

# The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

...If he (the minister) is to continue to bring the Word of God, he must constantly study beyond what is immediately necessary to produce a sermon. He must read and read and read. He must fill his soul with all that he can of what the Church of Christ has confessed to be the truth....And that requires hours and hours in his study. It is essential.... The well of his soul will soon run dry if it is not weekly replenished with the study of the Word of God in all of its broad context of the faith once for all delivered to the saints.

See "My Sheep Hear My Voice" — page 223

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## THE STANDARD BEARER

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## MEDITATION

## Moses' Forsaking of Egypt

Rev. H. Veldman

*"By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing Him Who is invisible."*

Choose we must. We must always choose between Christ and Satan, between the service of the Lord and that of the devil, between Egypt and the people of God, between the things above and the things below. And this choice is inevitable. No compromise is possible. It is either God or Mammon, Christ or Belial, the church or the world.

And to choose for God and Christ is possible only by faith.

Moreover, once we make the choice we must act. Our conscious choosing and definite action are always inseparable. Faith in Christ and a spiritual walk are inseparably connected. Indeed, to express



a preference for God and His cause and then to seek the things below is surely dishonest. How true this is of Moses! That faith and action are inseparably connected will also become plain as we dwell a few moments upon the incident in this particular word of God. Fact is, this is the thrust of this passage.

### THE INCIDENT

To which incident does this text refer? Moses left Egypt twice: he left Egypt when he fled to Midian, and he again left Egypt at the Exodus. Which incident is meant here? The commentators are not in agreement; there is much to be said in favor of both explanations.

We do not accept the explanation which refers this incident to the Exodus. It is true that weighty arguments can be brought forth in support of this view. Literally we read, not that he forsook Egypt, but that he left, departed out of Egypt. This would refer to the Exodus, would it not? When Moses went to Midian he did not simply leave Egypt, but he fled out of it. Besides, and this is by far the weightier argument, we read here: "not fearing the wrath of the king." When he fled to Midian he was driven by fear—see Ex. 2:14-15. But here we read he forsook Egypt, "not fearing the wrath of the king." So, this text cannot refer to his flight to Midian; it must refer to the incident known as the Exodus. However, we do not consider these arguments as weighty as those which can be marshalled in support of the view that the incident refers to his flight to Midian.

We accept the explanation which refers this incident to his flight to Midian. First, the text is personal. We read, not that he, Moses, led Israel out of Egypt, but that he forsook Egypt. Secondly, we read, "not fearing the wrath of the king." It is true that this expression is quoted in support of the view that the text refers to the Exodus. But we will use this expression to show that the Exodus is not meant here. There was no reason for Moses to fear the wrath of the king at the time of the Exodus. Had not the king commanded Moses and the children of Israel to depart out of Egypt? Why, then, should we read that he forsook Egypt as not fearing the wrath of the king? He feared the wrath of the king when he fled to Midian. This expression does make sense, however, when the incident refers to Moses' flight to Midian. Thirdly, and this, we believe, is potent: there is the chronological argument. Notice, if you will, the chronological order of events in the life of Moses in the verses 23-29. All these events follow in chronological order. How strange it would be if verse 27 would refer to the Exodus, whereas verse 28 speaks of the keeping of the passover and verse 29 refers to the passage through the Red Sea. Our

text, therefore, chronologically, must refer to the time when Moses fled out of Egypt to Midian.

We know the incident. Moses, when forty years old, went to see his people. He witnessed the smiting of a Hebrew by an Egyptian, and he slew the Egyptian and hid the body in the sand. The next day he again went out to visit his people and this time two of his fellow Israelites were quarreling; he intervened; and then he learned that his killing of the Egyptian which he thought to be a secret was known, and that it would be known also to the king. This led Moses to flee to Midian. In the historical account in Exodus 2 we read that Moses feared. There we certainly receive the impression that he fled because he was afraid of the king. But in our text we read that he was moved by faith, not fearing the wrath of the king. On the one hand, we read that fear prompted his flight. On the other hand, in this text, we are told that faith prompted his flight. The question is: which is correct? We should not really, of course, express ourselves this way. Fact is, both are correct. The only question before us is: how can these expressions, in Exodus 2 and in the words of this text, be harmonized?

### ITS SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE

Let us use an illustration. Let us picture to ourselves a child of God who, in prison for Jesus' sake, will be executed the following morning and suffer the most excruciating agonies. He is afraid of his coming torture. Of course! And yet, he fears not the wrath of his enemies but trusts in the Lord his God and is ready to suffer and die for Him. To this we may add one thing. He is given an opportunity to escape. He flees for his life. On the one hand, he flees because he fears his death at the stake. On the other hand, however, we may also say that he believed and feared not because he was faithful to his Lord, even unto the end, never renouncing his faith in his Master.

This surely applies to Moses. From a natural point of view, he was certainly afraid. He feared for his life, fled to Midian for self-preservation. Nevertheless, from a spiritual point of view, he feared not. In the first place, it was exactly because of his faith that he was now involved in his present difficulty. It was because of his faith that he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, and also that he went out to visit his brethren, and which moved him to kill the Egyptian who was smiting his fellow Israelite. Secondly, had he not believed he surely could have pursued a different course. It was not necessary for him to flee to Midian to save his life. He could have gone to Pharaoh, told him he was sorry for what he had done, also that he wanted to be his daughter's son and that he would renounce all allegiance to Israel. Moses, however,



persevered in his faith even until the end. He does not return to the palace of this king. He does not seek the favor of the king or of his daughter. He continues in the course he has chosen. Now, although he flees for his life because, naturally, he is afraid, yet he never for one moment considers to renounce his faith.

That Moses acted as he did by faith, as the evidence of things unseen and the substance of things hoped for, becomes all the more evident if we notice the circumstances under which it occurred. How high and strong was his faith as he went to visit his brethren! He had chosen for the cause of God and of His people, Israel. He had been instructed by his parents in all the knowledge of Jehovah and also in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. And he had surely weighed all the arguments, pro and con, for and against. And having made his definite choice for the people of God, he must have stood high and strong in his faith. How wonderful Israel must have seemed to him; how vain and worthless all the glories and treasures of Egypt! He must have felt that he stood at the pinnacle, was able to conquer every foe. That this is true of Moses is evident from his visit to his brethren. Notice what we read in Acts 7:25. He actually went because he would deliver his people! He felt himself capable of delivering them. This explains his slaying of the Egyptian! But Israel rejected him. They asked him who had made him a leader and prince over them. And they told him his killing of the Egyptian the day before was known. What a letdown. On the one hand, he had found two Israelites fighting each other. He had chosen for the afflictions of Israel to be one with the people of God. And now he discovers that this people are not even united among themselves. And, on the other hand, they even threaten to expose him. This is surely the implication of what they tell him, that his deed is known.

Let us apply this to ourselves. How high and lofty can be our state of mind when we definitely reveal our choice for God and for His Christ and cause. Then we know that our sins are forgiven us and we feel that we are strong, so strong that we can conquer every foe. Then there is no cloud in the sky. But then comes the letdown. We did not realize how weak we really are and how strong the enemy is and how powerful the temptations and enticements of the world can be. Our conception of sin within us and all around us was rather immature; the struggles and disappointments of life unknown to us. And then we tumble off our high perch and we fall into the depths, and things happen to us we never thought possible. How disappointed Moses was when he visited his brethren!

Now we understand all the more that Moses forsook Egypt by faith. O, there was also another way

open to him and it must have tempted him. He could have returned to Pharaoh's house, as we have already said, and expressed his sorrow. Or, he could have turned his back upon his people, and said, perhaps to them, and surely to himself: what's the use! How disappointed he must have been in them; why should he cast his lot in with them? But Moses left Egypt by faith. It is now that his faith reaches its pinnacle. Until now he had believed, to be sure. But he had relied upon his people, that they would support him, that he and they together would carry on in this cause of the Lord. And they fail him. Now he stands alone. But does he succumb? No, he now trusts in God, in God alone, as seeing the Invisible. Alone he must carry on. Alone? Yes, except with his God.

Does not the same truth apply to us? We will also experience life's bitter disappointments. Possibly we trusted in ourselves, in our own strength. The disappointments will be many. But the result of it all will be that we learn that God alone is our strength. His grace alone will become ever more sufficient. And this is the purpose of it all.

### ITS POSSIBILITY

We read: "for he endured, as seeing Him Who is invisible." O, this does not simply mean that we know that there is a God. The devils also believe this and they shudder. God is invisible. He cannot be seen. No man can see Him and live. What we see of God is God revealed, His face. And God's face, to us, is our Lord Jesus Christ. Hence, to see Him Who is invisible means that we see Him in Christ, as the God of our salvation.

This renders our believing and forsaking of Egypt possible. Moses might have thought, when Israel disowned him and he stood alone, that he was now really destitute, had lost everything. He had endured, as seeing the invisible God of his salvation; and he came to the wondrous discovery that, really, he had lost nothing. His trust was now solely upon his God. So, God being for him, all things were for him.

How wonderfully this applies to us! O, when we plunge into the depths, we may think: this is the end; what is the use? I cannot go on; it is all to no avail. And then we see God. Trusting in His precepts, forsaking the glories and honours of this world (only then can we see God), we see God. God says to us: you cannot go on, and you think it is no use? That is just fine. Look upon Me. What is humanly impossible, what you cannot do, you need not do. Just believe in Me, and you shall be saved.

This we all must learn.

This we will learn.

And the God of our salvation will surely care for us.



## EDITORIALS

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

# Inflation Strikes Our Magazine!

Of late almost every religious periodical I have read has been complaining about the whopping increase in mailing costs which was imposed by the Postal Service. And I figured that it was only a matter of time before our Board would also have to face the reality of such an inflationary increase.

Well, it has happened.

Our Business Manager telephoned me the other day with the bad news. He informed me that the last issue to be mailed under the old rates cost \$73 to mail, while the first issue to be mailed under the new postal rates cost \$105 to mail. That is an increase of \$32, or almost 44%. Multiply that \$32 by 21 issues, and the result is a total annual increase of \$672 in our mailing costs alone.

But that is not all of the bad news. The Board of the R.F.P.A. was also informed that our printing costs went up by 11% as of the first of January. However, while one might place a half dozen question-marks behind the inflated rates of our none-too-efficient postal service—in vain, of course—the increase in our printing costs from Wobbema Printing is not unjustifiable.

Nevertheless, facts are facts. And our Board has had to face these facts.

The inevitable conclusion to which the Board

came was that the subscription price of our *Standard Bearer* must be increased from the old rate of \$9.00 per year to \$10.50 per year. This new price of \$10.50 goes into effect as of March 1.

Naturally, the Board hopes—and I as editor also hope—that this increase in price will not result in a loss of subscribers and readers. Even at the price of \$10.50 per year the *Standard Bearer* is still a bargain. Compared with most other magazines—and I am speaking now only of numbers of issues and size, not of quality of content—the *Standard Bearer* is nearly at the bottom of the list as far as price is concerned. Besides, as I intimated, *all* magazines have been saddled with the increase in postal costs. Small comfort, perhaps you say; I still have to pay the \$10.50. True, but it does help to put matters in proper perspective.

Meanwhile, may I also urge both individuals and churches to continue and to increase, if possible, their generous free-will gifts to the *Standard Bearer*. Over the years these gifts, I think, have pretty well kept pace with the inflationary spiral; and we hope this continues. For without these gifts, it is safe to say, the *Standard Bearer* could not continue to be published—at least, not without more than doubling the subscription rate. Hence, please continue to help!

# The GKN on the Authority of Scripture

After a lapse of several issues, in which we had to pay attention to other matters, we now return to our systematic review and critique of the Report/Decision of the Gereformeerde Kerken on the nature of the authority of Scripture, a report appearing in translation under the title, "God With Us." I consider that title, by the way, beautiful though it is in itself, as a rather ironic title for such a miserably Scripture-denying report.

And while I am on the subject of the Report/Decision in general, let me add some remarks of a general character. In the first place, my general evaluation of the Report/Decision is that it is ab-

struse and vague, very difficult to understand in many parts. This very thing has made me hesitate even to discuss it in our *Standard Bearer*. I have tried to explain as simply as possible some of the positions taken by the Report. But there are many passages of the Report that I myself have difficulty in understanding. Perhaps it is because I am not sufficiently learned; and I suppose some would praise the Report for its high learning. But for my part, I do not consider this aspect of the Report a plus. The truth is simple, able to be understood and apprehended by any child of God. And to me, the very abstruseness and vagueness of the Report/De-



cision should constitute a warning against its acceptance. In close connection with this, in the second place, I find it difficult to understand why the Report/Decision was published and spread abroad in the GKN. Maybe the intent was to dazzle people by its brilliant learning. But I assure you that a report of this kind is certainly of no help to the general membership of the church in enabling them to understand the doctrine of Holy Scripture. When one compares this lengthy and complicated report with the simple and clear statements of Scripture itself and with the clear articles of our Belgic Confession, he is spontaneously inclined, I think, to be suspicious of the Report/Decision and to ask why it takes so many words and such complicated explanations to express the truth concerning Scripture's authority. Or was the very intent to befuddle the general membership of the churches and to induce them to leave these matters to the learned theologians?

By way of review, let me remind you that we are busy with Chapter IV of the Report, entitled "The Nature of Biblical Authority." There are several sections in this chapter. And we have already looked ahead, in part, to Section 3 and given some concrete illustrations of the way in which the Report denies the historical reliability, or trustworthiness, of the Bible. But Section 2 constitutes the basic section of this chapter. It deals with "The Ground of the Bible's Authority." We have discussed previously the segment entitled "God's Word in Human Language." The last segment of this section is entitled "The power of the Spirit," and it supposedly deals with the subject of the testimony of the Holy Spirit concerning Scripture. In the Report this section is summarized as follows:

Yet the authority of the Holy Scripture does not rest solely on the recognition of inspiration. We would never come to the recognition that the true, authoritative Word of God comes to us in the Bible if we did not surrender ourselves to the Spirit of truth Who opens our understanding and heart for this confession.

However, just as little as the Spirit has passed people by on the giving side (the speakers and writers of the Bible) exactly so is it the case on the receiving side (the hearers and readers of the Bible). The Word must be received by us to have truth and authority not only for times long past but also for us. Also in the understanding and acceptance of the truth of the Scriptures man is thus actively involved.

On the surface, this summary may appear to be rather innocent. Yet in the light of the explanation given in this section it is by no means innocent. This section is based on and promotes the so-called relational view of the truth which is set forth in the very beginning of the report. According to this view, remember, there is no such thing as objective truth, not even in Scripture itself. Thus we read in

this section: "Neither the individual believer nor the church as a fellowship of believers can in its own power come to the recognition of the divine truth which is contained in the Scripture." Notice: divine truth is "contained in the Scripture." Scripture is not from beginning to end the written record of revealed truth. Along this same line we read in the next paragraph: "One should not consider Article III of the Belgic Confession apart from Article V as we said in Chapter I: 'the Holy Spirit is active both in the inspiration of Scripture and in the hearts of the people, and (note this, HCH) the revelation of truth is not existing if one of these aspects is lacking.'" Now this is important. For we must never forget that Holy Scripture *is*, objectively, the testimony of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ. When you deprive Holy Scripture of this objective character, as the Report does, you deprive the testimony of the Holy Spirit of all of its content. There simply is no testimony of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers apart from those Scriptures. And yet the Report says that *there is no revelation of truth* if one of these aspects is lacking. Under the appearance, therefore, of loyalty to Articles 3 and 5 of the Confession, the Report presents something that is utterly foreign to the Confession; it means to leave it to man to determine what is the revelation of the truth that is wrapped up and hid somewhere in the Scriptures.

In the second place, it should be noted that this section is critical of the Belgic Confession in Article 5. It states: "Honesty requires that it be said that here also the Reformed tradition in general has attributed to human beings too passive a role. It is possible that that was not the intention. (Compare the statement, 'the very blind are able to perceive,' a sentence which was later added to Article V.) The impulse to convert, the recognition of the truth of revelation comes most certainly from 'the other side', that is, it proceeds from the Holy Spirit. But this impulse must immediately be responded to by a conversion on our part. Faith cannot exist without that element of joyful surprise, of impulsive turning toward the voice of the Beloved Who calls us from where we did not expect Him. To believe is to fall into the arms of God." Again: "It is true that the first action proceeds from the Spirit; for no field brings forth fruit if there is no Sower. But the work of the Spirit also remains fruitless if there is no reaction on our part. The Word must be accepted by us (Mark 4:20)." It should be noted that this is entirely different language than that of our Belgic Confession when it comes to the testimony of the Spirit. In the Confession all the emphasis is on that work of the Spirit, not on man's response. The emphasis of the Report is man-centered. It smacks of Pelagianism. The emphasis of the Confession is God-centered. Just read that confession. The title of Article



5 is: "From whence the Holy Scriptures derive their dignity and authority." The article reads: "We receive all these books, and these only, as holy and canonical, for the regulation, foundation, and confirmation of our faith; believing without any doubt, all things contained in them, not so much because the Church receives and approves them as such, but more especially because the Holy Ghost witnesseth in our hearts, that they are from God, whereof they carry the evidence in themselves. For

the very blind are able to perceive that the things foretold in them are fulfilling."

How simple and plain! We believe without any doubt all things contained in these books. Why? The Holy Ghost witnesseth in our hearts—always, remember, in connection with those Scriptures themselves—that they are from God.

If only the Report had clung to the language of our confessions!

## MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE

# Letter to Timothy

February 15, 1982

Dear Timothy,

You know that recently I have been writing you about the responsibility of the people of God in the pew. I was somewhat surprised by the reaction which this discussion stirred up. Some of those who reacted were not very happy with what I had to say; a number insisted that I was missing the point and talking to the wrong people. I should be talking, they said, to the minister because the preaching is not always what it ought to be. If there is a problem in the pew this problem is really one of poor preaching.

It might be well to discuss this whole matter.

Now, let it be understood, first of all, that it is my firm conviction that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to find in all the ecclesiastical world men who work harder at their calling than our ministers. The reasons for this are not hard to find. Our denomination is a small one and there is much work that has to be done. There is the ever present work of committees—committees of Synod and committees of Classis. There is a great deal of writing which has to be done for *The Standard Bearer*, the *Beacon Lights*, the many pamphlets which are written for Church extension work, etc. There are many speeches which have to be made. (I myself was somewhat surprised to see from my records that over the course of better than twenty-five years in the ministry, I averaged almost one speech a month. This is not, I think, an unusual number for many of our ministers.) There are radio sermons which have to be made so that the Reformed Witness Hour can continue its ministry.

And this is all work outside one's congregation.

Within the congregations, generally speaking,

more is demanded of our ministers than anywhere else in any other denomination. They teach most, if not all, the Catechism classes, from five or six year olds up to and including post-confession classes. They lead at least some of the Bible study societies in the congregation. They do a great amount of pastoral work which includes visiting the sick and aged, the widows and orphans, new parents and bereaved families. They work, sometimes for long periods of time, with people who have troubles and problems, with marriages which are rocky and weak, with those who battle against the sins of the flesh and need the constant support and help of their pastor. Many of their nights are taken by family visitation. They preach twice a Lord's Day and take all the special services besides.

There is no question about it that our ministers are busy—whether they are in small congregations or large congregations.

To be so busy and to do good work requires of our ministers a dedication and zeal for the cause of the Lord and a devotion for the welfare of the Church of Christ which is often beyond the call of duty—if I may use that expression in Christ's kingdom. They are involved in the work twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. They are not like the minister who, upon moving to a new congregation, put a notice in the bulletin that he would be available for pastoral work between 2:00 and 4:00 P.M. on Tuesdays and Thursdays. His elder hit the nail on the head when he said to his new pastor: "Pastor, I hope that when I die it is between 2:00 and 4:00 on either Tuesday or Thursday." They are *pastors* in the true sense of the word.

But the question nevertheless arises: Are our ministers too busy? That is, are they so busy that they cannot give the attention which they must to



their preaching? Does it happen sometimes that their work is so extensive and the demands made upon them so great that their sermon preparation suffers?

That this question has to be faced is clear from the fact that the preaching of the Word is *central* to their calling. Those who labor in the pastoral ministry are, first and foremost, *preachers*. There lies the heart of their calling. If they fail in this or are negligent in this, they ultimately fail in all their calling in Christ's vineyard.

Now there are a number of different viewpoints on this whole matter; and it is certainly an evident fact that no rules and regulations can be laid down to govern the problem which arises in this connection. It is certainly true that preaching comes before committee work — even the work of the Mission Committee and the Theological School Committee. But this committee work has to be done if the work of the Church is going to be done. And the minister must find the proper balance for his own life so that he can be faithful to his primary calling. It is true too that preaching comes before the work of leading societies; but it is also true that a minister really gets to know his sheep in the life of the societies in the Church; and these society meetings are often like moments of spiritual refreshment and renewal in the pressures of the work. Somewhere here too he must find a proper balance; and no one can do that but he himself. But, even then, let him remember that he is first and foremost a preacher.

And so it is that there are many demands placed upon his time and many things required of him which are only indirectly related to his calling to be a preacher. Some of these things are important; some less important; some not important at all. He must make his choices, and he must do so before the face of the Lord Christ Whom he serves and before Whose judgment seat he must render account. But he must remember that he is first and foremost a preacher.

When I say that the minister is first and foremost a preacher, I do not mean simply that his most important work is performed in that two hours or so that he stands on the pulpit on the Lord's Day. I refer to all that is involved in making those sermons which he brings to God's people during the worship services. I refer to the fact that the minister spends much time in prayer and study as he wrestles with the Scriptures and prepares a sermon of which he can confidently say: "This is what the Spirit has to say to the Church." I refer to the fact that, if he is to continue to bring that Word of God, he must constantly study beyond what is immediately necessary to produce a sermon. He must read and read and read. He must fill his soul with all that

he can of what the Church of Christ has confessed to be the truth. He must himself grow and develop in the knowledge of the riches of salvation in Jesus Christ if he is to preach in such a way that his congregation grows and develops. And this requires hours and hours in his study. It is essential. Without those hours and hours he will ultimately fail in his calling. The well of his soul will run dry if it is not weekly replenished with the study of the Word of God in all of its broad context of the faith once for all delivered to the saints.

What the ultimate solutions to the problems which a minister faces are, only the minister himself can decide. But decide he must for the sake of the welfare of Jerusalem and the peace of Zion.

But one aspect of this question especially I want to discuss with you; that is the relation between the pastoral work of the minister and his calling to preach. I am personally convinced, also from my own experience in the ministry, that it is entirely possible for pastoral work to take away from the time which a minister spends in his study.

There are reasons for this.

For one thing, there are those in the congregation who demand of their pastor pastoral attention when it is not really necessary. If God's people were spiritually mature and struggled to attain such spiritual maturity, there would be a spiritual strength to solve many problems in life which now the minister must help solve, but which mature people of God ought to be able to handle on their own. I am saying that our people sometimes place too many and too great demands upon their pastor.

Looking at the matter from the pastor's point of view, I think that there is, at least, the temptation to make pastoral work the top priority on a minister's list of things to do. It is a temptation. There is no excitement, no glamor, no public acclaim, no possibility of popularity in steady, unnoticed, but hard, patient, diligent work in the study. Nobody sees it. Nobody knows the hours spent there. Nobody understands what blood, sweat, and tears go into a sermon which is the fruit of soul-wrenching wrestling with the Word of God. Pastoral work is different. That is in the public eye. There is a certain excitement in it. There is no drudgery involved, for every visit, every problem is different. There is a certain challenge which quickens the blood. There is a certain praise of men which can be acquired from skillful counseling, from ability to solve knotty problems, from getting a tottering marriage to stand firm once again. You understand what I mean.

I am not saying that these things are the motivation behind the pastoral labors of our ministers in every case. But I am saying that the temptation is



there and is very strong — I know. And so it is easy to seek that work, to prefer it, to make it top priority, to drop the books and pen in the study at a moment's notice and be winging one's way off to more exciting matters.

This is wrong.

There is still another point of view. In the ecclesiastical work at large it is pastoral work which gets all the attention in magazines, journals, religious periodicals, ministerial workshops, etc., etc. Is it just possible that we have been influenced unduly by these things?

There is pastoral work that has to be done. There is no question about that. And pastoral work is also part of the minister's calling. He is a servant of the Word also in this aspect of his work.

But if this aspect of his work takes him out of his

study too much and if it results in sermon preparation which is hurriedly and slovenly done, then there is something radically wrong. If his pastoral labors leave him no time to read, to study, to broaden his understanding of the Word of God and the heritage of the truth, then he does wrong and his preaching will suffer. If he puts his pastoral work above and before sermon preparation, he does injustice to the Word of God and will have to pay the price.

The minister is first and foremost a preacher.

Next time we will talk about some solutions to this problem.

Farewell for now.

Fraternally in Christ,  
H. Hanko

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## BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

# Galatians — Our Liberty in Christ (Conclusion)

*Rev. J. Kortering*

We must now take some time to examine the Epistle to the Galatians in order to demonstrate that the concern of the inspired apostle was to uphold the liberty of Christ for the Gentiles over against the Judaizers who wanted to put them under the yoke of the Mosaic law.

### OUTLINE OF GALATIANS

The Epistle to the Galatians falls into three main parts. Chapters 1 and 2 deal with the assertion by Paul that the gospel of liberty in Christ, which he preached and others rejected, did not come from man, but by divine revelation. It is God's gospel. In chapters 3 and 4 Paul sets forth a defense of the truth of justification by faith without the works of the law. In chapters 5 and 6 Paul gives detail as to what the liberty in Christ really is. We will follow this main division.

1. Introduction to the Epistle (1:1-10). The Apostle Paul identifies himself as the author, being an apostle who was called by Jesus Christ (1:1). He names the recipients of the Epistle as the churches of Galatia (1:2), extends to them the apostolic blessing (1:3-5), expresses his concern that they so soon gave heed to "another gospel" which was no gospel but a perversion of the gospel. He pro-

nounces anathema (a divine curse) on anyone who preaches anything other than the gospel of Christ.

2. The Apostle Paul proceeds to prove that he did not preach a gospel which has its source in man, but is of God, because he received the gospel by divine revelation (1:11-2:21). Proof of that is that originally he was a zealous Jew, holding all the traditions of the fathers, even persecuting the saints (1:11-14). He received a divine call from Christ while on the way to Damascus (Acts 9:5). He did not then go immediately to Jerusalem to be "brain-washed" by the Jews there; rather he went to Arabia where Christ by His Holy Spirit instructed him (1:15-17). Then after three years he went to Jerusalem and conferred with Peter and James for a brief fifteen days (1:18, 19). Leaving Jerusalem, he traveled for fourteen years preaching the gospel in Syria and Cilicia and was virtually unknown to the Jerusalem churches (1:20-24). At the end of this fourteen year period, he went with Titus and Barnabas to Jerusalem for the conference. He reported to them of his work among the Gentiles (who remained uncircumcised, even as Titus) and how God blessed his ministry even as He blessed Peter's among the Jews (2:1-8). The response of the



brethren in Jerusalem was good. They saw that God had granted salvation to the uncircumcised Gentiles. They encouraged Paul to continue as he did, only that he should be sure to remember the Jerusalem poor among the converts (2:9, 10). The Apostle adds one more proof, how he withstood Peter's conduct in Antioch. The church there had their customary love feasts. At these feasts they had tables set up. Some had foods from the market place (offered to idols and including unclean meats); others had foods approved by the traditional Jew. At first Peter ate at the Gentiles' table, partaking of the "unclean meat." But, when some of the Jews came from Jerusalem, he switched tables, thereby condemning the Gentiles and putting them to open shame. Paul rebuked Peter for this. At stake was much more than the question of meats. It was the very heart of the Gospel. Hence, Paul states that justification through faith in Christ was the issue. If we be crucified with Christ we are dead to the law of works and are righteous through Christ's perfect work (2:11-21).

3. The basis for liberty in Christ is rooted in the doctrinal truth of justification by faith apart from the works of the law (3:1-4:31). The Apostle begins with a question: Did the Galatians receive the Holy Spirit by the works of the law or by faith in Christ? The implied answer is by faith. Why then should they imagine that the Holy Spirit would add to His work their works of the flesh, the keeping of the law (3:1-5)? Paul now gives an example from the Old Testament Scripture, viz., Abraham. Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him for righteousness. We who are the children of Abraham are righteous in the same way — through faith in God's promise, that is in Christ, in Him all nations are blessed (3:6-9). The law cannot save, for no one can keep the works of the law; it can only curse. Christ alone was able to deliver us from the curse of the law, since He bore that curse upon the cross. Hence, the Gospel declares that the just live by faith in Christ. By the same faith in Christ, both Abraham and the Gentiles are saved (3:10-14). Now the Apostle Paul sets forth the truth that God's promise to Abraham could not be invalidated. The promise of Christ was confirmed to Abraham and his seed. The law was given 430 years later and did not negate the promise. Rather it temporarily was added in order to point out that salvation was only in the Promised One, Jesus Christ (3:15-18). How did the law do this? It was like a schoolmaster which led the true sons of Abraham to Christ. The schoolmaster (pedagog) was a slave who took the young boy by the hand and led him to school. So the law confronts us with our sin and turns us over to Christ. In Christ there is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for we both see our sins and turn by faith to the same Christ (3:19-29). During the

Old Testament, the believer was heir to the righteousness in Christ, but placed under the tutorship of the law and treated as a servant rather than a son. In Christ, they too are made free sons by adoption, for they have the Spirit in their hearts whereby they cry, Father! In Christ, the New Testament church enjoys the freedom of a son and is the true heir (4:1-7). The Apostle reminds the Gentiles that before they received the Gospel they were in the bondage of sin, as heathen. Will they now exchange their freedom in Christ for the bondage of the Old Testament law? He warned them that by observing days (Jewish ceremonial laws) they were doing just that. He also reminds them of the joy they expressed in the Gospel at the first. Will they now consider Paul an enemy when he brings them the same truth (4:8-20). One final point is made: reflecting on the history of Hagar and Sarah, Paul shows them that Hagar represented bondage, which had to be cast out. Sarah represented Jerusalem, the promise, freedom in Christ. They ought to cast out the bondage of the law for freedom in Christ (4:21-31).

4. The believer's liberty in Christ is to be free from work righteousness and is shown in the ability to do God's will (5:1-6:16). By contrast, a Gentile convert who submitted to circumcision is not by that act justified before God. The danger is to think that such an *act* is spiritually beneficial (fallen from grace means to forsake the Gospel for the law). Rather, such a one is a heretic who is a bad leaven in the church (5:1-12). The liberty which is in Christ is one word, love. Such love does not give the license to commit sin; instead it is manifest in the fruits of the Spirit (5:13-26). Practically, this means that they restore one who falls into sin, bear each other's burden, support their ministers, sow good works so that they may reap in due time (6:1-10). Paul expresses a final warning against those who want them to be circumcised for carnal reasons. He would rather that they glory with him in the cross of Christ. The way to peace is to forsake work righteousness and to live in holiness as an expression of thankfulness to God (6:11-16).

5. Conclusion (6:17, 18). Paul mentioned that he wrote them in his own hand "how large a letter," vs. 11. This is not a reference to the length of the letter (it was short by comparison); rather it was to the size of the letters which he wrote in his own hand. This could refer to one of two things: either to the fact that he had poor eyesight and thus wrote in large script, or it could refer to the fact that Paul emphasized certain parts of the letter by writing in large letters, much as we use italics. Paul certified his qualifications to write by reminding them that he had scars in his physical body as proof of his



sincerity to preach the truth. He commended them to the grace of Christ Jesus (6:17, 18).

### **DISTINCTIVE FEATURES**

1. Paul wrote this letter under physical and psychological strain. The greeting is terse; the conclusion does not have any expression of thanksgiving to God for them. He addressed himself to the problem at hand with the prayer that they would receive the true Gospel of Christ.

2. The letter demonstrates Christian apologetics; it is a defense of the faith against error. Paul includes Scriptural references, logical arguments, even his own experiences, and warnings.

3. The letter contains helpful information about the life of Paul.

4. It is the only letter directed to a group of churches.

5. Taken with James, we have a comprehensive system of Christian ethics. Paul in Galatians emphasized the dynamics for holiness (3:13, 14). James emphasized the necessity of it (James 2:17).

### **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. Express in your own words the issue Paul faced in this letter to the Galatians. Why did this revolve around circumcision?

2. Show from chapter one that Paul considered the Gospel he preached to be the *only* gospel. Explain the anathema of verses 8 and 9. How do we apply this to our day?

3. Explain why Paul circumcised Timothy (Acts 16:3) and refused to circumcise Titus (Gal. 2:3).

4. Discuss what was at stake in Peter's conduct at Antioch when he turned from eating with the Gentiles and ate with the Jews, Galatians 2:1 ff.

5. What is the relationship between faith and justification? See Galatians 3:6 and Heidelberg Catechism, Question 61.

6. Show that Galatians 3:28 does not warrant having women in any ecclesiastical office. Consider I Timothy 2:2 and I Corinthians 14:34.

7. Explain how the New Testament church is mature over against the infant Old Testament church. See Galatians 4.

8. Give detail on the bondage of Hagar and Ishmael over against the liberty of Sarah and Isaac (Gal. 4:22 ff.).

9. How does freedom in Christ exclude licentiousness?

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## **THE DAY OF SHADOWS**

# **Forgiveness Full and Free**

*Rev. John A. Heys*

Being sure that they were true men, and confident of the fact that they had removed from the mind of the Egyptian ruler the idea that they were spies, the eleven brothers of Joseph began their homeward journey. This second visit to Egypt had been so much more pleasant than they anticipated. There was no rough speech at this time. Their brother Simeon had been released from prison and restored to them. And they had even had a sumptuous meal at the home of this ruler, at which they drank and were merry with him. Now they were about to return home with the peaceful thought that the distress which God brought upon them, because of their evil deed of selling their brother Joseph as a slave into Egypt, and by it bringing their father untold grief and sorrow, was a thing of the past. They had suffered for their sin, and God had brought it to an end. They could go home and forget all about it.

There was a certain sense of eagerness that came over them as they began to leave the city, an itching to get back to their father as quickly as possible to prove to him how safe it was and how wise as well to have taken Benjamin along. For here they come with both Benjamin and Simeon, and a store of food to last them for many days. How good God had been to them! How wonderfully it all worked out; and what happiness will now fill their homes and the entire family of Jacob!

But a cloud appeared on the horizon. And it was a cloud in the most literal sense of the word, for they saw a cloud of dust being kicked up by the feet of a horseman who seemed to want to catch up with them. And in this assumption they were not wrong. Joseph had sent his servant to stop them and to determine which one had taken his drinking cup with him as a thief.



What a blow to men who were so pure that they were true men! Had they not had enough grief and sadness already? No sooner had they appeared before this ruler in Egypt the first time and they were accused of being spies. Would they now as true men invite the charge of theft by taking his drinking cup? Would they do that before one so powerful in Egypt, and one who at times seemed almost able to see right through them? True, he had made the mistake of accusing them of being spies. But their own consciences told them that they were criminals whom God was now visiting. What is more, when he showed such uncanny wisdom as to seat them all exactly according to their ages at the table, not only did a sense of awe come over them, but a warning light lit up in their souls. They saw him as a man with whom they ought not trifle.

It is true that circumstantial evidence is there once again. They had been in his house when his drinking cup had been before him. But there must be something wrong. And so sure are they that they are true men and no thieves, so fully do they judge each other to be incapable of such a deed, that with an oath, "God forbid," they agree that the one who did steal the cup ought to die and the rest will be slaves of this ruler forever.

There is consternation at the charge, but there is no panic. They are confident. Once again according to their ages their sacks were opened. The first sack is opened. No cup is there. And as the sacks are opened their confidence grows. The sacks of Simeon and Levi, those "instruments of cruelty" that killed all the Shechemites, produced no drinking cup. And now there is but one left, that of Benjamin whom they had been guarding so carefully all the time while he was in Egypt so that they never left him out of their sight. Confident they are that the charge will be shown to be unfounded. In a few moments they will be on their way. Striking, is it not, that we do not read one word here of fear on the part of these brothers? They did not hold their breath each time a sack was opened. They waited not with bated breath as Benjamin's was opened. Annoyed they were but not afraid. And as the eleventh sack was gotten down to be opened, the other ten sacks were already closed and fixed to be placed on their beasts of burden for the continuation of their journey homeward.

Take note of the fact that, when the steward explained to them why he had stopped them, the brothers said, "God forbid that thy servants should do according to this thing: Behold, the money which we found in our sack's mouths, we brought again unto thee out of the land of Canaan; how then should we steal out of thy lord's house silver or gold? With whomsoever of thy servants it be found, both let him die and we also will be my lord's

bondmen." And the steward said, "Now let it be according unto your words; he with whom it is found shall be my servant; and ye shall be blameless." So convinced are these ten brothers of their innocence that *they* are ready to specify the death penalty for the thief and bondage for all the rest of them. This accusation is preposterous! The contents of this last sack will vindicate them, and they will be on their way.

Then the blow fell!

All ten brothers saw not only that drinking cup in Benjamin's sack but Benjamin consigned to slavery in Egypt, (even as they had once consigned Joseph to such bondage) and their father crushed with grief which, when added to the grief of losing Joseph, would bring him swiftly to his grave.

What tragedy is expressed in those brief words, "Then they rent their clothes and laded every man his ass, and returned to the city." In this instance the "they" refers to the ten brothers and does not include Benjamin as far as rending of clothes is concerned. He knew his innocence, though he was shocked at the thought of becoming a slave in Egypt. Even his ten brothers had vouched for his innocence when they agreed to death for the one with whom the cup would be found. And even when the cup was found in his sack, they did not believe that he stole it.

Someone had put their money in their sacks on the first journey; and they had not stolen it. As each sack now was being opened, they again saw that someone had put their money in their sacks. And they were sure that someone had put that cup in Benjamin's sack. They did not glare at him, blame him, or speak roughly to him. Instead, notice in Genesis 44:16 that Judah declares, "What shall we say unto my lord? What shall we speak? or how shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants: behold we are my lord's servants, both we, and he also with whom the cup is found." He does not say, "...and he who *took* the cup," but "with whom the cup was found." And the guilt of which he speaks is not the guilt of stealing that cup, for not one of them did steal it, but the guilt of selling Joseph as a slave into Egypt. He is not speaking of guilt that Benjamin had, but guilt that was wholly theirs, the guilt of these ten brothers. They see now that it was God Who, through someone else had put that cup in Benjamin's sack because of their guilt of years ago and that is now being visited by Him. Had not the steward said to them when they returned the money of the first visit? "Fear not; your God, and the God of your father hath given you treasure in your sack." Well, He had also through Joseph and his steward, put that cup in Benjamin's sack. And the ten guilty brothers mean that when they say that "God hath



found out the iniquity of thy servants." They had seen God's hand when they received such rough treatment on their first visit. Now they see it even more clearly, and feel far more heavily the hand of God upon them for their guilt.

They do not realize it, but the moment of truth has come. What Joseph sought, he found. For they were brought to appear before him as thieves. And the earnest plea that Judah made for his father; the length to which he went to show without a trace of envy that Benjamin was his father's favoured son and how they wanted to spare their father the loss of this favoured son (even though once they robbed him of another favoured son); their willingness to stay as slaves in Egypt so that Benjamin might go back to their father; all this was what Joseph wanted to hear, after noticing the day before that they evidenced no sign of envy when Benjamin was given a portion five times as large as theirs. All this showed that they were men who were radically changed in their spiritual lives. God had found out the iniquity of these brothers, but He had also caused them to find it as despicable as He judged it to be. God's hand was on them in chastisement but also therefore in mercy that works consciousness of sin and sorrow for it. They confessed their guilt. They showed their sorrow for their sin. They showed tender love for their father and his favoured son. They gave evidence of being converted and penitent by the Spirit of God.

What a touching scene followed! Joseph sent forth all the Egyptians out of the room, and bursting into loud tears that these Egyptians—and even the house of Pharaoh—heard, he said, "I am Joseph!"

Stunned these brothers were. They could not speak. Not one was able to run and fall on his neck and kiss him as a long lost brother. They were simply dumbfounded at this work of God. Joseph, their brother, is this mighty ruler in Egypt before whom they had bowed, and before whom even now they were on their knees after pleading for Benjamin's freedom and their father's joy!

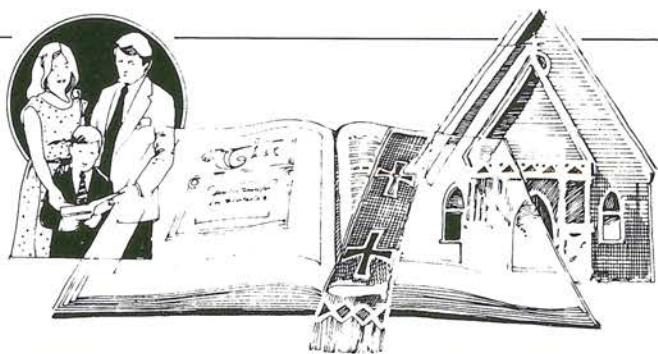
It was not that they still hated Joseph and therefore did not rush to him and express their joy and show their relief that he had not died, or was some-

where in Egypt as an humble slave. No, it was what God wrought that made them so speechless and troubled that they could not answer Joseph when he asked, "Doth my father yet live?" Even though he speaks personally to them without an interpreter and in their language, these brothers could not find words to respond and react to this new turn of events. In a sense they were in shock. Their thinking was not exactly what could be called confused. Their minds just went blank, and they had trouble taking it all in and reacting to what they learned. Even the relief and knowledge now that they could bring Benjamin to their father did not register. The wonder, the benefits of this revelation stunned them and numbed them. They were speechless and immobile until Joseph calls them to him and fills in the details that prove that he is their brother.

Joseph reveals, what no other person in Egypt could reveal, that these brothers had sold him as a slave into Egypt. How could Joseph know that, if he were not the one sold? He tells them not to grieve and be angry with themselves for that sin, but to see the hand of God in it. He gives the richest evidence of his identity when he speaks of God's covenant with Abraham and his seed. Note that in Genesis 45:7 we read, "And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance." Here is the covenant promise and God in His covenant faithfulness working all together for the fulfillment of that promise, which ultimately brings *the* great deliverance through Christ and His cross and resurrection.

Let that be seen clearly. We deal here with sin; and the wages of sin is death! But, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:1). And the truth to see here is that Joseph, finding his brothers no longer walking after the flesh but after the Spirit, reveals such a forgiving spirit unto them. The more wonderful truth to see is that God so fully and freely forgives us our sins, and had His Son sold for thirty pieces of silver, so that He might receive our wages of death and earn for us and our posterity everlasting life in the new Jerusalem.

*Know the standard and  
follow it. Read the  
Standard Bearer.*





## THE STRENGTH OF YOUTH

# The Moral Majority and the Trying of the Spirits

*Rev. Rodney Miersma*

The content of this article is taken from notes of a lecture given by the undersigned at the Spring Meeting of the Eastern Men's and Ladies' League held in April, 1981. The title of the lecture was "The Moral Majority Movement: Should We Support It?" I include this subject in this department, for the youth of our churches also need strength with regard to the various movements in our country which seem so appealing and worthy of support. Thus, one must try the spirits to see whether this is the spirit of God or the spirit of the Antichrist. Youth in their exuberance are inclined to join movements quickly and with fervor without first searching to see what is the foundation and purpose of such movements. It will be the attempt of the undersigned to shed some light on the Moral Majority in order that we may assess this movement properly from the viewpoint of Holy Writ.

The Moral Majority was very active in 1980, the year of the election of the President of the United States. This year, 1982, is another election year. Even though it is not a presidential election year we can expect to hear from this movement again.

What is the Moral Majority? It is a political organization. This they say of themselves in their paper "The Moral Majority Report" (3/16/81): "Moral Majority Inc. is a political organization providing a platform for religious and non-religious Americans, who share moral values, to address their concerns in these areas. Members of Moral Majority Inc. have no common theological premise. We are *Americans* who are proud to be conservative in our approach to moral, social, and political concerns."

The founder of this organization is the Dr. Rev. Jerry Falwell, pastor of the Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, VA, which has a membership of about 17,000. In addition, he also has a television program entitled "The Old-Time Gospel Hour," which has an audience of about 21,000,000 which in turn contributes about \$1,000,000 a week. Since its founding in 1979 Moral Majority Inc. has signed up 72,000 ministers, 4,000,000 lay members, and is establishing chapters in all fifty states.

Their reason for organizing is that in their eyes

the United States is in a terrifying moral decline and they believe that as Christians we have the duty to reverse that by voting only for those who agree with our moral principles. Falwell in the October 13, 1980 issue of *PEOPLE* magazine says that the purpose is "to give a voice to the millions of decent, law-abiding, God-fearing Americans who want to do something about the moral decline of our country."

After the organization of the Moral Majority Inc. similar organizations were born. These work closely with the Moral Majority. Two such organizations are The Religious Roundtable, founded by Ed McAteer, and The Christian Voice, founded by Gary Jarmin. All of these organizations are similar in that most of their members are considered evangelicals or fundamentalists. Characteristics of such are that one must be born again, one must believe that the Bible is the literal Word of God, and one must encourage others to believe in Christ.

This kind of person ordinarily shuns politics, but is prompted into action by three things: the legalization of abortion, the spread of pornography and of gay-rights, and the attempt in 1978 of the Internal Revenue Service to tax private schools suspected of practicing racial discrimination (In reality these schools were established to separate the children from the ungodly education of the public school system).

Being a political organization they take a definite political stand. They are against such things as abortion, Equal Rights Amendment, gay-rights, Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT), pornography, filth on television, sex education in school, and drugs. On the positive side they are for the Kemp-Roth proposal to cut taxes by thirty per cent, free enterprise, a balanced budget, voluntary prayer in public schools, and a secure Israel.

In order to secure these objectives they became especially active prior to the election in 1980 for the purpose of electing those who shared their ideals. First, they conducted a great campaign to register many citizens who ordinarily did not vote but were conservative in their views. At the same time they developed a political report card giving Con-



gressmen grades according to their voting record on various moral issues. Those that received low marks were targeted for defeat.

As a result of this vigorous campaign many liberals, such as John Culver of Iowa and George McGovern of South Dakota, were defeated. They also claim credit for ousting Jimmy Carter and electing Ronald Reagan. They also succeeded in blocking the passage of the ERA in fifteen states. In addition, they shaped a large section of the GOP platform.

What must we say about this movement of the Moral Majority Inc. and of similar organizations? Objectively seen, many of their causes are laudable. We have been chafing under the legislation and government of a liberal left for a long time. Now we have an organization and movement which is trying to accomplish many things to which we can say "Amen." Certainly, we are against abortion, ERA, gay-rights, drugs, pornography, TV filth, and sex education in school. And again, we can see merit in a balanced budget, since that is good stewardship of governmental monies. We also would desire a cut in taxes if that means cutting out the fat and the frills of a wasteful government, including its welfare programs.

On the other hand, there are some proposals with which we cannot agree. Voluntary prayer in public schools has no place in that ungodly and anti-christian institution. Neither do we agree with their reason for a secure Israel, for their reason is based on their dispensationalism. With other issues we are perhaps indifferent, such as free enterprise and SALT.

We see what the spirit of this movement is as we look at them from the viewpoint of their own writings and sayings. Falwell says, "The moralists in America have had enough. We are joining hands together for the changing, the rejuvenating of a nation." And again, "The 80's is the decade in which this country is going to have a moral rebirth." A fellow advocate, James Robison says, "It's time for God's people to come out of the closet and the churches, — and change America." President Ronald Reagan is quoted as he calls for "a return to the building of Eden in America — 'the shining city'." Others are saying that "a born-again president will solve all the nation's problems" and "top priority is to win the world for Jesus Christ." Then, in the eyes of one of the critics of the Moral Majority movement as quoted in the October 29, 1980 issue of *Christianity Today*, "Falwell believes that America's fate hinges on adoption by government of these latter day prohibitions. If we can just quash sufficient numbers of deviants and dissenters America's problems will disappear and its former greatness will be regained."

Now that we have seen this movement from the outside it is time that we examine it on the inside, that is, we must see whether this is the spirit of God or the spirit of Antichrist. Generally speaking, one can readily see that this is nothing less than the preaching of the "social gospel." This is the old belief that if we put a Band-Aid on the sore, the sore will be healed and the cause of it taken away. A social gospel looks at all the fruits of sin instead of sin itself which is the cause of all the crime, filth, and corruption in society. Legislation and new faces in office will not solve our problems. From the beginning of time, changing the heart of man has been the only answer.

Moreover, with the Moral Majority speaking to the government and advocating policy we have a violation of the relationship between church and state. Admittedly, according to their legal status they keep the separation. Yet, by their own admission they toe the line so close that although the letter of the law is not violated, yet the spirit of the law certainly is violated. Let me explain. No church as such, as far as the Moral Majority is concerned, supports any particular candidate. However, the minister does and makes his position known to his congregation. What we must not forget in this connection is that any policy with moral or religious overtones is viewed as the voice coming from the church. Hence, in the Moral Majority movement we see really the church becoming the spokesman unto and for the state. All we have to do is look at the 1980 GOP platform, which was very much formulated by the Moral Majority. Notice how the President is now in a certain sense the servant of the Moral Majority in his carrying out of these programs. It will also be noticed that the President does not say that he has the backing of these various ministers. Rather, he now claims to have the backing of the *church*.

Finally, still generally speaking, this is really a postmillennial view of this dispensation. The goal is an ever-increasing Christian world through legislation and the removal of evil by law. This is the view that there is the possibility of a heaven here on earth.

Let us now look more specifically and examine this movement from the viewpoint of Holy Writ, in particular as seen from Revelation 17. In this chapter we have a picture of the anti-christian world power as it develops and finally realizes its full power in the end. We see a beast, and a woman carried by this beast. The beast represents the world power from its political aspect while the woman represents the world power from its social and religious aspect. The beast, being the state power, and the woman, being the church, are united together to form the anti-christian world



power. As far as the institute of the state and the institute of the church are concerned there is nothing wrong with them as such, for both have been ordained of God. What is wrong is their unholy alliance.

Taking a closer look we see that the state is ordained of God to bear the sword power with the purpose of protecting the good and punishing the bad. It is a temporal institution which must maintain law and order in the midst of a corrupt society. The means by which the state accomplishes this purpose is a material one, the sword power. The spiritual means does not belong to the state.

On the other hand, the church as institute has also been ordained by God. She is the manifestation of the body of Christ on earth and her task is to build up the saints so that they grow in grace, truth, and knowledge. Thus, she must preach the gospel in every land. In fulfilling this task the state does not tell her what to do or what to preach. The church acknowledges no other authority than Christ. To accomplish her task she uses no other means than the spiritual means which is the preaching of the Word. She is eternal rather than temporal, with the sole task to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. The state exists for the purpose of making that possible for her.

The relationship between the church and the state, the woman and the beast, in Revelation 17 is an adulterous relationship. The state takes upon itself the task of developing the kingdom of Christ. It conceives of the possibility of rooting out evil and establishing peace by the power of the law and sword power. The result of this labor will be the claim that this is the kingdom of Christ. At the same time the church becomes one mind with the beast. She will abandon the name of Christ and will no longer preach on sin and total depravity, but on all sorts of other topics: war and peace, health, labor, business, crime, corruption, and the betterment of humanity through means of legislation. She will teach her members that through these means the glorious kingdom of God will come on earth.

We now apply this Word of God to the Moral Majority movement. First of all, we look at the government, both state and federal, to see how deeply they are involved in religious matters. I will name just ten issues: 1) prayer in public schools, 2) aid to parochial and private schools, 3) abortion, 4) federal aid for abortions for the poor, 5) the teaching of both evolution and creation in schools, 6) taxing various religious organizations and making them file a financial report, 7) protection of the rights of religious minorities (Moonies), 8) maintenance of the religious character of church-related institutions which rely on public funds (colleges), 9) aid to religious agencies (remedial reading, etc.), 10) religious symbols on public property (nativity scene).

In the second place, we look at the Moral Majority itself. It is the harlot, since she has abandoned the name of Christ for that of Moral Majority as she speaks not on sin, but on all the social evils of the day. She teaches that through these means the kingdom of God may come on earth. If you question that, simply go back to those quotations given earlier in this article. It becomes unmistakably clear just where the Moral Majority stands.

The question of whether or not we should join such a movement is now much easier to answer. By no means may we join. The implied warning to all of us is, "Stay away from the Moral Majority movement and all other like organizations." In appearance it looks like the true church with its gospel, the Bible, the sacraments, ministers, etc. But in reality it is the whore as she is forsaking her rightful husband Jesus Christ for marriage with the beast. It is the embodiment of the false Christ and the false prophet.

Thus, the admonition to our youth and to all of us is that which is given in Holy Writ by the Apostle Paul in I Corinthians 15:58, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

## GUEST ARTICLE

# Watch Therefore

*Rev. R.G. Moore*

Do you think about the day of the Lord? Do you look forward to His coming? Are you aware of the signs of Christ's coming, which signs are being increasingly fulfilled roundabout us? Are you sober

and watchful — mindful that the coming of our Lord will be as a thief in the night?

It is the evident instruction of the Lord that we indeed ought to be able to answer yes to all the



above questions. For this instruction, we are reminded of several texts of God's Word.

In Matthew 24 Jesus calls His church to sobriety and watchfulness. And John says to us that the time is at hand: "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time" (I John 2:18).

On the other hand, many there be that are characterized by the Scripture when it speaks of the last days and of those dwelling therein. In Matthew 24:37-38 Christ says, "But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark." Or again, the Scripture characterizes many in the last days in II Peter 3:3-4 as follows: "Then shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation."

The temptation to follow this way of thinking is real, and we must confess that we can easily fall into its trap. We would all too easily live our lives without considering the coming of our Lord. Is it not indeed easy to become partakers of this sin? I heard the remark just the other day, "I hope Christ doesn't come for a long time — not until after my life time!" But such a remark is not made from the faith that abides in us. It is a way of thinking that arises out of the old man of the flesh, in which we still dwell.

The temptation is to so sin by living completely engrossed with this life, and its ends and goals. This characterized the world at the time of the type of final judgment — the time of the flood. This is evident from our quotation above from Matthew 24:37-38.

There is, of course, nothing wrong with eating, drinking, marrying or giving in marriage, as such. We do that every day and may do this as pilgrims and strangers in the midst of the world. But when this becomes the focus of life, as it was in the days of Noah, then one walks in sin — sin that, if not repented of, will lead to eternal desolation. Many there be in this world that are just so walking.

In the days of Noah the world was given over to seeking itself. Men were concerned only for the day in which they lived. All their thoughts, desires, and activities were channeled into living unto the things of this world. They were concerned only about how they would obtain the most this life had to offer.

This was done in the face of the pure preaching of God's Word by Noah. It was a preaching which

emphasized that God is a righteous God, and a God Who is holy. This preaching called them unto holiness and called them to seek the things of the kingdom of heaven. It was a preaching of the coming of a righteous judgment. But they would not take heed, they continued their eating, and drinking, and marrying, as though nothing would happen. They were concerned only with their daily life. Their homes, their occupations, their entertainment, etc., constituted the object of their whole life.

And the flood came and destroyed them!

The days in which we live can be likened unto the days of Noah. And rather than being content with what we have, rather than seeking our very happiness and blessedness out of the Word, out of Christ, we find ourselves attracted to the philosophy of the world. The attitude that we must keep up with our neighbor, and a constant striving to have more and more of this life and its things, become all too ingrained into our way of life.

Such a philosophy and striving must be recognized as having its source in the prince of the power of darkness. It has its source in hell!

When we follow the above reasoning we find that our young people believe that they have an inalienable right to a new house, new furniture, new car with which to begin life together as husband and wife. And if that means that both must work in order to make the payments, then so be it, even if it means that we put off the God-given calling to bring forth the covenant seed. In such reasoning the wife's occupation becomes more important to the family than her being a godly mother in the home, and than her caring for the needs of her husband and children.

Life so often consists only in eating, drinking, and marrying or giving in marriage!

Let us continue for a short space yet to consider the effects of this worldly attitude upon our lives. Often even for us, our work becomes more important than time with the family, or time for the increasing of our spiritual life through church attendance, Bible studies, good Christian fellowship, etc.

Further, families have become so involved with activities of one sort or another, that there is left no time for true fellowship together. When is the last time that you sat together with your whole family for the reading of the Bible and its discussion, or even for family prayer? How much time do you take for family fellowship, and to do things together as a family in the Lord? We could go on and on with such searching questions, but let this suffice.

One becomes so very busy with this life and with its activity and its things — without a thought, or with but a mere thought now and then, that our



Lord is coming. So often we do not consider the significance of the coming of our Lord, and we are indeed tempted at times to hope that He will not come for quite awhile yet.

But, over against this our Lord says to us, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33).

And in the light of God's word, indeed we have to confess that, yes, we too have fallen all too often into the snare of this sin. It is obvious that the world's attitudes and philosophies have made their inroads into our lives.

But our Lord says to us, Repent, repent and turn from this way! It is not the way of life! And by means of the second text we quoted, that from II Peter 3, Christ shows us the foolishness of those who continue so to walk. They act as if God does not judge, and as if Christ does not come. But He comes most assuredly — and that in judgment!

Natural man foolishly says, "Where is the promise of His coming: for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." But to so speak is to close one's eyes to the reality. For it is not true that all things continue as they were. The flood changed the world as God brought judgment upon the wickedness of man — so much so that the Word of God teaches us that we dwell in a different world from that before the flood. So changed is it! Read in this connection II Peter 2:5; 3:5-6. God speaks through this text, and says He brings judgment upon the scoffer — the wicked. And to think lightly of this is

to have a spiritually dead attitude. For indeed God brings judgment! And those who have the attitude expressed in the text from II Peter 3 shall be destroyed, even as the first world was by the flood. And all things of this creation shall perish with a fervent heat.

But you who are in the Lord Jesus Christ, and who by grace are given eyes to see the promises of God, hear Christ's Word, "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come....Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Matt. 24:42,44). And, "According to His promise, look for a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (II Peter 3:13). To be so led by the gracious Word of God is also to be assured of rich blessing. For Christ says, "Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing" (Matt. 24:46).

And be comforted that, as your God gives you ears to hear His Word, and leads you in the pilgrim's pathway, and as your eyes are set upon the things of His kingdom, you shall grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. For the work that God has begun in you, He will perform until the day of Jesus Christ. And when Jesus Christ comes even as a thief in the night, you shall be prepared and shall receive true peace and joy eternally in heaven.

May God grant us grace to seek fervently the true proclamation of His word. May He grant us grace to flee the foolish ways of darkness by giving us grace to hear His warning, "Watch therefore!" Thus indeed we shall be kept in the hope that fadeth not away.

## TRANSLATED TREASURES

# A Pamphlet Concerning the Reformation of the Church

*Dr. A. Kuyper*

### Chapter 4

#### CONCERNING THE REFORMATION OF THE CHURCHES

(With the last paragraph Kuyper has finished his discussion of how the church here on earth goes through a process of deterioration. He now turns his attention to the reformation of the churches.)

#### 51. What Is To Be Understood By the Reformation Of the Churches.

Reformation can be considered in a wider or narrower sense and clarity of conception requires that these divergent meanings, even though they have been discussed earlier, be correctly and sharply distinguished at the beginning of this fourth chapter.

The most commonly held and most generally used idea of reformation is the idea of restoration of truth and holiness in the place of error and sin.



In the widest sense, reformation also includes the continuous enlightenment which the church received from the Holy Spirit in the course of the ages, as well as ongoing growth in sanctification. Both, enlightenment and sanctification, must be understood as pertaining to the body of the church as well as to her individual members. All that brings the church nearer to the Fountain-of-all-good, or, vice versa, all that causes the Fountain-of-all-good to flow more generously and more purely in the stream of the church, reforms the church.

Yet seldom is the idea of reformation taken in this broad sense. Just as we, in connection with our body, commonly make distinction between normal growth and development on the one hand, and the healing of abnormal sicknesses or wounds on the other hand, so we require of the church of Christ a normal growth in enlightenment and sanctification not only but also seek the recovery of the church from a condition of sickness into which she has sunk through her own guilt and unbelief or through Satan's malice.

That normal growth in enlightenment and sanctification is called then the continual edification and upbuilding of the church of God through the working of the means of grace. And only the healing of her wounds is called reformation.

But also in this narrower sense, the idea of reformation can be distinguished. It all depends on whether the recovery of the sickness is brought about by a restoration of strength, by cleansing the body from poison, or by a radical operation.

The first, the method which refers exclusively to a renewal of the torpid spirit of life, is both commonly called reveal or revival or awakening.

The second, the method which without radical surgery has in view the cleansing from poison, is usually called church restoration.

And the third, the method which puts the knife in the wound and is an operation, has the name of reformation in the narrowest sense.

Which of these three measures is required depends entirely upon the nature of the illness.

If the organic fabric of the church remains uninjured so that the institution of the church remains undamaged and the administration of the means of grace remains pure, then a spiritual awakening of ministers and members is the one needed. A new awakening of the Holy Spirit by a new feeling of the faithful covenant of the Lord. Reveal!

On the other hand, if the sickness has penetrated further and engulfed not only the spiritual life of the church but has also damaged the very character of the church so that "the truth stumbles on the streets," then surely also must spiritual awakening

be the point of departure. But in addition to this, one ought also to strive for the gradual betterment of the institution of the church and the taking away of error. Thus revival and church restoration.

And if, finally, the church develops so far that not only the life of grace withers and "the truth stumbles on the streets," but also that both the extermination of error and restoration of the honor of God's Word by the over-shepherds is permanently impossible, then the spiritual awakening, which knows that the way to gradual church reformation is impossible, must not shrink back from the most painful method of all. It ought, for the saving of life, to proceed to surgery, i.e., to strive for public reformation in the sense in which Luther did this and Calvin perfected Luther's work.

But even though the Spirit of the Lord pushes and presses to proceed to this extreme, yet spiritual awakening must always be the point of departure.

What is from the outside to the inside produces only an appearance of life; what endures is not worked in any other way than out of the Spirit.

52. That All Good Reformation Has God For Its Author.

All human efforts in the church of Christ are vanity and less than vanity itself. The church of Christ is put into the world by God's wonderful grace in spite of man's sinful wrangling. It continues to exist in the world age after age in spite of man's opposition and unfaithfulness. It has never thrived even for a moment in any other way than out of and by means of and in grace. Slime always cleaves to the church which she rather naturally picks up from the world. But as church it is always and unchangeably applicable to her in the fullest possible sense: "In Him she lives and moves and has her being."

There is then also no more senseless undertaking than that a certain man, even though he is the most excellent, or that a certain ecclesiastical assembly, even though it is the most influential, should ever presume to say or to think: "Yes, we shall, by our influence effect a reform of this or that corrupt church!"

Such talk is unreformed pride and can never result in anything other than still further deformation. It is the preposterous notion that we have to deliver to God a pure church rather than that He graces us in His mercy with a purified church.

It is the order of the gospel turned around, a setting aside of the covenant of grace, and again, striving for reward on the basis of good works.

This goes to show that the error still lives in our hearts that a child of God can bring forth out of himself one small speck of holiness; and that error



is completely conquered only when our soul rightly comes to confess before God that every speck of holiness which radiates from us is first dropped into us from the holiness of Christ — so completely that also the best which still works from our natural life is to be considered sin rather than holiness.

For this reason a pious Christian person must know enough not to try to strike a bargain with God.

A child of the kingdom who desires to proclaim the virtues of Him Who has called him out of darkness into His marvelous light knows no half-measures on this point. From him nothing but sin; everything holy from God. All that wells up from him is characterized by the lie; the Lord alone is true.

If thus reformation, as the former paragraph expressed it, is the restoration of truth and holiness in the place of the lie and sin, then it must be asked from where else that truth and holiness should come to the church than from Him alone Who has both?

God the Author of all true reformation is therefore the beginning, a truth never denied by the faithful sons of the church. From this comes their praying, their waiting, their obedience to the Lord.

This principle applies to reformation at all three levels.

From God is all awakening of the congregation from her deathly sleep. Not as if all revivals and awakenings are from Him. Alas, who does not bewail the fact that so often human maneuvering adorns itself with that beautiful name. No, by this is meant that there never, that there nowhere is restored life to the dead bones; that never and nowhere growth in sanctification is again begun after a long delay; and that never and nowhere the urge to win others for the Lord finds an open door — than in that time and in those churches in which God the Lord is pleased, in spite of the sin and unbelief and faithlessness of His people, to be merciful to that people which has turned away. And indeed He is merciful because He either sends a prophet saying: "Speak to these dead bones," or He, without using a minister who preaches repentance, arouses the conviction of sin and unbelief in the soul and by the prick of this consciousness of sin, He spurs them on to prayers.

The ancient struggle between the Reformed and the Arminian applies also to this spiritual awakening. He who sleeps, how shall he rise unless he is wakened! How shall improvement come from the people who become spiritually worse by the day? Thus, just as the unregenerate can come out of the darkness to the light only by the work of God, so also a church which has sunk back into darkness

can again look up to the light only through a gracious work of God. This new gracing of God's with a light which they have forfeited a thousand times and finally lost is His divine and inviolable privilege.

Thus God's people can never be admonished too much to awake from their sleep, to rouse again their first love, to perfect their holy work before God, and to awake a zeal for the saving of other souls; but woe to him who finds this glorious revival in any other place than in the Fountain of all good!

God alone multiplies faith, pours out into the heart through His Holy Spirit a warm love, gives the victory in temptation and binds the welfare of others to our souls.

This becomes the more evident to anyone who thinks that a spiritual awakening must include many more souls. Supposing that you had power over your own heart (though you do not); even then you could never penetrate savingly into another soul and you still remain deeply dependent on the free grace of your God.

But also the second degree of reformation which we call gradual renewal has God alone for its Author.

Without God a church can perhaps draw up better articles of ecclesiastical regulations and thus reform the church on paper, but this dead thing which is born out of death shall also prove completely powerless to restore even slightly a spiritual well-being to the body of the churches.

No, if church renewal is to come, then the one who draws up a better church order must record only what God is pleased to arouse by His Word and Spirit in the consciousness and intention of people.

Opportunities are necessary for church renewal, and who else grants these than the Lord our God? All sorts of persons are indispensable for church renewal, and who else creates persons than He? For church renewal there must be agreement of judgment, uniformity of purpose, desire for cooperation. And who else leads the heart as water courses than the Lord?

Above all, in the gatherings where gradual church renewal is carried out, not the majority of a certain number, but the present kingly power of Christ is the only compelling power, and the truth will never triumph except under the chairmanship of the Holy Spirit.

Thus it was at Nicea. Thus it was at Dordrecht. That is exactly what was lacking at our Synod of the Hague. That Synod decided, (O, we cry to you, O church) to reduce her prayers to once a week.



And what finally concerns the third stage of reformation, viz., reformation through separation from the existing organizations as Luther and Calvin carried it out also here the truth applies implicitly that it is either deeply sinful or worked by God.

Terrible is the conceit of anyone who tears apart the body of Christ and misuses the church of God as a dishonorable corpse upon which the surgeon exercises his dissecting abilities.

He who dares to break the unity of the church into which he was born must be very definitely assured that he is appointed to this by God; or else he heaps upon himself a responsibility which shall make the curse penetrate into his convulsed heart.

Such a reckless deed can then only exist in the frivolous one whose lack of spiritual insight or fanatic over-excitement is clearly evident to the

people of God.

And reformation by the work of surgery, by a rupture, by the severing of bonds, can and may only come among the people who fear God, when the Lord Himself visits His people, arouses men who can lead out His flock and Himself as their complete defense on the way through the wilderness.

It must not therefore be said that, yes, as a last resort all working and thus also the reformation of the churches can be ascribed to God. No, but it must be confessed that never or nowhere reformation in the church of the Lord, whether in the form of an awakening, or as gradual renewal, or as necessary separation, takes place unless the particular inworking of divine grace has begun that glorious work, continued it, and carried it to its conclusion.

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## FAITH OF OUR FATHERS

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# Westminster Confession (Chapter IX)

*Pastor R. Van Overloop*

Through chapter VIII the Confession has dealt with salvation in its outward and objective aspects. In the next chapters the Confession is concerned with salvation in its application and experience.

[In 1942 the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America (North) added two chapters at this point in the Confession of Faith: Of the Holy Spirit and Of the Gospel. It is said that the chapter on the Holy Spirit merely gathers together the teachings on that subject scattered throughout the Confession and Catechism. The chapter on the Gospel, however, does more than that. James B. Green says, "The chapter on the Gospel is meant to make explicit what is only implicit in the Westminster Standards. The Westminster Assembly emphasized the love of God for the elect. This chapter was not designed to correct that emphasis but to supplement it. The fact of the love of God for all mankind underlies the whole statement of the Calvinistic creed. The revisors thought that this general love of God and His call to all men should have clear recognition" (*A Harmony of the Westminster Prebyterian Standards*, p. 71). At this point let it suffice us to say that we do not agree with Green's evaluation of what is implicit in the Confession. In this rubric we will

treat the work of the Westminster Assembly and not that of any revisors.]

This ninth chapter is an answer to an oft raised objection against the main doctrine of the Reformed Faith: the sovereignty of God. The charge is brought against Divine sovereignty that it destroys all human responsibility. It is this evil and most false charge which the Westminster Assembly is treating in this chapter.

Most often in our day the subject of the freedom of the will is considered from a moral-ethical viewpoint, viz., that man's will is bound in sin to serve evil or in Christ is freed from this bondage of sin unto the service of the living God (Romans 6). This is the perspective of Martin Luther's well-known "The Bondage of the Will."

However, the Confession is not taking that perspective. Rather it is considering whether or not the sovereignty of God destroys and cancels out the will of man so that he is no different from the rock or the tree. And the position of the Confession is that man does have a will which he can exercise, and hence he is responsible.

1. God hath endued the will of man that natural liberty, that it is neither forced, nor by any absolute



necessity of nature determined, to good or evil.<sup>1</sup>

1. Matthew 17:12; James 1:14; Deuteronomy 30:19.

Freedom of the will is set up by the Confession as the opposite of force and coerced. The Confession states that man is not forced by some external force greater than himself to will something he does not want to will. Man is free to will what he wants to will. Also man is free to do what he wills within the limitations of his ability. Man is created with the power of willing and of willing in the way the man himself desires at the time. This is the "natural" liberty of which the Confession speaks.

This liberty must not be identified with ability. Notice that we did not say man is free to do what he wants to do, but that he is free to will what he wants to will. Man is not forced to think, will, and desire something which he does not want to think, will, or desire. Man's will is not such that he wills one thing, but convulsively does another thing against his will.

Man's will is conditioned by the moral character of the man, out of which the willing comes. The acts of the will represent and reveal the character of the person, so that Jesus can say, "The tree is known by his fruit" (Matt. 12:33). If the soul is corrupt, then it will only will to do evil. Although morally and ethically such a will does not have the ability to escape the bonds of sin, nevertheless it has liberty to will all the evil and every kind of evil he wishes. No one forces him in any evil act. Each he wills of his own will.

The Confession now considers this liberty of man's will in its four states: innocence, total depravity, grace, and glory. In each man is a free, responsible agent choosing or refusing as he wills.

2. Man, in his state of innocency, had freedom and power to will and to do that which is good and well-pleasing to God;<sup>1</sup> but yet mutably, so that he might fall from it.<sup>2</sup>

1. Ecclesiastes 7:29; Genesis 1:26.

2. Genesis 2:16, 17; Genesis 3:6.

God created man good and in the state of innocence. The natural liberty of man's will was such that he chose that which was good and pleasing in God's sight. Free to do his desire, he desired to do that which was morally right.

However, man could change; he could lose the *ability* (not liberty) to choose the good. Man did fall from the state of innocence by choosing to do that which was not pleasing in God's sight, that which is contrary to God's command.

3. Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation;<sup>1</sup> so as a natural man, being altogether averse from that good,<sup>2</sup> and dead in sin,<sup>3</sup> is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to

prepare himself thereunto.<sup>4</sup>

1. Romans 5:6; 8:7; John 15:5.

2. Romans 3:10, 12.

3. Ephesians 2:1, 5; Colossians 2:13.

4. John 6:44, 65; Ephesians 2:2-5; I Corinthians 2:14; Titus 3:3-5.

By his fall into sin and guilt before the righteous God, man lost the *ability* to do good. One sin destroyed the pure source out of which the ability to will good came. Before the fall he was able to will and to do either good or evil. After the fall he is able to will and to do only evil, for "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." "There is none that doeth good, no, not one." "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil" (Genesis 6:5; Romans 3:12; Jeremiah 13:23). Being "utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil" (Confession IV - 4) man in sin cannot convert himself or even prepare himself for conversion, i.e., he cannot even will his own conversion. This is a death blow to the position that the natural man has the ability to will good, even and especially his own salvation.

Though morally bankrupt and bound only to evil, man's will is still free to desire as he wills to do so, namely he is free to will all the evil and every evil he wishes. As A.A. Hodge says in his commentary on the Confession, "The moral condition of the heart determines the act of the will, but the act of the will cannot change the moral condition of the heart."

4. When God converts a sinner, and translates him into the state of grace, he freeth him from his natural bondage under sin,<sup>1</sup> and by His grace alone enables him freely to will and to do that which is spiritually good;<sup>2</sup> yet so as that, by reason of his remaining corruption, he doth not perfectly nor only will that which is good, but also wills that which is evil.<sup>3</sup>

1. Colossians 1:13; John 8:34, 36.

2. Philippians 2:13; Romans 6:18, 22.

3. Galatians 5:17; Romans 7:15, 18, 19, 21, 23.

Only regeneration frees the will of man morally. The power of grace is that it liberates man's will from the bondage of willing only evil. Grace gives man's will the ability to will the spiritually good.

Such a man is still a free, responsible agent, willing what he desires to will. The difference between the unregenerate and the regenerate man is one of ability, not of liberty.

Unlike Adam, the man on whom grace has come cannot will the good perfectly. This is because sin is still present with him. The Christian wills both good and evil, and the good he wills he does not will perfectly. Nevertheless, natural liberty of man's will remains in the state of grace: he wills



what he desires to will. Sometimes that will is influenced by his regenerated heart and sometimes by the corrupt nature which he still possesses.

5. The will of man is made perfectly and immutably free to do good alone in the state of glory.<sup>1</sup>

1. Ephesians 4:13; Hebrews 12:23; I John 3:2; Jude 24.

It is in the state of glory that man's will will only will the good.

Then too, man's will has the natural freedom to will what it desires to will.

The ability of the will of the glorified saint is that it wills only and always that which is right in God's

sight. As the fallen man's will wills only and always that which is evil, so the glorified saint's will wills only and always that which is good. As the fallen man's will is free only within the bounds of sin, so the glorified saint's will is free within the bounds of righteousness.

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This is the answer to the charge that God's sovereignty destroys man's responsibility making him only a robot. No, man is not as a robot, tree, or stone. He is an actively willing creature, willing what he wants to will. Hence he is always responsible for his willing and the actions which flow from his will.

## Book Review

**IN THE SANCTUARY**, Expository Sermons on the Lord's Prayer, by Herman Hoeksema; Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1982; 116 pages, \$3.95 (paper). (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko).

Many of our readers will know that this book is a reprint of a book which first appeared in the Forties, but has long been out of print. It was published soon after Rev. Hoeksema delivered a series of radio sermons on this subject. The book is a published form of those radio messages.

I wish that there was some way in which this book could be put in the home of every Christian family to be read and studied. I say this because the book speaks of prayer, and God's people today are badly in need of instruction concerning prayer. Not only is this true because of the sorry corruptions of prayer which are so common in our day; nor is this true only because God's people do not pray as

much as they ought; but it is also true because prayer is a holy art, and God's people themselves know how much they need to be instructed in it. This book is admirably suited to this purpose.

The book has an introductory chapter on prayer and a chapter on the general principles of the Lord's Prayer; these are followed by an exposition of the address, the six petitions, and the doxology with which the Lord's prayer closes. It is an incisive exposition of each part in which the petition itself is explained and the spiritual disposition of the heart necessary to pray is set forth. Rev. Hoeksema, as all who knew him know, had the ability to make the profound clear, and the clear interesting and gripping. These things come through in this book.

In expounding the Lord's Prayer the author has the opportunity to discuss all the principles which underlie true prayer, to warn against evils in prayer, and to point out repeatedly the deepest truth that God is God.

The book can be read as meditative readings, and this is indeed a thoroughly enjoyable way to read the book. But, more importantly, any child of God who takes seriously the petition, "Lord, teach us to pray..." must get this book. It will be an answer to his prayer.

### IN LOVING MEMORY

On Christmas Day, December 25, 1981, it pleased our Heavenly Father to take unto Himself our beloved husband, father and grandfather, HENRY VELTHOUSE at the age of 63 years. We can but rejoice in his going Home and thank God for giving him such peace in his pathway.

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me, Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." (Psalm 23:4).

As in times past, may we have learned from his Christian example and have been taught to — "So number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." (Psalm 90:12).

Mrs. Henry Velthouse  
John and Jerri Velthouse  
Debbie and Jodie

Irv and Barb Velthouse  
Dawn, Amy, Kari and Sara  
Bob and Sharon Velthouse  
Robbie, Emily and Craig

### NOTICE!!!

Adams Street Protestant Reformed Christian School of Grand Rapids, Michigan, will need an administrator for the 1982-83 school year. Inquiries should be sent to Dr. D. Monsma, 2141 Jefferson Ave., S.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49507.

### NOTICE!!!

An Office-Bearers Conference is to be held at the Randolph Protestant Reformed Church in Randolph, Wisconsin on Tuesday, March 2, 1982, the Lord willing, dealing with the subject of Bible Translations and textual evidence. All those in need of lodging and transportation from the Dane County Airport (Madison) are requested to notify Randolph's Clerk - Mr. Don De Vries, Route 1, Box 176, Randolph, WI; Phone 414-326-5610.

### NOTICE!!!

All students of the Protestant Reformed Churches who will enroll in the Protestant Reformed Seminary and are in need of financial assistance for the school year 1982-83, are asked to contact the Student Aid Committee, Mr. Gerald Bouwkamp, Secretary, 5440 Lawndale Ave., Hudsonville, MI 49426, (Phone 616-669-9230). This contact should be made before the next meeting of the committee on March 22, 1982.



## Report of Classis East

Classis East met in regular session on January 13, 1982 at the First Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids. With the exception of Kalamazoo, each church was represented by two delegates. Rev. S. Houck, home missionary in Lansing, Michigan was also present. Rev. R. Flikkema chaired this session. The session was lengthy — adjournment came at 11:45 p.m.

A matter of central concern was the consideration of an appeal by a brother who came to Classis because he was not satisfied with his consistory's decision relative to his protest against his pastor's preaching. The issue at stake was "Does the regenerate man have a free will?" It was charged by this brother that his pastor taught the Arminian concept of the free will. This the pastor and consistory denied. The appellant, however, insisted that the regenerate man had no free will and that ultimately God, Who is sovereign in all things, was also the author of all good works. The Classis upheld the consistory in its decision. In its report, the committee of pre-advice succinctly showed from the scriptures and the confessions that the position of the pastor and consistory, viz., that the regenerate man's will has been freed from the bondage of sin and therefore the regenerate man can choose the good, is a sound, Reformed position. A copy of the committee's report is available from the clerk if anyone so chooses to read it.

Classis also dealt with the matter of discipline in approving the erasure of a baptized member.

Two overtures were treated by the Classis. The first, from Mr. Donald Lotterman, requested that the synodical *Agenda* be made public and available to all members of the churches. Discipline and personal matters — matters that would normally be treated in closed session — would be published separately and available only to officebearers. Classis forwarded this overture to Synod with its approval on the grounds that 1) historically we have always been in favor of open ecclesiastical meetings, and 2) the procedure gives recognition to

the office of all-believers. The second overture to Synod was from First Church and dealt with the manner in which churches compute the number of families used for synodical assessment purposes. First Church requests that those not able to pay and those on benevolence not be used in the family count. Further, First consistory requests that Synod re-evaluate its formula for counting families. Classis sent this overture to Synod without its approval. With regard to the first part of this overture, viz., the request for exemption from the count of families those who can not pay, Classis argued that the number of retirees and older families does not *per se* establish inability to pay. Further, classis argued that sister church diaconates should be contacted for help in this matter. In regard to re-evaluation of the formula currently used for counting families, Classis cited the grounds that First Church itself offered no suggestion for doing this and, further, that the present formula has served us well for many years.

Classis spent a good deal of its time voting. Revs. Van Baren and Flikkema were elected to *primus* and *secundus* terms, respectively, as delegates *ad examina*. Synodical delegates elected are as follows: MINISTERS: *Primus*: C. Haak, M. Joostens, G. Van Baren, B. Woudenberg; *Secundus*: W. Bruinsma, M. De Vries, R. Flikkema, R. Miersma. ELDERS: *Primus*: J. Kalsbeek, Sr., T. Newhof, Jr., H. Ophoff, R. Teitsma; *Secundus*: C. Kuiper, Hilbert Kuiper, E. Ophoff, R. Van Baren. Church visitors selected were Rev. C. Hanko and Rev. J.A. Heys, with Rev. M. Schipper as alternate.

The expenses for this classis amounted to \$560.50. Subsidy requests for the year 1983 were approved for Kalamazoo (\$12,000) and Covenant (\$15,750).

The next meeting of classis will be held on May 12, 1982 at our Holland church.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jon J. Huisken  
Stated Clerk