

As the particulars of this "salutation" we notice the following:

1. That Paul enunciates very clearly and emphatically that he is an apostle of Christ. He does not say that he is *the* apostle above all other apostles. He is *an* apostle. He has all the qualifications and credentials necessary for being an apostle. He mentions here the chief and basic consideration. He is an apostle by means of (*dia*) Jesus Christ himself, and that, too, very personally without the intervention of men. He refutes most vigorously that his being an apostle is from (apo) men. Men as a class, in distinction from God, are meant. He has not an earthly calling but a heavenly. Nor has he been called to the apostleship through a man. God did not use a man to put him in office, as he did with Elisha through the prophet Elijah. (I Kings 19:16) The enemies of Paul are spreading the lie that Paul was not a real apostle, and that, therefore, his gospel was not that which Christ Himself had told him to preach. And now Paul as with a trumpet-blast insists that this salutation which he brings from God, he brings in the capacity and with the authority of a sent one from the throne of God and of Christ.

2. It should further be considered that the apostolic office was of supreme and pivotal importance in this entire apology for the Gospel of the Cross! The office of apostle is connected with the "foundation of our faith, of which Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone. We live in a day when this office of the apostles is misunderstood if not outright denied. The Bible teaches that God has appointed offices in the church, "first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers, then miracles." (I Cor. 12:28) The Bible tells us that Christ has given these offices as "gifts" for his church, as the One Who is exalted far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things. (Eph. 4:10) And these "gifts" are that "he gave some to be apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some shepherds and teachers." (Eph. 4:11) Thus we speak of the first rank office of the apostles,

which was given to the church. And this office we no longer have, except in the teaching of the apostles, as given to us in the canonical Scriptures. But Paul always writes as an "apostle," second to none. Every letter begins "Paul, an apostle. . .", except *Philemon* where he writes, "Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ. . ."

It is true that Paul did not follow Jesus in His earthly labors as a disciple, and that he is not called one of the apostles by Jesus while the latter was on earth. (Matt. 10:2) Yet, he has all the credentials, as we said earlier. (a) One must have seen the Lord Himself. Paul rises to the occasion in I Cor. 9:1, saying "Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?" (b) He had been an eye-witness of the risen and glorified Lord on the way to Damascus, where he had been called to be an apostle of Christ. And he speaks of the fact that he had been caught up into the third heaven, where he heard "unspeakable words." (I Cor. 12:1) He was not a wit behind the chiefest of the apostles. Let then the Galatians take notice of this letter!

To underscore the glory of his apostleship for the Galatians and for us, Paul emphasizes that the God and Father Who sent him to preach and teach is the very God and Father Who raised Christ Jesus from the dead. This brings his apostleship in the closest connection with the heart of the gospel. The Bible often says, "whom ye killed, God hath made him alive." (Act 2:24, 30, 32; 13:33, 34) This is the fulfilment of the promise made to the fathers, and realization of what we read in Psalm 2:7, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." (Cf. Heb. 1:5; 5:5) And that is here inserted in this greeting for great and weighty reasons, as we hope to see further in our exposition of this epistle. For Christ was delivered for our offences, and He was raised for our justification. (Rom. 4:25) This is the very heart-beat of the justification by grace through faith. In this gospel we experience the peace of saying, "Abba, Father." By this great God and His Christ, Paul was made an apostle, and in that deep consciousness of his calling he writes, as if in travail to have Christ formed in them. (Gal. 4:19)

~~~~~  
 I hear Him say — my soul admires the truth —  
 I hear Him say, with wisdom, love and grace,  
 "All power in heaven and earth is mine.  
 Mine to subdue the foes that dare insult my Church:  
 Mine to secure the kingdom God, my Father, gave:  
 Mine to impart eternal life to all He gave to me:  
 Mine to bestow the pardon sinners need:  
 Mine to impart the love, the life, the peace for which  
 they cry:  
 Mine to bestow the crown of righteousness laid up in  
 heaven."  
 ~~~~~



## GUEST ARTICLE

## A Life-Long Lesson

*Rev. Ronald J. Van Overloop*

Without a strong hand at the helm, a ship drifts and washes about in the sea, whether the sea is calm or rough. When there is this strong hand, the wind, though it be blowing almost directly against the ship, helps to push that ship forward.

Essentially, contentment is to be independent. It is an internal independence of external circumstances. Of course, it is not an independence in our relationship to God, for we must learn in all of our life that we are **DEPENDENT** upon God.

It is an independence from the circumstances of life. It is an independence in all the relationships of life: family, job, and the material things of this world. It is an independence from what we possess and from the things that happen to us. To learn contentment, we must learn to separate ourselves from the external circumstances of life.

It is not a physical independence. That is an impossibility, for it would mean forsaking one's family and calling. Rather, it is an internal independence. My mental state and the condition of my soul must be independent of the circumstances about me and not determined by those circumstances. It means that the circumstances of life do not *create* my feelings and mental stability or lack thereof. On the one hand it is obvious that I cannot control most of the things that happen to me. Most of them are beyond the scope of my control. On the other hand, circumstances can control me; but that I may not let happen. They affect me, but the effect should not be such that it throws me off balance.

Simply put: I, from the viewpoint of my mind, must be above the circumstances of life and not let them be above me. I am not able to escape their effect, but I am able to escape their control. I cannot control them, but I never may let them control me. In this sense I must be independent. That is the independence of contentment.

Then when the strong winds blow, the firm hand at the helm of my soul, directs my life and outlook on life forward.

In Philippians 4:11 the Holy Spirit through the

apostle Paul speaks of contentment. "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." Paul has learned to have enough, independently, without desiring aid from others. This is not the objective, but the subjective, state of need, i.e., the inward peace which arises from the fact that he knows he can be satisfied and happy, that he could rejoice always in the Lord, that he could be careful for nothing. Paul is personally conscious of a living power flowing through him and making him fit for anything. The fortress that has a deep well in the yard and plenty of provisions within, is the only one that can hold out.

There are three elements to contentment. First, it means that I know all is well. All is well no matter what the circumstances of my life may be. This is where the independency is necessary. Secondly, it means that with the will of my soul I do not want the circumstances of my life to be any different from what they are. And thirdly, it means that because of the first two elements, I have peace in my heart: total serenity and happiness.

Let us go over those three elements again.

First we must recognize God's hand in all things. It is only when we see that all things come from His hand that we can know that all is well. This is based on the fact that the sovereign God, Who is Lord over all, is for Jesus sake my Father. When anything comes to a child from his heavenly Father, it can only come as a blessing.

The second element, very simply put, is submission. We thank God for **ALL** things. This refers not only to what we like, but also to the unpleasant. Paul put it best. "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need" (Phil. 4:12).

The third element is to be glad and rejoice in all things. This is not just an attitude of bowing to circumstances, but an inner joy of heart. "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice" (Phil. 4:4). Always rejoicing, at all times and in whatsoever state I am.



To be able to fulfill all three of these elements is humanly impossible. We always find ourselves wanting to say, "All these things are against me." Could we be content with what the ravens brought Elijah every morning and evening during his stay at the brook Cherith? Would we be content with preparing each meal three times a day by scraping out the last of our flour and pouring out the last drops of our oil as the widow of Zarephath had to do for over a year?

Contentment must be a gift of grace. Therefore it is possible only for God's children. We alone can say with Paul, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13). If God be for us, nothing can be against us. He paid for all our sins. He merited life and grace and glory for us. Therefore we can be content. Neither prosperity nor sorrow is ever too overwhelming that we cannot be content, for we know it comes from God, we submit to Him and rejoice in Him. All things work together for our good.

Whatever happens to us comes to us out of a fountain of love — the cross of Christ. His love for us never wavers. It may be that sometimes we cannot see that it is a demonstration of His love, but even the hurt is a manifestation of His love. "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven" (Matthew 5:11, 12). "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations" (James 1:2). Our light affliction worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (II Cor. 4:17).

While both prosperity and sorrow can control and upset us, both also can minister to our growth. Sorrow will drive us and joy will draw us nearer to God.

If we are not tempted by abundance to plunge our desires into it, nor tempted by sorrow to think ourselves hopelessly harmed by it, both will knit us more closely to our time and changeless good: Jehovah.

We attain and acquire this contentment in the school of life. We stay in that school and never stop learning as long as we are upon this earth. The lesson is God's. The textbook is the Bible. The teacher is Christ. Sometimes the rod of discipline must be used by our loving Father.

Paul bore the scars of Christ all over his body. The devil kept pounding on that thorn in his flesh so that he asked of God that it be removed three times. When he pens his epistle to the Philippians, he is waiting in prison to die. Yet he writes about learning in God's school. Being persuaded that his and our affairs are governed by God's providence and good pleasure, Paul, and we with him, learn not to measure sufficiency by abundance, but by the will of God.

We are not always content. We are risen with Christ, but we yet have the old man and therefore it is still hard for us to be content. We have our ups and downs as far as our learning is concerned. And sometimes we wonder if we will ever learn.

But we have learned, principally. We do acknowledge God's fatherly hand. By His grace we submit to His will and can rejoice. Then we have happiness in sorrows.

Also we know that one day all this sorrow and pain will be past. We know that one day we will not be tempted by earthly prosperity and material possessions. That day will be when God's tabernacle will be with men.

## Reply to Correspondence

*Prof. H. Hanko*

I recently received a letter from a brother concerning one of my "letters to Timothy" which raises important enough issues to be answered in a special column of the *Standard Bearer*. The questions concern what I wrote in the September 1 issue of the *Standard Bearer* and which it is probably best to quote here:

But there is another matter which we must consider yet in connection with practical preaching. This has to do with the fact that it is entirely possible for the minister to address himself in his preaching to problems of life and conduct which are not directly connected with his sermon. Let me illustrate once again. In some church circles where there are dif-

ferent views of the covenant held than in our own it is customary for the minister to consider a large portion of his congregation as unconverted. This is not the place to enter into the doctrinal questions involved; but you know that in these circles it is customary for and expected of the minister that he end each sermon which he preaches with some kind of "toepassing" which confronts the unconverted with the need of conversion. Now, apart from the erroneous doctrine which is involved in this matter, you must understand, of course, that God's people must be constantly called to repentance and conversion. There is no dispute about this. But the fact of the matter is that when this kind of preaching comes from the pulpit, the minister tacks on his little call to



the unconverted no matter what text he may be preaching on.

In connection with these remarks, my correspondent asks a number of questions, some of which are of particular interest in this whole matter. The first question has to do with the matter of unconverted in the congregation. The brother writes:

There are two possibilities; a) either the whole congregation is converted or b) nobody is converted. Which of the two, a or b, is Rev. H's position?

In connection with this, he further writes:

If the unconverted are not to be addressed, how can you preach the holy gospel which is according to question 84, Lord's Day 31 an opening and closing?

This Lord's Day is then quoted in part, especially that section which reads: "that the wrath of God and eternal condemnation abides on them as long as they are not converted."

The correspondent also refers to a number of writers who did preach to the unconverted, among whom are listed Brakel, Smytegeld, Comrie, Lode-styn, and others. And the question is asked: Do they all err in the truth?

Finally, the writer asks whether these differences

are of such an extent that they have to be called an "erroneous doctrine" so that according to the Second epistle of John, verse 10, he that brings another doctrine is not to be received "into your house, neither bid him God speed." Or is it a difference that covers only non-essentials? But why then call it an erroneous doctrine?

In answer to these questions, the following remarks seem to be particularly important.

In the first place, it ought not to escape the readers' notice that I was writing about misplaced applications of sermons. The example to which the correspondent refers is only one example. In a further paragraph I cited an additional example and pointed out that the error is not only one of inappropriateness but also that one who misapplies a text does not let the Word of God speak. The reader can consult that article if he wishes. I would not want this main point to be obscured.

In the second place, there is no question about it that the preaching of the gospel must certainly include a warning to those who are unconverted that they stand exposed to the wrath of God and eternal condemnation. This is what Lord's Day XXXI asserts as part of the preaching, and this is the way in which the kingdom of heaven is opened and shut by the preaching of the holy gospel. At the same time it is also true that neither of the options which the correspondent leaves for me (either the whole congregation is converted or nobody is converted) is agreeable to me or is the truth of Scripture.

What is the actual situation? In a certain sense of the word it is true that every single person in the congregation is in need of conversion, if by conversion is meant what the Heidelberg Catechism calls conversion in Lord's Day XXXIII: "Of how many parts doth the true conversion of man consist? Of two parts; of the mortification of the old, and the quickening of the new man." All God's people and every member of the congregation are in need of this conversion. And this is not only true once in their lifetime, or even frequently in their lifetime; this is true every single day of our life. We need always to kill the old man of sin and quicken the new man born by the power of regeneration. And the preaching must always see to it that the people of God are brought face to face with this calling. There must always be in our lives a sincere sorrow of heart that we have provoked God by our sins; we must always hate and flee from them; we must always with love and delight live according to the will of God in all good works.

But the congregation addressed by the minister on the Lord's Day is not made up of unconverted people in the sense of "narrow conversion." It is also possible to speak of conversion in this narrow sense as referring to that first work of God in the heart of the elect sinner whereby he is delivered from his depravity and death and translated into the kingdom of life. In this sense, conversion is identical to regeneration as the first implanting of the life of Jesus Christ.

The congregation is the congregation of God's people. It is the Church of God. When the apostles addressed their letters to the individual congregations, they did not hesitate to address these congregations as "saints"; "beloved of God"; "sanctified in Christ Jesus"; "faithful brethren in Christ"; "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ"; "them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ." The congregation is composed of elect, called, sanctified, and converted people of God. It must be addressed as such.

Does this mean that all in the congregation head for head are indeed elect? Of course not. Paul himself makes very clear in Romans 9 that not all those who are of Israel are really Israel. This was true not only in the Old Dispensation; it is true throughout the history of the Church of Christ. But here we have an important point, a point which is, in my opinion, so important that without understanding it one does not really understand the truth of Scripture in this respect. Scripture looks at the Church as an organic whole. And it looks at every congregation from the organic viewpoint. And every minister must do the



same. The example has often been used, and I can think of no better, of a wheat field. That wheat field is indeed a wheat field. It is called by that name. It is worked by the farmer with that in mind. It is tended and cared for, watched and examined as a wheat field. It is harvested finally as a wheat field. Does this mean that every single plant in that field is a wheat plant? By no means. Everyone, and especially the farmer who owns the field, knows that there are many weeds in that field. It is even possible that there is a majority of weeds in that field. But that does not alter the fact that that field is a *wheat* field and not a *weed* field. It is precisely this point which Jesus is making in the parable of the tares in the field. They do and must remain there until the harvest. The Church has, in her earthly manifestation, reprobate seed in her midst. It is always that way and cannot be any different. But it is, organically considered, the Church of Christ and must be called by that name, must be treated as such, and must be addressed as such by the minister on the Lord's Day.

In the third place, this stands closely connected with the doctrine of the covenant. The covenant is also to be considered organically. The very essence of the covenant is that bond of friendship which God establishes with His people through Jesus Christ. That covenant, according to God's own Word, is established in the line of continued generations. Children as well as adults are comprehended in the covenant of grace. Hence, the Church of Christ is composed of believers and their seed.

Nor does this mean that every child of believing parents is truly incorporated into that covenant. There are always Esaus in the covenant. But nevertheless, Scripture is clear on the point that the gracious covenant of God includes both believers and

their seed. I compared this in one of my articles to a river flowing in a riverbed. There are new generations entering that "river" constantly; there is a certain amount of water splashed out of that river. But the whole river is God's covenant in the line of generations.

If the covenant is considered as an agreement between two parties, or if the covenant is divided into an internal and an external covenant in such a way that children born of believers are first of all in the covenant only externally, and are in the covenant internally only at such a time as they accept the provisions of the covenant by faith, then a situation is present in the Church where children of the covenant must be considered as "unconverted" in the absolute sense of the word. They are not yet regenerated; they are not yet converted; they are not yet, in the true sense, members of the covenant. But this is wrong and leads to an Arminian conception of the covenant.

If the writers to whom my correspondent refers held to this view (and some of those with whom I am acquainted did) then they were wrong.

Finally, I do indeed consider this an erroneous doctrine. I do not consider these matters "non-essentials." But this does not mean that I apply to those who hold to this position the words of II John 10. That is a different matter. The apostle is talking in that passage about those who deny the truth that Jesus Christ is come into the flesh (See vs. 7). These people we must not let into our homes nor bid them God speed. For the rest, I would not only welcome those who have a different covenant conception into my home, but I would also find a particular joy in discussing with them these precious truths of the Word of God.

## *SIGNS OF THE TIMES*

# The Signs of Christ's Coming

*Rev. H. Veldman*

The signs of Christ's coming, also known as the precursory signs, are defined by the late Rev. H. Hoeksema in his *Reformed Dogmatics* as relating to all the events in the realm of nature as well as in the history of the nations and in the church which more or less clearly indicate that Jesus is coming and that the end of all things is near and approaching quickly.

Scripture distinguishes between a two-fold coming of the Lord, two aspects of His coming, and these two aspects are related as the way to the end. Of course, we must not conceive of these "two" comings of the Lord in the dispensational or premillenarian sense of the word. The dispensationalists speak of two separate comings of the Lord, and these comings are



separated approximately by a period of seven years. These two comings are called the Rapture, occurring at the beginning of the seven years, and the second coming of the Lord is called the Revelation, occurring at the end of these seven years. The Rapture occurs at the end of the dispensation of the church. It will be a secret coming of the Lord. At that time the faithful will be translated, as was Enoch, and together with the saints which will be raised from the dead they will be taken up to be with the Lord in the air where the marriage supper of the Lamb is supposed to take place. This event can occur at any moment. The church is then taken out of the world. This also occurs before the great tribulation, so that they who participate in this great blessing escape this great tribulation. During this period of seven years God will again begin to deal with Israel. His Old Testament people, who will be restored to their own land. It is in this period that Antichrist shall be revealed, a tribulation will occur of unprecedented severity, and Israel is converted and embraces the Christ. This period of seven years is followed by the second coming of the Lord known as the Revelation. In this second coming the Lord is accompanied by His saints, and will execute judgment upon the earth. Antichrist is destroyed; the beast and the false prophet are taken; Gog and Magog and their allies are smitten; Satan is bound; and the millenium and the glorious reign of Christ upon earth for a thousand years is ushered in. This theory we cannot accept because we believe it to be contrary to the teachings of the Word of God.

The so-called first coming of the Lord, known as the Rapture, is based chiefly upon 1 Thess. 4:17, which is supposed to speak of the first resurrection, that is, the resurrection of the saints in distinction from the resurrection of the wicked at the end of the period of the millenium. However, this interpretation of the passage in 1 Thess. 4 cannot stand. Let us have the entire passage before us. We read in 1 Thess. 4:14-18: "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." It is obvious from this passage that these people of God at Thessalonica had a problem. They undoubtedly believed that Jesus was coming soon, probably in their day. But they were concerned about those believers who fell asleep in Jesus. Would these children of the Lord who died before the Lord's

coming not participate in the Lord's coming? Would this privilege be denied them? It is now to this problem or concern of these believers that the apostle addresses himself.

Notice, now, the reasoning of the apostle. In the first place, the apostle declares that they who are alive at Christ's coming will not prevent, that is, go before those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. Fact is, writes the apostle, when Christ comes the dead in Christ shall rise first, and then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. It is obvious that the distinction in this passage is not between the dead in Christ and the dead outside of Christ, but between the dead in Christ and the then living in Christ. Hence, they who shall be living at the time of Christ's return will not have any advantage above those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. Indeed, there shall not be two groups of resurrected people, one at the rapture, the resurrection of the righteous, and one at the end of the millennium, the resurrection of the wicked. The Word of God teaches us that there will be only one resurrection of the dead. This is clearly set forth in John 5:28, 29: "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the grave shall hear His voice. And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." Besides, the passage in 1 Thess. 4 does not teach us that these faithful will be with Jesus for only seven years. On the contrary, we read that they will be with the Lord forever. And finally, the dispensationalists speak of this first coming of the Lord, the Rapture, as a secret event. The apostle, however, informs us in this passage that the Lord shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God. So, this will not be a secret coming of the Lord; it will be very public. We would make one more observation. We consider this view of the dispensationalists to be very dangerous. They consider the Rapture to be such a blessed event because the faithful will escape the great tribulation. This, however, is surely not the teaching of Holy Writ. The Word of God does not promise the people of God that they will escape tribulation. The Scriptures always teach us that in the world we shall have tribulation, and they assure us that we will be saved, not from tribulation but through tribulation. What an eye-opener it will be for the people of God who expected to be delivered from tribulation and sorrow and then find themselves in the fire of affliction, the like of which had never been experienced before by the church of the living God!

We have already remarked that Scripture distinguishes between a two-fold coming of the Lord: the coming of our Lord throughout the ages and His



final appearance upon the clouds of heaven. In addition to this, however, the Word of God also speaks of a coming of the Lord upon the day of Pentecost in the pouring out of the Holy Spirit. We read in John 14:18-20: "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth Me no more; but ye see Me: because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you." That this outpouring of the Holy Spirit is actually a return of the Lord to His church is evident from the fact that the apostle Peter explains in his sermon of Acts 2 the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the light of the passage from Joel as the day of the Lord. Besides this, we can also speak of the Lord's coming as occurring for each child of God at the moment of his death. This is surely implied in the Saviour's words to His disciples as recorded in John 14:1-3.

In this rubric we are, of course, primarily interested in the coming of the Lord as it occurs throughout the ages. The Word of God surely speaks of this coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. To this coming the Saviour refers in Matt. 26:64: "Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter (or: henceforth, from now on) ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." Notice, please: henceforth, from now on. This includes the cross, inasmuch as Jesus surely comes in the way of the cross. But this is a coming from now on, throughout the New Dispensation. And we also read in Rev. 22:12: "And, behold, I come (am coming) quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be." More passages need not be quoted in support of this coming of the Lord as occurring throughout the ages. This is surely also the chief thought in the Book of Revelation.

We understand, of course, that the coming of the Lord throughout the ages and His final appearance upon the clouds of heaven are really one coming. When Jesus declares to Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin (Matt. 26:64) that from henceforth they would see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, He certainly refers to His coming as culminating in that final day. That this coming throughout the ages and as culminating in the clouds of heaven are one is, first of all, because Jesus is actually coming throughout the ages. Whatever must occur occurs through Him. And, secondly, they are one coming because all these events in the realm of nature and in the history of the world and of the church lead to that final coming;

without the former the latter would be impossible.

The Word of God calls our attention to many precursory signs. These signs are as follows: the preaching of the gospel to all nations; Wars and rumours of wars; Social conflict and revolution; Death, famines, pestilences and earthquakes; Apostasy from the faith; The development and final consummation of Antichrist; Great tribulation, also throughout the whole new dispensation, but especially at the end of the ages; Signs in the heavens; The sign of the Son of man.

As far as these signs are concerned, they are primarily signs of judgment. This is also true of the preaching of the gospel which, although the means whereby the Lord gathers His church, is surely a sign of judgment as far as the world is concerned. That these precursory signs are principally signs of judgment need not surprise us. The coming of our Lord Jesus Christ cannot be anything else than catastrophe and judgment for the wicked world. His coming can never be a coming of grace and mercy for them. Christ's coming and the judgment of the world are inseparable. We need, therefore, not be surprised that wars and rumors of wars, death and famines and pestilences and earthquakes, social conflict and revolutions accompany this coming of the Lord. Thus it will be at the end of the ages. Thus it is also throughout the ages. And even as He gathers His church throughout the ages, calling His own out of darkness into His marvellous light, so He is also ever preparing the wicked, God's eternally predestinated vessels of wrath, for their day of wrath at the final coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

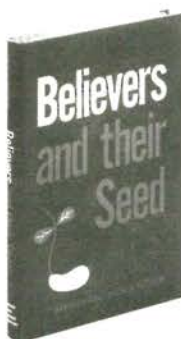
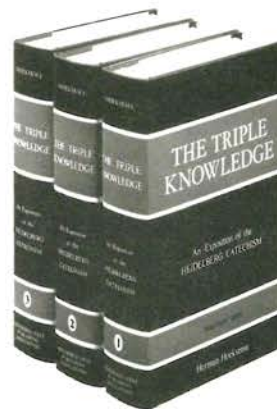
The purpose of this rubric, we understand, is not simply to treat these several precursory signs of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is, however, the purpose of this department to look at these signs of Christ's coming as occurring in the world around us. It was in this vein that Rev. Van Baren ably acquitted himself of this task while writing in this department. We expect to continue in this vein. One of these precursory signs, so common in our present day and age, is held before us in Matt. 24:12: "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." Of course, these precursory signs are always being fulfilled. Do we see them? Do we have the grace, as we see them, to view them as the signs of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ? The Lord willing, in our following article we plan to call attention to this passage of Matt. 24:12. It is the sign of Christ's coming known as the Great Apostasy.

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# BOOK REVIEW

*PIONEER PREACHER*, by Gordon J. Spykman; Heritage Hall Publications, Calvin College and Seminary Library, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506; Paperback, no price listed. (Reviewed by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema)

This little book is about the Rev. A. C. Van Raalte, the leader of the Dutch colonists at Holland, Michigan. Specifically, it is about Van Raalte as a preacher. There are several chapters of background and evaluation by Dr. Spykman; and these are followed by a lengthy appendix containing samples of Van Raalte's sermon notes. Almost all of the latter were in the Dutch language, of course; but they appear in translation in this book.

To those who have an interest in church history, specifically the history of the Dutch Reformed movement in this country, and more specifically the history of the Christian Reformed Church, this book will prove interesting. It is no great contribution in the area of church history, even as Van Raalte, though an influential leader in the establishment of the Holland Colony, was never a great light in the Reformed firmament. But the book furnishes an insight into Van Raalte as preacher, and by the same token it furnishes an insight into the history of the Holland Colony, of the Christian Reformed Church, and into the life and times of the colonists who were in part our spiritual ancestors. While this is no earth-shaking publication, therefore, it is nevertheless an interesting little book.

Judging from the samples of sermon notes, Van Raalte was "no great shakes" as a homiletician, exegete, or preacher.

One negative comment: the book is marred by several obvious spelling errors, something which careful editing should avoid.

## IN MEMORIAM

The Ladies Society, Ruth, of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church of Walker, Michigan mourns the loss of one of its members, MRS. GRACE NOBEL whom the Lord took from our midst on October 10, 1976. We are comforted with the words of the apostle, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." (Phil. 1:21).

Rev. R. Van Overloop, Pres.  
Mrs. H. Velthouse, Sec'y.

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<i>by Gertrude Hoeksema</i> (Instruction concerning the nurture of covenant youth)	
<b>Reformed Dogmatics</b>	<b>\$9.95</b>
<i>by Herman Hoeksema</i> (A systematic study of theology)	
<b>Therefore Have I Spoken</b>	<b>\$5.95</b>
<i>by Gertrude Hoeksema</i> (A biography of Herman Hoeksema)	
<b>Triple Knowledge</b> (3 vol.)	<b>\$24.95</b>
<i>by Herman Hoeksema</i> (An exposition of the Heidelberg Catechism)	
<b>"Whosoever Will"</b> (paper)	<b>\$1.95</b>
<i>by Herman Hoeksema</i>	



## News From Our Churches

The consistory of our church in Lynden, Washington made a trio consisting of Revs. Wayne Bekkering, Dale Kuiper, and Gise Van Baren. The Lynden congregation elected to extend a call to Rev. Kuiper. Lynden's present pastor was expected to arrive in Kalamazoo, Michigan to take up his labors in his new charge early in November. The tentative date for Rev. Woudenberg's installation in Kalamazoo is November 11. Rev. Ronald Van Overloop has declined the call he received from Hull, Iowa.

The First Church bulletin carried the following announcement on October 24: "We welcome to our pulpit today Seminarian Wilbur Bruinsma and Prof. H. Hanko. The consistory approved a request of the Theological School Committee to allow the professors and/or students to be given opportunities to preach in our church once every eight weeks. The other churches in this area agreed to similar requests. This gives the professors opportunities to preach occasionally, something that they believe they need to continue to do; and it gives to our students the necessary opportunities to gain experience in the pulpit." Since the closest vacant church in our denomination is about 800 miles from our Seminary in Grand Rapids it is not too practical to send our seminarians to these churches each Sunday. If the recent movement of our ministers from one charge to another continues, that situation could change.

This new Theological School Committee plan would seem to be a good one for several reasons: it provides needed experience in preaching for the students; it exposes the students to our congregations — so that both might be strengthened and encouraged; and it provides our ministers the rather rare experience of sitting in the pew rather than standing behind the pulpit — an experience which should be of benefit to them also.

Our seminarians have been active in other ways in the churches beside 'giving a word of edification.' They have been teaching catechism classes in the Grand Rapids area churches and addressing various gatherings. Seminarian Richard Flikkema accepted the request of the Southeast Church Sr. Mr. & Mrs. Society to serve as their Bible study leader.

With the coming of the Fall season, most of our church bulletins no longer carry the 'filler' material needed to 'flesh out' the bulletin during the summer as there are so many meetings, lectures, outings, gatherings and the like to call attention to. Among the scheduled events this fall were the following: The combined Mass Meeting of the Leagues of Ladies' and Men's Societies was held on October 13 in First Church. Rev. G. Van Baren spoke on the topic, "Do We Really Appreciate Being Protestant Reformed?" The Mr. & Mrs. Societies' Fall League Meeting was held in Southwest Church on October 19. Prof. H. Hanko spoke on "The Work of Angels", a topic which we too often view as being very mysterious, but a topic on which the Bible does have much to say if only we take the time to seek it out. The Ladies Circle in our Loveland, Colorado church appears to be a very active group. They scheduled a 'Tasting Bee' on October 20. What was to be tasted was not explained, so I guess you had to be in Loveland to discover whether it was pastry, cheese, wine, or what have you. The same group is already planning their Annual Ladies Circle Bazaar to be held on December 3 for the benefit of the Loveland Church and Christian School. Loveland has also begun a Choral Society. Another (apparently there were more) church picnic was scheduled in Houston on September 25. Rev. Harbach noted in the announcement that this date was the Jewish New Year, but did not state that the picnic was in honor of this holiday.

The event that all of us in the Michigan area look forward to each year toward the end of October is our Reformation Day Lecture. This year the lecture was scheduled on October 29 in First Church. Rev. Meindert Joostens' topic is, "The Priesthood of All Believers."

A quiet thought from Spurgeon in the Houston bulletin, "The doctrinal soon affects the practical. I know many . . . living in different parts of this country to whom the Sabbath is very little of a day of rest, for they hear no truth in which rest is to be found, but they are worried and wearied with novelties which neither glorify God nor benefit the souls of men."

K.G.V.