

# The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

... If we look at ourselves as we really are now, we do not always appear as children of God. There is so much in us that still looks like the devil. Our old natures are still quite prominent. Though in principle there can be no doubt that we are God's children, it does not yet appear what we shall be. However, when we have fully become the children of God, O, how beautiful we shall be! Then we shall be perfectly like unto our God, Who is beautiful indeed!

See "Becoming Children of God"

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## THE STANDARD BEARER

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## MEDITATION

# Becoming Children of God

Rev. M. Schipper

*"But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His Name"*  
John 1:12

Concerning the text itself, there are especially three things that merit our attention.

First of all, it should be clearly noted that the text is introduced with the conjunctive word "but," which indicates that the Word of God here stands in contrast to the preceding context. In that context the apostle wrote of Christ's rejection, first of all by

the world of darkness, which "comprehended Him not" (verse 5), and which "knew Him not" (verse 10). In verse 11 the apostle describes Him coming into a smaller circle, namely, that of His "own things" — the more intimate circle, where He also was rejected and cast out. But now, according to the text, in spite of what appeared as universal re-



jection, there were those who received Him. Not only were there those of His own who received Him, but also among the nations of the world. By a wonder of grace there are some in Israel and among the nations who received Him. Though the Scriptures, as in the text, describe them as the remnant that are saved, they are also described as a great host which no man can number.

Secondly, we should note the pronouns, "Him," "He," and "His" in the text. The antecedents of these pronouns, that is, the names to which the pronouns refer are: "the true Light," "the Light" (verses 8, 9), "the Life" (verse 4), and still farther back "the Word" (*Logos*) (verse 1). And when you look ahead to verse 14, you discover "that the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." And this can refer to none other than the Son of God incarnate, the Person of the Son of God become flesh. Our Lord Jesus Christ! He is the one Who is received, and He it is Who gives power to become the children of God.

In the third place, it must also be pointed out that the translation, as given above, is not entirely in accord with the original text. The translation has "to become the sons of God"; while in the original text we read "to become the children of God." As we shall see in a moment, there is a difference in meaning between these two translations, which we do well to see.

With these thoughts in mind, we consider now the truth of the Word of God here, that power is given to become the children of God.

Glorious prospect!

That is, of becoming children of God!

Though it is true that the Scriptures also speak of becoming sons of God, this is not what the apostle tells us in the text.

The apostle Paul in Galatians 3:26 writes: "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." The word "children" here is properly "sons." Again, in Galatians 4:5, 6, the apostle speaks of the "adoption of sons," and "because ye are sons." And when the Scriptures speak of our sonship, as they do also in other places, they relate to the idea of adoption, through which we are brought into the family of God in a legal sense. Reverently speaking, God has only one natural Son, the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. If He is to have any other sons, it must be through the way of adoption; and our adoption papers, so to speak, are written with a pen of blood, the blood of His Only Begotten Son. When, on the other hand, the Word of God, as in our text, speaks of the children of God, it reflects on their regeneration, their having been born again from above, of

their partaking of His image. Not, you understand, in the essential image, for only the Son has the expressed, the essential image of God (Heb. 1:3); but in the created image, so that in a creatural sense we partake of the image of God. Into that image we are transformed by the Spirit of regeneration, and in principle are become the children of God. God is our Father, and we partake of His likeness spiritually.

This wonder of grace could never happen in a natural way. Who ever heard of adopted children taking on them the image of those who adopted them? Those who aspire to parenthood through the legal means of adoption may try when they choose the children they adopt to pick out those who more resemble themselves. Most generally, however, they discover after while their disillusionment. Neither in looks nor in nature do their adopted sons and daughters resemble them. But, through a wonder of grace this is quite different when God adopts His sons and daughters. Through the grace of regeneration they are born again from above in His image and likeness — not in the similitude of Adam, who was created in the image of God but through sin lost that image, and we with him, but in the similitude of God's Son, which image cannot be lost.

Moreover, when the text speaks of our becoming the children of God, it considers this becoming a process, something that is held before us in prospect.

This implies, does it not, that we are not the children of God by nature — contrary to all Modernism. The latter, you know, believe in the universal Fatherhood of God; and this must mean that all men are therefore the children of God, and they make bold to say so. The truth is, that by nature all men are children of darkness, and partake of the very image of the father of lies, and the "all men" includes us. If we are to become the children of God, God, by the Spirit of Christ, must make us so to become. But there is more.

As we already suggested, we are becoming the children of God. Though through regeneration we are the children of God in principle, we have not yet attained unto the fullness of our childhood. The apostle John, in his first epistle, tells us this in no uncertain terms when he writes: "Beloved, now are we the sons (children) of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when He (Christ) shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (I John 3:2). It is therefore to the final appearance of Christ on the clouds of heaven that our becoming the children of God is pointed. Until then, we are in the process of becoming His children. This process then begins



with the moment of our regeneration, when in principle we become the children of God; and this process ends in our glorious resurrection in the day of Christ, when in body and soul we shall appear — beautiful children of God! You can understand this, too, can you not? If we look at ourselves as we really are now, we do not always appear as children of God. There is so much in us that still looks like the devil. Our old natures are still quite prominent. Though in principle there can be no doubt that we are God's children, it does not yet appear what we shall be. However, when we have fully become the children of God, O, how beautiful we shall be! Then we shall be perfectly like unto our God, Who is beautiful indeed! That is what the apostle has in mind when he speaks in our text of becoming the children of God. Instructive in this connection is also what we read in II Corinthians 3:18; Galatians 4:19; and II Peter 1:4.

Wonderful power!

As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the children of God.

The New Testament Scriptures use especially two words to denote power. A very common word is that from which our English words dynamic, dynamo, and dynamite are derived. It refers to power in the sense of ability and strength, energizing power, which enables one to accomplish something. The other word, the word used in our text, is properly translated by such terms as authority, the right of claim.

Sometimes these two words are used together, as for example, in Acts 1:7, 8. There we read: "And He (Christ) said unto them (His disciples), it is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power (authority). But ye shall receive power (ability), after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you...." It should be plain from the first part of this text, that to know and determine the times and seasons resides singularly within the authority of God and His right to govern. While in the last part of the text the Lord says that power, that ability, is to be given also unto the disciples after the Holy Ghost is come upon them; that is, the Holy Spirit will enable them also to discern the times and seasons.

In our text, however, the apostle does not use the word for power that signifies the power of ability and strength, but he uses the word which clearly signifies power in the sense of authority, and especially the right of claim.

Power given by God!

They who receive Christ and lay claim to their becoming the children of God, do not have this power of themselves, but it is given to them of Christ.

A little later in the Gospel of John (chapter 8), we learn that the Jews of Jesus' day laid claim to this power by nature. They asserted that they were the children of Abraham, and that God was their Father (verses 33, 41). Jesus admitted that they were Abraham's seed (verse 37); however, as He pointed out to them, if they were truly the children of Abraham and children of God, they would do the works of Abraham (verse 39). Further, He asserted, if God was their Father, they would love Christ, and recognize that He came forth from the Father. This, they did not do. Thus they showed not only that their claim was false, but that truly they were the children of the devil (verse 44). This context shows plainly that while they laid claim to being the children of God, they nevertheless had no right to this claim, as their works testified.

This false Jewish claim is implicit in all present day Modernism and in all Arminianism preached in our time. It is most important that we understand this. Whether with Modernism one believes that all men are by nature children of God, or with Arminianism one believes that it lies within the power of all men to accept Christ proffered in the gospel, both lay claim to that which is untrue.

As the Word of God in our text clearly states, the power, that is, the right to lay claim to becoming children of God, must be divinely given. It is a power of God in Christ, and given only to those who are truly the children of God.

Marvelous way!

This is indicated in the first part of our text, where the apostle speaks of those who received Christ, and in the last part of the text, where the first part is explained: "even them who believe on His Name."

This implies, first of all, that when they received Christ, He must first impart Himself unto them. It implies, in the second place, that only after He has given power to become the children of God, do they consciously appropriate Him, and believe on His Name.

We strongly object to the interpretation of those who would maintain on the basis of our text that our reception of Christ or our believing on His Name is the condition we fulfill, in order to become the children of God. In the first place, faith is not that which is inherent in every man; rather, it is a gift of God (Eph. 2:8). Nor is it ever a condition man fulfills, in order to obtain something of God. But it is always presented in Scripture as the means and the way through which God applies unto us His saving grace. That we receive Christ and believe on His Name, is implicit in the power given to become the children of God. God is first, not man — in order that of Him, through Him, and unto Him,



may be all the glory (Rom. 11:36).

Indeed, they who are given power to become the children of God, receive Christ, and they believe on His Name; that is, the revelation of Christ as presented in the gospel. This is precisely the appointed way to their becoming the children of God. Only when the gospel is purely preached is Christ revealed unto us. And only as He is properly presented to us, is His image truly reflected to us, and we are transformed into that image.

What a marvelous way in which God in Christ makes us to become more and more the children of God!

It belongs to our becoming children of God therefore, not only that we receive Christ, appropriate Him as our own, as He is presented to us in the Word, and not only that we believe on this revelation of Christ, through which we are transformed into the children of God, but, as John informs us in his epistle (I John 3:2), that we purify ourselves as He is pure. This is, indeed, the transforming process God uses to make us to become His children. Proper preaching of the Word must also

cause us to walk in the way of sanctification, without which no man shall see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14).

The power that is given to become the children of God is also the power given to receive Christ and to believe on His Name. Or, to put it differently, to believe into His Name, and then to embrace Christ with living faith, is the working out of the power, the right to claim, that we are the children of God.

As was said, this transforming process goes on in us until we shall see Him face to face.

Glorious prospect!

Wonderful power!

Marvelous way!

From the moment of our regeneration unto the moment we shall see Him, we are being changed by the power of God in Christ into those children who will appear exactly as He is, and as His children shall with Him constitute the family of God.

Then the covenant of God shall be realized, the object of His eternal good pleasure!

Amen!

## EDITORIALS

*Prof. H.C. Hoeksema*

# Suggestions for Improving Synod

In this issue and the next a few suggestions will be offered toward the improvement of our synodical gatherings. These are based, for the most part, on my observation of the activities of the Synod just completed in June. Most, if not all, of them could be followed without bringing about any formal change in the rules; some of them merely involve adhering more closely to rules and practices which we already have. My motive for making these suggestions — if I must give account of it — is, as the title of this editorial suggests, that I seek the improvement of our synodical gatherings.

My first suggestion concerns the matter of voting for members on our various standing committees and for such officers as stated clerk and synodical treasurer and their alternates. For as many years as I can remember this voting has always taken place at the very end of our synodical sessions. It has taken place in a somewhat informal atmosphere — sometimes too informal. It has followed the old-fashioned procedure of nominations from the floor, balloting, and then tallying the votes (sometimes on

a chalkboard) in the presence of the whole Synod. It often takes place at a time when Synod is rushing to finish its business, so that the delegates may go home. Sometimes, as this year, it takes place in a session lengthened past the normal adjournment time — something which seems to add to the haste with which this work is performed. At our most recent Synod, for example, we were suddenly informed — after adjournment and after the reading of the concept minutes — that two Western delegates had to leave for home the next morning. Suddenly and without any possible formal decision (we were adjourned!) it was decided to reconvene and to meet right through the supper hour to complete the remainder of Report IV and to take care of voting. Besides, the whole procedure of voting at the end of Synod is rather anticlimactic and not conducive to a dignified conclusion of our broadest assembly.

In my opinion, there would be two possible methods of bringing about improvement and also greater efficiency in this regard.



A first method would be simply to take care of voting for various committees and functionaries as the occasion arises in connection with their reports. Thus, for example, if the Domestic Mission Committee's report is treated by Advisory Committee I, and it is reported that the terms of a minister and an elder expire this year, take care of voting for replacements immediately, rather than waiting till the end of Synod. This would result, of course, in scattering the voting throughout the sessions of Synod. But it would avoid many of the disadvantages of the present method. Two disadvantages of this suggestion might be that it tends to interrupt the work of Synod when from time to time it must vote like this, and that it might be disadvantageous to vote separately rather than to get an over-all view of the personnel needed on various committees.

A second method would be as follows: 1. Appoint a committee on elections immediately at the very first session of Synod. This could either be the committee on committees or it could be an altogether separate committee. 2. This committee would survey the personnel needs of the various standing committees and functionaries, would prepare a list for Synod (or use the list usually prepared by the Stated Clerk), and bring this to the attention of Synod, again at that opening session. At this time nominations would be made by Synod and recorded by the committee. 3. The committee would then prepare printed ballots and distribute them to the delegates on Thursday. 4. These ballots would then be collected and tallied by the committee, after sufficient time was allowed for the delegates to mark their ballots. 5. In case of a lack of majority in a given instance, the committee on elections would be empowered to make a decision concerning voting between the two or three highest and to submit a new ballot to the delegates. After the whole process is completed, the results can be announced to Synod. All of this could be accomplished with very little inconvenience, with no interruption of the work of Synod, and with almost none of Synod's time expended on it. Besides, the important matter of voting for committee personnel could be accomplished when Synod is fresh and alert, rather than when the delegates are weary and rushing to adjourn.

If necessary, an arrangement like this could, by overtone, be made part of the rules of Synod. At present, however, there is nothing in the rules, as far as I can tell, which would prohibit Synod from initiating a procedure like this. It only awaits someone's action.

There is one more item in this connection which needs attention. I believe our method of making nominations could be improved. As matters stand

now, it is a bit haphazard. Sometimes there is doubt as to eligibility and availability. Sometimes qualified men are overlooked. Sometimes there is ignorance on the part of the delegates, as, for example, when delegates from Classis East must vote for committees whose constituency is from the West and vice versa. I have the following suggestions in this regard:

- 1) The various standing committees could make *suggestions* as to nominees. I want to emphasize that these should be suggestions, not nominations. We should not open the door to committees becoming self-perpetuating.
- 2) The delegates to Synod themselves should give advance study to this matter of nominees, so that they are prepared to make intelligent nominations.
- 3) I see no reason why consistories could not make suggestions in this regard. Often they are in the best position to know which elders or ex-elders would be both capable and available to serve on some of our committees.
- 4) Sometimes a few words of identification of nominees would be helpful, provided this would not lead to any "campaigning."

Perhaps other suggestions could be made. I am convinced, however, that this is one area of Synod's work which is long overdue for some streamlining.

My second suggestion is connected with Synod's decision last June not to treat three overtures in the Agenda which had not been properly processed from consistory to Classis to Synod.

First of all, let me explain Synod's decision and the grounds for it. You will recall that I reported the decision of Synod to reject three overtures as not being legally before Synod. This does not mean that the overtures themselves had no merit and that they were rejected as to their *content*. It simply means that they were not *treated* at all, and that if they should come to Synod next year in the proper way, they could very well be treated and even adopted then. In the grounds of this decision, Synod cited Article 5, B, 3, a and b of the Rules of Synod: "The following matters shall be considered by Synod: a. All overtures forwarded by the Classes. b. All overtures rejected by the Classes, but which are forwarded by their authors without classical approval." Further, Synod referred to Article 30 of the Church Order, "...In major assemblies only such matters shall be dealt with as could not be finished in minor assemblies, or such as pertain to the churches of the major assembly in common." Still further, Synod called attention to precedent. The Advisory Committee called Synod's attention to the fact that from 1948 through 1981 there were at least 47 overtures to Synod. Of these 45 went through Classis first, while only two (in 1980) did not. And finally, Synod cited as a ground



the fact that three former professors of church polity (Rev. G.M. Ophoff, Prof. Hoeksema, and Prof. Hanko) have maintained this position in their notes on Article 46 of the Church Order. Prof. Hanko states it this way in his notes:

An overture is a request on the part of a minor assembly to a major assembly to take some positive action on a matter within the jurisdiction of a major assembly. These overtures may originate with an individual, a Consistory, a Classis. They go to broader assemblies via the minor assemblies. Each minor assembly ought also to consider its value and come to a formal decision on it. This is quite important.

The late Rev. Ophoff wrote as follows:

There is also this question. Can a Classis bring upon the Synod a matter that has not been brought upon the Classis by a consistory through its delegation? This is not very well possible, for it would mean that the delegates to Classis present to Classis a matter or matters that they were not instructed to present by the consistories who delegated them. And this they may not do. For as to its essence the entire "agendum" of the Synod must originate with the local churches, must, in other words, rise from the bosom of the churches. The Synod cannot treat matters that, as to their essence, were not brought upon the Synod by the Classis, and the same holds true of the Classis in relation to the consistories. But this of course does not mean that the matter must be brought to the Classis by every consistory, but it must be brought there by at least one consistory. Common members of the church can also bring matters to Classis, but the rule should be that they do so through the consistory, or at least not without the knowledge of the consistory....

Synod, therefore, simply reinforced a rule which we have had and have practiced for many years. And the principle is a sound one: what is treated by a Synod must arise out of the bosom of the churches.

My suggestion in connection with this decision of Synod is that we must very really live by this rule. Synod must not simply become a dumping ground for all kinds of frivolous or ill-considered proposals; and the churches must not take the attitude that after all Synod will sort out the various overtures, disposing of the poor ones and adopting the good ones, and that this can be safely left to Synod. This means, therefore, that consistories and

Classis must not think they are abiding by this rule when they merely rubber stamp an overture rather than given it careful study. Nor may consistories and Classis pass on overtures "without comment" or "without prejudice." On the contrary, there are several things to consider here. We note the following:

1) When an overture is presented to a consistory by an individual or by a consistory to a Classis, the first thing to check is the rule of Article 46 of the Church Order: "Instructions concerning matters to be considered in major assemblies shall not be written until the decisions of previous Synods touching these matters have been read, in order that what was once decided be not again proposed, unless a revision be deemed necessary." And let it be noted, that if "a revision be deemed necessary," the burden of proof lies with those bringing the overture.

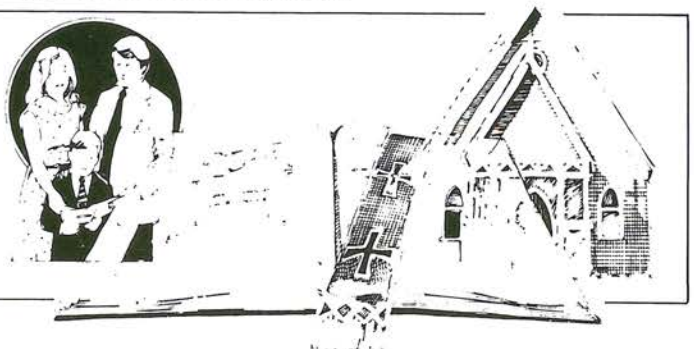
2) When an overture is presented, a consistory or a Classis should consider such an overture carefully and on its merits. It may be that the assembly comes to the conclusion that the overture is ill-advised and then refuses to add its adherence. In such an instance, an individual or consistory still has the right to insist that the overture go through to Synod, and it will appear in the Agenda, but without consistorial or classical approval or even with express disapproval. It may also be that an individual or a consistory becomes persuaded that the overture should be withdrawn, and then it will not even appear in the Agenda.

3) When such an overture is presented, a consistory of a Classis can also conceivably improve upon it and add some modifications.

4) Finally, the minor assemblies also have the opportunity — and to my mind, the duty — to take care of some of the "homework" that might be connected with an overture. Sometimes information is needed, for example, with respect to costs, manner of execution, or even the possibility of execution. Why should all this work be dumped in the lap of Synod or a synodical study committee when it could better and more efficiently be done at the local or regional level?

If, therefore, we try conscientiously to live by this rule, the result can only be salutary for our Synods and our churches.

*The Standard Bearer  
makes a thoughtful gift  
for many occasions.*





## The "eodem modo" Rejected in the Conclusion of the Canons

[In the June 1 issue we continued to call attention to the misuse of this expression, noting that on the part of Dr. Berkouwer this led ultimately to an outright rejection of the doctrine of double predestination. Then we began to look at what American theologians have done with this expression. We noted that Dr. Harry Boer saw it as a "drawing back at the brink from the enormity of the consequences of a theological rationalism" by men who "did not have the courage to stand by what they had written," but "refused to break with the logical premise that led them to it." We now continue with our discussion of the misuse of this expression.]

In passing we may note that the Study Report does not see this expression in the same light as does the Boer Gravamen. It does not recognize a conflict between the statement in the Conclusion and the doctrine of reprobation as set forth in Canons I. This is not due, however, to a basic disagreement with Boer and to an embracing of the teachings of the Canons. After all the Study Report first twists Articles 6 and 15 of Canons I, and then in its recommendations reduces reprobation to a kind of limited election. Except for a weak clinging to a notion of "deficient causality," the Study Report is in agreement with Boer. But the Study Report sees no conflict between the body of the Canons and the Conclusion simply because it has first changed the meaning of the Canons with respect to reprobation, and therefore finds no need of "drawing back at the brink" when it comes to the Conclusion.

Dr. James Daane, in his *The Freedom of God*, goes beyond all bounds in his misuse of the Canons' rejection of this "eodem modo." We may note, incidentally, that he is very careless in his reference to this expression. More than once in his book he cites the Latin incorrectly as "*in eodem modo*" rather than "*eodem modo*;" and more than once he writes as though the Canons simply say "*non eodem modo* (not in the same manner)" — something which the Canons do not say in so many words, though they indeed reject an Arminian slander in the Conclusion. More than this, however, Daane gives to this expression much broader implications with respect to the whole concept of what he calls "decretal theology" than it was ever intended to have by the Synod of Dordrecht. And above all, it must not be forgotten that all of Daane's illegitimate appeal to this expression in the Conclusion is for the purpose of denying the very doctrine which the Canons teach, the doctrine of sovereign reprobation. In other words, Dr. Daane lands where Dr.

Berkouwer landed. Daane makes this very plain when he writes, p. 200: "This means that any doctrine of reprobation is illegitimate by biblical standards *except that which biblical teaching sanctions*: that he (sic) who rejects God, God rejects."

To cite in context and to refute all of Daane's misuses of this expression would probably result in another book as long as his. Permit me, however, to give a few instances.

On pages 31 and 32 he writes:

When Van Til and Hoeksema speak this way, they contend that they are articulating authentic Reformed theology. Their differences come within the context of a much deeper agreement. Both expound a decretal theology in which God's decree is not identified with his freedom, but with his essence, and thus with God Himself. On this position God Himself is — and is in the same manner (*in eodem modo*) — the cause and therefore the explanation and rationale of "whatsoever comes to pass," including election and reprobation — a principle the Canons of Dort reject. It is evident that nothing in decretal theology is new, special, unique, specifically gracious, truly gospel, that everything is essentially neutral, of the same nature and accomplished "in the same manner."

Notice how already here the rejection of a calumny in the Conclusion of the Canons is elevated by Daane to a "principle" which the Canons reject, and that, too, with applications not only to reprobation but to the whole of God's counsel. The theologians of Dordt would certainly not recognize their own theology in this presentation of Dr. Daane.

In a similar vein he writes on pp. 35 and 36:

The Conclusion of the Canons of Dort explicitly rejects — in fact, *detests* — the position that election and reprobation are related "in the same manner" (*in [sic] eodem modo*). God does not elect men in the same manner in which He rejects men. Election and reprobation are not simply two sides of the same coin. By rejecting the "in the same manner," the Canons destroy the argument that the endorsement of a proper doctrine of election is automatically also an endorsement of a proper doctrine of reprobation. The relationship of election and reprobation is not a simple one, like two sides of the same coin, or the simple affirmation that one logically implies the other.

Again Daane goes far beyond what the Conclusion of the Canons actually states. Note carefully what it is that "the Reformed Churches not only do not acknowledge, but even detest with their whole



soul." It is this: "that in the same manner in which the election is the fountain and cause of faith and good works, reprobation is the cause of unbelief and impiety." Daane, however, says that the Conclusion detests "the position that election and reprobation are related 'in the same manner.'" Daane makes it that "God does not elect men in the same manner in which He rejects men." He is trying to make the Conclusion state something about which it says absolutely nothing. Furthermore, Dr. Daane's entire argumentation against the idea of a single decree of predestination which includes both election and reprobation is specious, since it is based on the misrepresentation and misinterpretation of the Conclusion just described. Nor does he have a satisfactory answer to the plain fact that the Canons themselves hold to such a single decree.

This incorrect appeal to the Conclusion of the Canons, moreover, permeates Daane's book. He returns to it in the chapter on "The Election of the Church," pp. 149, 150, as follows:

The Conclusion to the Canons of Dort asserts that God does not elect and reprobate in the same manner. Paul makes it clear in Romans that God does not elect Jews and Gentiles in the same manner. And it is equally clear that God does not elect Jesus Christ and the individual Christian in the same manner. But decretal theology cannot honor this rejection of the "in the same manner." It insists that the simple divine decree is without distinctions, though it appears to finite minds to have them. But if so, the Canons' insistence that God does not elect and reject "in the same manner" goes out the window. The rejection of the "in the same manner" causes decretal theology no end of trouble.

Notice, by the way, that here Daane expands his application of what he elevates to a controlling principle (not in the same manner) so that it applies not only to election and reprobation but even to different aspects of election (of Jews and Gentiles, of Christ and the individual Christian). It ought to be

evident also from this that Daane goes far beyond anything the Canons ever intended to say in the Conclusion.

Never tiring of combatting what he calls "decretal theology" (though he frequently misrepresents it, and though he would find himself in conflict with every Reformed theologian from Calvin forward — and not merely with so-called Protestant scholasticism from Beza forward), he returns to the subject once more in the chapter on "The Freedom of God and the Logic of Election." On p. 173 he writes:

Given the character of the decree as they see it, decretal theologians have sufficient reason for positing a logical nexus between election and reprobation. This logical nexus, however, requires that God elects and reprobates "in the same manner." If the decree is a logical harmony, everything in it is logically and rationally interrelated in the same manner. Exhaustively rational relationships allow no distinctions. Election then implies reprobation as logically as reprobation implies election (sheer nonsense! HCH). But such a view violates the "in the same manner" rejected by the Canons of Dort and leaves no room for the freedom of God. Election and reprobation both become necessary, and with this necessity theology loses all need for the language of grace. Indeed, we have noted earlier that the concept of grace is distorted in the thought of the thorough-going decretal theologian.

It is small wonder that Daane ends his fulminations against decretal theology by openly denying what has always been the Reformed doctrine of reprobation, as we have already noted that he does on page 200. Or did he perhaps begin with a denial of reprobation and imagine that he found in the Canons themselves a stick with which to lick the dog? Really, you know, it is a preposterous idea — if you know anything about the fathers of Dort — that they should deny in the Conclusion what they so clearly asserted in the First Head of Doctrine!

## THE LORD GAVE THE WORD

### Missionary Methods (13)

*Prof. Robert D. Decker*

To accomplish the work of the ministry of the Word in China Dr. John L. Nevius made extensive use of native leaders. These men were unordained and unpaid by the mission. They remained in their station and calling in life while leading the worship and teaching classes in their mission stations. For

various reasons, some of them practical, Nevius used as few paid native preachers as possible. (Cf. *The Planting And Development of Missionary Churches*, pp. 35 ff.). In our previous article [Missionary Methods (12)] we criticized Nevius at this point. It is our contention that there must be preaching on



the mission field. If one is to call upon the Name of the Lord and be saved he needs to hear Christ through a preacher who is sent (Romans 10:14, 15). The preaching, we emphasized, must be adapted to the needs and situation of those to whom it is addressed. In missions the preacher must feed the people with the milk of the Word until they have reached a level of spiritual growth which will enable them to digest the meat of the Word. This preaching must be done publicly and from house to house after the manner of the apostle Paul. (Cf. Acts 20:20 ff.). This modification brings the "Nevius Plan" in harmony with the missionary methods taught by Scripture and followed by the apostles. Preaching must be at the very heart of all missionary work.

There is, however, much which we can learn from the methods of teaching advocated by Nevius and employed by him and his colleagues in China a century ago. Initially, new converts received oral instruction from the missionary or from the native helpers (an assistant to the missionary, paid by the mission) or from the leader through whom they were brought into the church. A catechism was composed which contained a compendium, a brief and simple summary of Christian doctrine. All new converts were required to memorize and learn the meaning of this catechism. They were also required to commit to memory various forms of prayers and passages of Scripture. All this time these new converts were in a period of probation which lasted from six months to one or two years. The Baptist mission in China at the time set the minimum probation period at eighteen months. During this probationary period the converts were expected to attend worship services faithfully and to perform the duties of professing Christians. In addition to the catechism, the converts were given a "Manual for Inquirers" which contained various rules and regulations which the missionaries found necessary to unify and systematize the work. A copy of the four Gospel accounts was also given to each. These "...I place in the hands of every inquirer, and little more is needed for years in the way of textbooks for those who have not previously learned to read" (p. 38).

"The Manual," Nevius writes, "contains, — General Directions for Prosecuting Scripture Studies; Forms of Prayer; the Apostles' Creed; and Select Passages of Scripture — to be committed to memory. Then follows a large selection of Scripture stories and parables, with directions as to how they should be recited and explained; only the titles of these are given with references to the place in the Bible where they are to be found. Next follow: Rules for the Organization and Direction of Stations; Duties of Leaders and Rules for their Guid-

ance; a system of forms for keeping Station Records of attendance and studies, etc.; Form of Church Covenant; Scripture Lessons for Preparing for Baptism; the same for preparing for the Lord's Supper; Order of Exercises for Church Service and Directions for Spending Sunday; a short Scripture Catechism — enforcing the duty of giving of our substance for benevolent purposes; and a short essay of the Duty of Every Christian to make known the Gospel to others. To the whole is appended questions on the various parts, specially prepared to facilitate the teaching and examination of learners. A selection of our most common hymns is also sometimes bound up with the volume" (p. 38).

The "Scripture Studies" mentioned above were divided into six kinds. These were: learning to read, memorizing Scripture, reading Scripture in course, telling Scripture stories, learning the meaning of Scripture, and reviews of former exercises. The tremendous amount of work which must have gone into the preparation of this Manual will be appreciated when we realize that "The books used are almost exclusively in Mandarin (the chief dialect of China, R.D.D.), in the Chinese character" (p. 39).

The Catechisms and Scripture question books the missionaries found to be extremely valuable not only for "inquirers" and new converts but also for more advanced Christians. Nevius informs us: "I give great prominence to learning and reciting Scripture stories and parables, and nothing has been found to produce more satisfactory results. It excites interest, develops thought, and furnishes in a simple form a compendium of Bible history and Christian duty; while a careful training in relating Bible Stories and drawing practical lessons from them is one of the best ways of developing preaching talent where it is found" (p. 39). Both those able to read and the illiterate were required to learn the Manual. The purpose of this was twofold: for their own edification and knowledge of the Bible and so that they might be able to teach others. Nevius tells us that they soon mastered the material of the Manual and were able to move on to more intensive study of the Scriptures with the help of Commentaries.

Provided one remembers our position on the necessity of the preaching of the Word, there is much which we can learn from all of this. Much of this ought in the opinion of this writer be implemented in our own mission work both in foreign fields and domestic. The probationary period for new converts is somewhat akin to the classes conducted by Pastor den Hartog in Singapore to prepare candidates for the sacrament of Baptism and membership in the church. The idea is sound. Not only is it true that prospective members of the



church need to be instructed in the truth of Scripture, but they must be "proved" before they are admitted into the Christian church. Becoming a Christian is not a matter of a quick, easy decision to "accept Christ." It has happened altogether too frequently both at home and on the foreign field that people are accepted into the church with little or no instruction and after a while they fall away.

The idea of a Manual of Instruction is also sound. This would have to be adapted to the particular field of labor. What might be suitable for the work of Singapore, for example, probably would not fit the needs of Jamaica or some domestic field. Whatever modifications might be necessary, certainly the main thrust of the Nevius plan with its emphasis on equipping converts to read and study the Bible ought to be emulated. The emphasis on instruction in the simple stories, the parables, and truths and proceeding to more intensive Bible study and study of the creeds is correct. This enabled converts to become more and more "at home" in the Scriptures. The practice of requiring converts to memorize passages of Scripture and catechism lessons is extremely important. Especially is this true in our times when there is so much ignorance of even the most basic truths and doctrines of the Word of God. The inspired Scripture which alone is able to make us wise unto salvation is profitable "for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (II Timothy 3:15).

Training people in the practice of relating the

narratives and truths of the Bible is necessary. Not only does this afford the missionary opportunity to discover gifts for preaching as Nevius pointed out, but this is something every Christian is called to do. God's people must be shining lights, living witnesses of the Gospel. They must follow the example of the persecuted saints who were forced to flee Jerusalem and who went everywhere "evangelizing" (cf. Acts 8:4). This point is closely related to the next. The whole concept of learning in order to be able to teach others certainly ought to be encouraged both at home and in foreign fields. This kindles a healthy and keen interest in the things of the gospel and the church. It gives each new convert a continuing sense of being a real part of the church. He has a vital function within the community of believers. He is needed.

At the heart of all this must be the preaching of the Word. This we must never forget, for, after all, "It pleases God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (I Cor. 1:21). Preaching is the divine power which makes effective the witness and mutual edification of believers. Without pastors and teachers believers are tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine; they are not able to speak the truth in love so as to grow up into Christ; they are not able to edify one another in love; they are not able to come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ (cf. Eph. 4:11 ff.).

## GUEST ARTICLE

# The Principles and Practice of Bible Study (Part II)

Rev. Ronald Hanko

In the first part of this article we saw how both the truth of inspiration in general and the specific principle of organic inspiration can be applied in our study of the Word of God. In this second part we turn to another aspect of the doctrine of Scripture, the principle of *verbal* inspiration. This principle also can and must be applied and will help in its own way to give both purpose and direction to and searching of the Scriptures.

Verbal inspiration means that the Bible is inspired not only in its thoughts and ideas but also in

its words. Revelation 22:18, 19 sets forth this principle with unmistakable clarity: "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things (that is, the words of the prophecy of this book, RH), God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book; and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book." Because it is God's book not even the words may be tampered with.



It is on the basis of this principle that we reject all paraphrases of the Bible such as *Good News for Modern Man* or *The Living Bible*. Man may not put God's Word into his own words. That is doing exactly what Revelation 22 warns against. Also the whole idea of dynamic equivalence in translating the Bible must be rejected. This is the principle which underlies *Today's English Version* (*Good News For Modern Man*), some other lesser known "translations," and even to a certain extent the most recent translation of the Bible, the *New International Version*. According to this theory it is more important to present the thrust or power (dynamic) of a text than to give as closely as possible its literal translation, and the result of the application of this theory is that one ends with a compromise between faithful translation and paraphrase.

That principle of verbal inspiration is closely connected with the principle of plenary inspiration. This means simply that the whole Bible is inspired, its history, its geography, and its science also. It means as well that *all* the words of the Bible are inspired, not only the important words and concepts, but even the little articles (a, an, the), conjunctions (and, but, therefore, etc.), and interjections (O, Behold, Lo). They too are important and must be attended to in studying God's Word. A good example of this is the use of the word "immediately" or "straightway" (both the same word in the original Greek) in the Gospel according to Mark. The word is used almost fifty times in the Gospel and is one of the keys to the interpretation of Mark's version of the life of Christ.

In particular the principle of verbal, plenary inspiration means first of all that ordinary rules of grammar apply to the Bible just as to any other book. To say the same thing another way, this means that the Bible must be interpreted *literally*. This is, of course, the wonder of revelation, that the infinitely glorious God Who dwells in immortality and unapproachable light reveals Himself in plain, ordinary human language. We do not, therefore, have to seek for "deeper" and "hidden" meanings and offer complicated and tortuous explanations of Scripture, but must simply ask ourselves the same question that Jesus often asked of His hearers, "What do the Scriptures say?" Then we must understand that they mean exactly what they say.

This is not to say that there are not figures, or types, or symbols, or dark sayings in Scripture. Even the most ardent fundamentalist who pushes the principle of literal interpretation to the extreme of trying to draw pictures of the symbols used in the book of Revelation will have to admit at times the existence of figures and symbols. But literal interpretation simply means that we recognize that these things are a recognizable part of

every language and also part of the languages through which God reveals Himself in the Scriptures. The word "recognizable" is the word that needs emphasis here. In everyday use of language anyone with even a little common sense knows when figures of speech are being used. So also it is not difficult for one who has a measure of sanctified common sense to see when the same figures are being used in God's Word.

For example once again, it is not difficult to see that Revelation 2:17 uses a symbol to describe heavenly glory and that the real glory of heaven does not consist in each believer receiving a white rock with his name written on it. And throughout Scripture the principle that Scripture is self-interpreting must apply in this regard. Scripture must and will show us when it uses figures of speech. We must, in other words, expect to find much symbolism in the book of Revelation, exactly because it is a book of visions. We must not expect to find all sorts of symbolism in the book of Genesis which even to a very young child clearly presents us with sober, historical narrative (including the first three chapters). The poetry of the Psalms must be recognized as such and not treated in exactly the same way as the history of the four Gospel accounts.

There are even special rules for the study of the different kinds of Bible literature, poetry, prophecy, historical narrative, doctrinal discourses, parables and all the rest. These rules, however, really go beyond the scope of this article and ought to be dealt with in connection with a study of the particular books in which these different kinds of Bible literature are found.

What needs to be stressed is that the principle of verbal inspiration and the connected principle of literal interpretation are very closely bound up with the perspicuity of Scripture. We believe that Scripture is clear and easily understood. The Scriptures are given to us as members of the church, not as theologians, but as common ordinary people; masters and servants, soldiers, tradesmen, fathers, mothers, and children. They are given for our use and instruction, and by the miracle of revelation are adapted and fitted for us and also clear. It is in view of the perspicuity of Scripture that those who tell us that what sounds like history is really poetry and that what appears to be symbolic is really literal history, must be suspect, theologians though they be. God speaks plainly. God means what He says.

Nevertheless, the principle of verbal inspiration can be even more specifically applied. Three of the more important rules for understanding and interpreting God's Word follow, but more as examples than as a comprehensive list.



One of these rules is that synonyms, that is, words of approximately the same but yet slightly different shades of meaning are not just matters of style but of great significance with respect to the meaning of the passages in which they are found. A clear example of this is the two different words in the New Testament for the office of elder. Each word (translated "elder" and "bishop") has a different connotation, and it is exceedingly important that one word and not the other be used in such passages as I Timothy 3:1, Titus 1:5, I Peter 2:25, and I Peter 5:1. Another example has to do with the different words for prayer that are found throughout Scripture. We must ask ourselves "Why this word and not another?" or even, "Why is it said this way when it appears as though perhaps it could better have been said another way?"

Another rule to be deduced from the principle of verbal inspiration is that connecting words are of great importance. Perhaps this is especially true of Paul's Epistles where we have logical exposition of doctrinal themes and the connectives tie the various steps in Paul's argument together. The word "therefore" in Romans 8:1 is a good example. The word shows us that we have the conclusion to an argument in this verse, and a very important conclusion at that, as further study shows. This is the conclusion to all that Paul has said previously and the basis for all that he goes on to say about the assurance of our salvation in the rest of chapter 8.

The third of these rules concerns the repeated use of a word in the same context. Here the principle is that a word used more than once in the same context must mean the same thing unless there is overwhelming evidence *in the passage itself* that it has a different meaning. This is an extremely important principle. The classic illustration of this principle is Romans 11:26a; "And so all Israel shall be saved." Israel in Scripture can refer either to the Old Testament nation or to spiritual Israel gathered from among Jews and Gentiles alike. Neither meaning in this context is wrong, but the difference does make quite a change in the meaning of the verse. To what then does "Israel" here refer? The fact that "Israel" throughout chapter 11 refers to Jews in distinction from Gentiles would seem to indicate that also in verse 26 it must refer to the spiritual seed gathered out of the Jewish nation.

These then are some of the ways in which the doctrine of the inspiration and infallibility of Scripture can be applied to the very practical matter of Bible study. By way of summary and for reference it is probably a good thing simply to list some of these rules. Certainly what follows does not include every rule and not even every important rule for the study of Scripture. Nor are the rules as given here to be followed necessarily in the order

that they are given. There are even a few rules included which were not discussed in the article, but which can in one way or another be traced back to the truth of inspiration.

#### Rules for the Study of Scripture

##### A. Rules for spiritual preparation:

1. Pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
2. Leave time for meditation upon the passage under study, probably after all other work with the passage is finished.

##### B. General rules:

1. Determine what kind of literature is being studied: poetry, prophecy, history, etc.
2. Attempt to divide the passage into sections or determine where the passage being studied begins and ends.
3. Define the theme of the book in which the passage is found and the place of that theme in the rest of Scripture.
4. Write down all questions.

##### C. Rules concerning the actual interpretation of the passage:

1. Determine the main point of the passage.
2. Take note of any problems of grammar or interpretation.
3. Identify the important words or concepts in the text.
4. Study these words or ideas in the light of the rest of Scripture by looking up and studying all the important texts where the same word or words are used.
5. Compare the text as a whole with similar or related passages from the rest of the Bible.
6. Take a close look at the passage in light of the immediate context as well as the context of the whole book and ask how the text fits into that context.
7. If necessary look for background material on history, chronology, customs, etc.
8. Look for Christ in the passage and how the text brings the Gospel of Christ.
9. Try to set out clearly the application of the text — what the Spirit says to the Churches.

It is especially in connection with these last two rules that meditation and prayer become an important part of Bible study.

From all of this it is certainly evident that real, dedicated study of the Word of God is hard work. Any minister who must prepare to expound that Word to the people of God on the Lord's day and any elder or deacon who must prepare himself to



bring that same Word to the specific needs of the people of God can testify to this. Nevertheless, it is work which is neither burdensome nor joyless. Rather it is a way in which we come to know the everlasting God as our faithful Father, and His be-

loved Son Jesus Christ as our blessed Redeemer, Whom to know is life everlasting. Who would not rejoice in that with "joy unspeakable and full of glory"?

## QUESTION BOX

Rev. C. Hanko

# Divorce and Remarriage

A reader sent in the following question:

"In Deuteronomy 24:3, 4 we read that it is an abomination before the Lord if a man marry his divorced wife after she has married another man. It says that if the latter husband *die* she could not return to the first husband.

"In Jeremiah 3:1 we read that the land would be greatly polluted if a man marry his divorced wife after she has married another man. It identifies how it was wrong for Israel to return to the first marriage, yet God wants Israel to return to Him even though they have played the harlot with many lovers.

"The question is, why did God not permit them to repent from the evil of divorce by remarriage their first wife?

"What is hard to understand is why God considers it an abomination before the Lord and that Israel would pollute the land if they would return to their first wife."

The first reference is to Deuteronomy 24:1-4, which reads:

"When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it comes to pass that she find no favor in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her; then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house.

"And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife.

"And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth it in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her to be his wife;

"Her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after she is defiled; for that is abomination before the Lord: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance."

This passage refers to a miserable situation that obviously existed in Israel, God's church. A man takes a wife and marries her. After he has lived with her for a while he puts her away. The reason for putting her away is, that "she finds no favor in his eyes, because he has found some uncleanness in her." Uncleanness means literally, "a matter of nakedness." The same word is used in Deuteronomy 23:14, where it is contrasted with *holiness* in the sight of God. Thus in this passage it must refer to some sexual, moral uncleanness. It cannot refer to the sin of adultery, because that was punishable by death (Num. 20:10). The reference must be to something that displeased the husband in their marital relationship, so that he finds an excuse to put his wife away.

According to verse 2, it also happened that after the woman left her first husband she married another. We could receive the impression from the translation of the AV given above, that the law of Moses sanctioned this second marriage. But that is not the case.\* Verse 4 tells us that by marrying this other man "she defiled herself." (This is the correct translation of the expression in verse 4.) By marrying another man she is guilty of desecrating the holy, unbreakable marriage bond. According to Leviticus 18:20, Numbers 5:13, 14 and Matthew 5:32 she is an adulteress.

Verse 3 states that the possibility exists that the second husband also puts her away when he tires of her, or even that he dies, and that the first husband has a change of heart, so that he desires to take her back as his wife. *This the law of Moses, that is, the law of God forbids.* To prevent a repeated desecration of the holy marriage bond, and to prevent a man and woman who had both already defiled themselves to continue on their sinful way, the law of Moses required a writing of divorcement, a legal prevention of the woman returning to her first husband.

This is the explanation that Jesus gives of this



passage in Matthew 19:3-8. The Pharisees, who took a keen delight in trying to pit Jesus against Moses, interpreted this passage in Deuteronomy 24 as if it allowed "a man to put away his wife for every cause." Jesus reminded them that according to the institution of marriage in Paradise God joins man and wife together as one flesh in an unbreakable marriage bond. Thereupon the Pharisees see their opportunity to expose Jesus as contradicting Moses by asking, "Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away." Jesus tells these Pharisees that they are all wrong, Moses never did sanction putting away one's wife, no matter what the reason may be. Nor did Moses *command* a writing of divorcement as a general rule to be adopted by the church. Jesus blamed the Jews for this writing of divorcement. Moses *suffered* it, that is, allowed it, because of the hardness of their hearts. It was because they could not forgive one another, or could not bear with one another's weaknesses, but catered to the carnal lusts of their flesh that this law was instituted. "From the beginning it was not so!" Since neither party showed any real concern for the sacred marriage bond, and since neither party intended to stop playing with holy things, God required that the man who put away his wife should give her a bill of divorcement, and thereby legally establish that he would never take her to wife again.

The second passage referred to in the question above is Jeremiah 3:1, where we read, "They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return to her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted? but thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to Me, saith the Lord."

In this text we have a quotation from Deuteronomy 24, which we have just discussed. But this reference serves to point out the sharp contrast between the frivolous dealings of a man who puts away his wife and Jehovah's dealings with spiritual Israel, His wife.

Notice, Jehovah loves His wife with an eternal love in Christ Jesus. Therefore He also cherishes

and esteems His wife as His personal possession. In Ezekiel 16:8-14 God describes Israel as the real, spiritual Beauty Queen of the whole universe! From that point of view God never finds anything unpleasant or repulsive in her.

From this follows that God can never put away His wife, certainly not for some trivial or frivolous reason. What does happen is that Israel plays the harlot even while she is God's wife. She defiles herself by forsaking her husband and going awhoring after vain idols (Jeremiah 2). For a clear description of this abominable sin of Israel read Ezekiel 19:15-21. God had every reason to put His adulterous wife away in holy wrath.

Does He do that? Does He give her a bill of divorcement when He sends her to Babylon? NO! (see Isaiah 50:1.) On the contrary, according to Jeremiah 3:1, God declares through the prophet, "Yet return again to Me, saith the Lord."

We should notice that Jehovah, the eternal, unchangeable, ever faithful covenant God never puts His wife away. Moreover, He continues to love her and even calls her to repentance with a powerful, efficacious calling. The land would certainly be polluted if Jehovah were to put away His wife for some trivial person, and then take her back again in some equally trivial manner. But the Lord does not do that. He renews the heart, brings to sorrow and repentance, and draws His unfaithful wife back to Him in mutual love and devotion. That is the reality of which the holy marriage among God's people is the replica.

Therefore in answer to your question, "Why did God not permit them to repent from the evil of divorce by remarrying their first wife?" the Lord does not sanction a divorce and remarriage, but neither does He sanction a reunion that is not based on a sincere confession of sin, a hearty repentance and a determination to live together in a holy, godly life. Any other kind of reunion would be considered an abomination before the Lord and would pollute the land, that is, the church.

\* See "Marriage" by Rev. D. Engelsma, page 85.

## About Being Baptized for the Dead

[Editor's Note. This is a special contribution to this department. Prof. Hanko answered a question from a correspondent who wrote to the Reformed Witness Hour. The correspondent then requested

that this answer be published in the *Standard Bearer*, and with this request we gladly comply.]

Dear Mr. \_\_\_\_\_,

The Reformed Witness Hour has forwarded to



me a copy of your letter in which you ask concerning "being baptized for the dead." I shall try to answer this as best I can.

The passage is found in I Corinthians 15:29, which reads: "Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?"

There is no doubt about it that this is a somewhat difficult passage. One commentator mentions the fact that there are at least 30 different explanations of this passage; so it is clear that commentators do not at all agree. And the difficulty of the passage centers exactly in the questions you raise: "The dead cannot benefit from the baptism of a living person for their destiny was determined at the time of death."

However, I think that we must take the words at face value and not try to force some kind of interpretation on them which does not fit the plain meaning of the words. Only, the main point of the apostle in this whole chapter must not be forgotten. We must remember, first of all, that the apostle writes this beautiful and glorious chapter on the resurrection because there were those in the church of Corinth who denied the truth of the resurrection of the body. The apostle is proving that the saints shall indeed arise at the coming of Christ, and his main line of proof is that this must necessarily follow from the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. This verse stands in direct relation to that: the apostle makes this statement as an additional proof of our glorious resurrection.

Secondly, it appears from the text, and this is not really all that surprising, that the saints of Corinth, at least some of them, were concerned about various fellow saints who had died without being baptized. In a congregation of new converts this was indeed a possibility. They were converted very shortly before death and before there was opportunity to baptize them; or they were too sick, too weak and feeble to come to church for the sacrament of baptism. And so they died before they were baptized by the church. Those who were living

were apparently under the impression that baptism was essential for them and for their salvation. But they were not baptized. What then? And so they practiced a sort of superstitious ritual which consisted in this that the living were baptized on behalf of or in the place of the dead in the hope that this would aid the unbaptized dead.

It is, I think, important to understand that the apostle does not put his stamp of approval on this, and Scripture nowhere teaches that this ought to be done. But the apostle recognizes that this superstition, this practice was being carried on in the church of Corinth. And so he appeals to this practice as proof of the resurrection of our bodies. He asks, in effect: "If the dead do not arise, why then do some of you perform this ritual? What good is it? What is the sense of being baptized for the dead, if, in fact, the grave is the end and death terminates our existence. Your own practice, as wrong as it may be, has sense only if there is a resurrection from the dead."

It is, I think, important to understand that, when this practice was carried on by the Corinthians, these people who were living were being baptized for dead *believers*. They were not being baptized for all the dead, for the dead willy-nilly; but, emphatically for departed saints. And, while the practice was undoubtedly wrong, Paul turns this very practice into an argument against their position that the dead do not rise.

It seems to me that this is the clear meaning of the text. If, however, you still have questions, please feel free to write again. Or, if you so choose, you may write to the *Standard Bearer* and ask that the question be answered by the editor of "Question Box." It may be that he will come up with some other idea. Nevertheless, I think this interpretation is correct.

Thank you for your interest in our radio ministry and your concern about matters of Scripture. Whenever we have occasion to study the Word of God more fully, we can only profit from this.

## THE DAY OF SHADOWS

### Jacob Blesses Pharaoh

Rev. John A. Heys

At Babel God confused man's speech and drove the descendants of Ham and Japheth away from those of Shem, who remained in the area where

that tower of Babel was built. Japheth's descendants went north into Asia Minor and into Europe. Ham's descendants settled in the land of Canaan



and in Egypt and Africa.

Many years later God called Abraham from the regions near the tower of Babel and brought him to Canaan, which He promised to him and his seed. A famine throughout the land of Canaan and Egypt brought Jacob and his family, which was two and three generations removed from Abraham, down into the land of Pharaoh, the descendant of Ham and ruler in Egypt.

Now what God had separated physically is re-joined in a rather close relationship. Jacob and his family dwell in Goshen, a part of Egypt which Pharaoh willingly gave them for their sojourn, and dwell there in a secluded and separate life. Yet Jacob's most beloved son was Pharaoh's right hand man and was loved by Pharaoh as a political leader under whom Egypt prospered materially.

This meeting was all arranged by God and was not the result of carefully laid human plans. He sent the famine, and before that sent Joseph into Egypt to interpret the dreams of Pharaoh. He moved Pharaoh to exalt Joseph to supervise the whole gathering and distribution of the food. It was His hand that brought Joseph's brothers to his feet seeking bread, and later on arranged to have Jacob come into the land and to be set before Pharaoh. All this was divinely planned and divinely executed. Had He not told Abraham that his seed would be strangers in a land that was not theirs? He knew that this long sojourn in Egypt was coming because He planned it all in every detail.

And now the "unexpected" happens when Jacob the descendant of Shem comes before Pharaoh the descendant of Ham. A Star would arise in Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel (Numbers 24:17); and He is the Son born unto us, the Child given to us on Whose shoulder is the government, and before Whom every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that He is Lord to the glory of God (Philippians 2:10, 11). And yet Jacob blesses Pharaoh. A child of God blesses an unbelieving ruler of this world. He in whose line the Christ will come blesses him from whose camp the Antichrist will ultimately come.

How shall we explain it?

There are those who are ready to say that Jacob wished God's blessing upon this worldly king. And there are those who insist that Pharaoh must have been a believer. Otherwise Jacob would not do this. As to the latter we have no evidence at all that he was a believer; and Jacob does not, outside then of this "blessing," speak to him as though he were a believer. Nor is there anything in the passage to indicate that God was speaking here through Jacob and that he was sent to speak God's blessing upon him. The only item recorded of what Pharaoh says

to Jacob is the question, "How old art thou?" And Jacob's response is a reference to the fact that he was a sojourner and that his sojourn was short in comparison with that of his fathers, and that it was full of evil. Apparently Jacob thought that the day of his death was near. Otherwise why would he say that it was so short? He was now one hundred thirty years old and he lived another seventeen years. He did come quite close to Isaac his father who lived thirty-three years longer than Jacob. But outside of that one item of speaking of his life as a pilgrimage, there is nothing spiritual in the whole conversation recorded between Jacob and Pharaoh. Surely more was said. But when just this little bit is recorded, we may be sure that the tenor and nature of the exchange between them was no more spiritual. Otherwise the spiritual aspect would have been presented.

Was Jacob ruled here by his flesh to bless Pharaoh even though he knew Pharaoh to be an unbeliever? Was he moved by the great things that he had done for his son Joseph, and for this kindness of giving them the land of Goshen to dwell in until the famine was a thing of the past? We also do that. We do it in the hymn, "God bless America" which some so glibly, or thoughtlessly, sing. It is quite a cry from singing, "God bless His people in America" and singing "God bless America".

How does this fit in with Psalm 1:1, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful"? And would you contradict the Christ Himself Who, in His Sermon on the Kingdom — usually called The Sermon on the Mount, naming it after the place where it was preached rather than after its content — when He lists those who are blessed in the Beatitudes? God bless America means God bless all in America; and it limits it to America while there are surely people of God in every nation, tongue, and tribe. But God bless America means God bless the scorners who teach Evolution and the Atheists who say that there is no God. It means bless the sinners and the ungodly, those who are not poor in spirit; those who do not mourn over their sins but laugh about them; those who are not the meek of the earth; those who do not hunger and thirst after righteousness; those who are troublemakers instead of peacemakers; those who are vile in heart and not pure in heart; those who persecute the righteous. Let us not do that! Put the music away and sing instead, "Bless Thy inheritance, Our Savior be, I pray; Supply Thou all Thy people's need, And be their constant stay" (Psalm 28:9; *Psalter* Number 75:6). Or, "O truly is the nation blest Whose God before the world confessed Jehovah is alone. And blest the people is whom He Has made His heritage to be,



And chosen for His own" (Psalm 33:12; *Psalter* Number 86:3). These men spoke under divine inspiration and spoke what God speaks. Let us not dare to contradict them and pray God's blessing on those for whom Christ did not die, and for those then on whom Scripture — and thus God Himself — declares that the wrath of God abideth.

Go back to Psalm 1 and now verses 4 and 5, "The ungodly are not so; but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous."

But perhaps you say, "Does Paul not teach us to pray for kings in I Timothy 2 and for all men?" Indeed he does, but he does not say that we are to pray for a blessing upon them. He spells it out clearly, "that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty." The prayer here is *for the Church* and for her good, for a blessing of quietness and peace to be able to teach the generations to come God's praises; and to build up the church in the truth and in the faith.

But then there are those who also want to insist, in spite of all the texts quoted above, that there is a material blessing for all and that God has a certain grace for everyone. And in that sense Jacob could wish God's blessing on Pharaoh. Yet how do they explain it that too much rain, and thus too much of a blessing, ruins man in his crops and does damage to his home? And that too much sunshine, and thus too much grace kills him and causes his food supply to wither away and die and so denies him food and brings him famines? And shall we rebuke and contradict Him Who is the Way because He is the *Truth* and the Life, when He says, "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me; for they are Mine" (John 17:9). And again, "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36). What blessing, Jesus asks, is there in getting material possessions, if you lose your soul?

No, the text does not teach anything like that. Jacob wished God's blessing upon Pharaoh neither in the sense that he wished him worldly riches and prosperity, nor that he prayed for his salvation. The simple fact in the case is that the word "bless" used here can mean and does here mean simply that he greeted Pharaoh. It is translated as bless 121 times in the Old Testament. But it is also translated 5 times as salute. Let us look at one or two of these. You have in I Samuel 13:10 King Saul saluting Samuel. Saul had sinned in that he did not wait for Samuel to offer but offered himself. But he came to salute Samuel. Did he mean to bless him? Could you, would you, so translate this passage? Can a wicked man sincerely wish you God's blessing

when he cares not about what is truly a blessing? Then turn to I Samuel 25:14 where we read of David saluting Nabal, who by his wife is called such a son of Belial that a man cannot speak to him. Do you suppose that David wished him God's blessing? Would you not here keep the translation that David saluted, that is, greeted churlish Nabal. In II Kings 10:14 we have wicked Jehu saluting. Did he wish God's blessing upon Jehonadab? Was he even wishing him material blessings?

And please note that in Genesis 47:7-10 Jacob blessed Pharaoh when he first was brought before him, and he blesses him again when he leaves Pharaoh's presence. Is that not exactly what one would do before a dignitary, that is, greet him and say farewell to him? There is nothing spiritual in the whole thing. It is simply saying Hello and Good-bye, except that our good-bye is a contraction for God be with you. And if that is what we mean, we also should not say this to the wicked.

Jesus said it, "I lay down My life for My sheep." For them there are blessings flowing from the cross, and for no one else. What men call material blessings, and claim also to have come from that cross, will only testify against the wicked; and they would have been better off, yea let us say it, it would have been much closer to a blessing if they had not gotten these material gifts. For their torment in hell would not have been as great. They are rewarded according to their works. Had they not received these material possessions, they could not have sinned with them.

But for the child of God the loss of material possessions is a blessing. It is a blessing for him to lose his life. As Paul put it, "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21).

Some would count it loss. But it is only in the way of losing this body and this sin cursed world that we can enter into a realm of everlasting blessedness with new spiritual bodies. And unless Paul did not speak the truth when he said that *all things* work together for good to those that love God — he did not say to all men — the losses we suffer, the pains we experience, the afflictions that are our lot ARE blessings, because as he also wrote in II Corinthians 4:17, 18, "Our light affliction which is but for a moment worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory...." Is it not a blessing to receive that which works glory for us? That also is why Paul can call death a gain, a pure gain, and far better than to continue in this vale of tears.

*Take time to read  
The Standard Bearer*



## ALL AROUND US

# The Dance is Redeemed — Finally, after Many Years

Rev. G. Van Baren

The *Calvinist Contact*, June 25, 1982, reports on the decision of the Christian Reformed Church Synod of 1982 concerning the dance:

Synod has mandated the Christian community to learn how to dance redemptively. Old and young, mature and maturing, Christians are challenged to look dance squarely in the eyes and redeem it.

In one of the most difficult discussions of Synod for many, the delegates struggled hard with the content of the report written by the study committee and recommended by the Majority Report of the Advisory Committee.

The same paper also quotes the statements and guidelines as these were adopted by the Synod (with the exception of one part which will be noted below):

a. It is biblical and therefore fitting that God's people use appropriate liturgical dance forms for the expression of their deep feelings of praise to their God. The God who gave us bodies responsive to music and capable of rhythmic movement does not require that we ignore our bodies in worship or that we praise Him only with our minds and voices. (Note: Synod referred point a. to the Liturgical Committee for further study of its implications and its feasibility of implementation and to report to Synod in 1984.)

b. Like painting, sculpture, and music, artistic dance forms such as ballet are legitimate avenues of expression for the Christian who pursues them in acknowledgement of Christ's redemptive claims.

c. The folk dances of many ethnic cultures, including various square dances, generally reflect a joyful use of music, rhythm, movement, and social involvement which can be redeemed by a Christian community that makes a sensitive effort to control the ingredients of music, motivation, and context.

d. The ballroom and social dance of our contemporary culture present a far greater challenge to conscientious Christians. While many of these dances present positive potential for the expression of genuine artistic skills as well as healthy social interaction, they also present negative potential. They can be, and often are, deliberately sexually suggestive; they allow partners to make physical contact indiscriminately on a very casual and superficial basis; and the entire con-

text in which such dances are held often reflects the hedonistic values dominant in our culture. Christians will find it difficult to redeem ballroom dancing without monitoring closely their attitudes, the nature of their participation, and the context in which these dances take place. Christians should not participate in them without the exercise of genuine Christian maturity.

e. Such contemporary dances as disco, present a whole array of features that are sharply in conflict with Christian standards. These features include a blatant sexual suggestiveness, a narcissistic orientation, and use of musical themes that flout Christian values. Christians will find it difficult to redeem these dances and should firmly reject them as they appear in our culture.

More was written in the statement adopted by Synod — but the above represents the statement of position on the dance itself. Dancing is "in" — although for the present it would appear that the disco is too difficult to redeem, and the liturgical dance (which would presumably be part of the church worship) is under further study. The liturgical dance was, evidently, too much for the delegates at this Synod. Perhaps this was true, in part, because the *Banner* (May 24, 1982) had pictured on its cover three ladies participating in a liturgical dance. That *Banner* cover was featured on the front page of the *Grand Rapids Press* (June 16, 1982) along with a report of some of the discussion at Synod:

...But the debate at Calvin College was not without its pointed moments, as one delegate questioned the committee's report suggesting that Christians could redeem dance to "God-honoring use."

That prompted some shifting about in seats.

"We have the spiritual mandate that God forbids we do anything that will lead us to unchastity," said one delegate who was opposed to the idea of liturgical dancing.

He then drew attention to the cover of a denominational magazine, the *Banner*, where three Calvin College students were pictured performing a liturgical dance for a Good Friday service.



"These three lovely ladies on the *Banner* cover are doing a liturgical dance, but how can we expect to give a good sermon after these girls have done their work? Why, on the cover, her leg is exposed as high as the leg goes," he said as the audience and other delegates burst into laughter....

Others were not too happy about that *Banner* cover and liturgical dances either. In the *Banner* of July 5, 1982, another wrote to "Voices":

Regarding the *Banner* cover of 5/24/82, it is odd the things different people see in the same object. By no stretch of my imagination do I see three crosses or three nights in the tomb.

What I see is the degradation and desecration of a Christian church service. I see the Israelites dancing and worshipping Baal when Moses left them for a while. I see druids dancing at a witches' coven. I see three scantily clad girls cavorting before their Lord and Master.

I go to church to hear the Word of God, not to see a spectacle.

What must one say of this sad turn of events? I am not going to argue against the decision of Synod. I would rather have the C.R.C. Synod of 1928 in its "Report on Worldly Amusements," as this was printed for public distribution by the Synod of the C.R.C. of 1945, do this. I present brief excerpts:

...The same principle (that the honor of God is superior to all other interests) requires that the Christian shall deem it a matter of loyalty to his God and Savior not to further the interests of an institution which in its general influence is an unmitigated evil, even though occasionally it may offer amusement which is not positively baneful....

...He knows that he belongs to a peculiar people, and is not satisfied with differing from the world only in the ground he has for his hope of heaven. He wants to lead a Christian life, a life as rich and varied as that of the worldly man, but a life which in all its ramifications bears the Christian stamp and grows from a Christian root....

...It is, for example, not correct to say that a moving-picture is a sinful thing, even though the godless world turns it into pollution on an enormous scale. But, on the other hand, this statement embodies the stern ethical principle that everything is forbidden which, though lawful in itself, has become defiled by the world to such an extent that a Christian cannot participate in it without endangering his spiritual or moral purity....

...But when we speak of "the dance," we speak of the modern dance, the suggestive dance in which the sexes mingle and that promiscuously, that is, any man with any woman. Reformed moralists and Christian writers in general have condemned the dance for amusement when it is suggestive, because of an immodest exposure of certain parts of the body, and also when it is promiscuous.

The promiscuous dance, especially as it is in vogue

today, because of the close physical contact between the sexes, is fundamentally immoral. Its fascination lies in its sex-appeal. It thrives on the sex-instinct, and is therefore a violation of the seventh commandment, as explained in the Heid. Cat. This kind of diversion would almost die out if there were no mingling of the sexes in the mazes of the dance. It is an unclean thing and is in principle immoral because it nourishes forbidden lusts. It can and does entice men to unchaste thoughts and desires if not to impure actions.

But how about the dance for amusement's sake when it is not suggestive or promiscuous? Since the mere act of dance is not condemned in the Scriptures, either directly or indirectly, the conclusion might seem justifiable, even inescapable, that there can be no harm in the private dance in the home between members of the same family, the aesthetic dance and the folk-dances which are taught in many public schools. We do not believe, however, that this conclusion should be drawn. The rule of self-denial and self-preservation determines our attitude in this case. We believe that in view of the rapidly increasing popularity of the promiscuous dance and the low morality of the modern dances, Christian parents and teachers and the Christian church should frown even on the most innocent forms of this kind of amusement. The folk-dance and the parlor dance so easily become the stepping-stone to the promiscuous dance. The child which is permitted to take dancing lessons will, as a rule, not stop at the mixed dance, as its parents may require and expect, and say, "There I draw the line!" It has entered the danger zone and may lose its soul because of the carelessness of its parents! Such parents are not less foolish than those who allow their children to play with matches on the ground that matches were made for useful purposes! Here again we have a case where Christians should hate even the garment which is spotted by the flesh.

There follow many quotations from Reformed writers and other churches, condemning the dance. There seemed no doubt in the mind of the church in 1928 about the dance. It was wrong — and even required discipline and excommunication except the sinner repent.

But the decision of 1928 had a "fly in the ointment." It pointed to the effect of common grace upon the wicked, and allowed that this permitted a measure of cooperation and participation with the ungodly (cf. page 15 of the pamphlet). The C.R.C. Synod of 1966, in approving of "good" movies, also referred to the work of common grace whereby the wicked do produce that which the Christian can enjoy. The same argument was also presented in connection with the dance. In 1928, common grace could not be stretched far enough to cover the movie and the dance — but by 1966 and 1982 it had gained that elasticity!

Some troubling questions could also be asked in connection with this sad decision. One was expressed by a delegate to this year's Synod as quoted



in the *G.R. Press* (6/17/82):

After the Synod approved the different forms of dancing, and suggested that families and institutions take responsibility for the dancers' surroundings, an older Wisconsin delegate stood before his fellow delegates to express his dismay.

Explaining he had taught his children "that sin was sin and dance was sin," the delegate asked, "Now I have to go back to Wisconsin and say I was wrong because Calvin (College) is doing this. How can you supervise sin?"

Synod moderator Rev. Clarence Boomsma...sympathized with the Wisconsin delegate. "I empathize with you, brother, because all of us older brothers were brought up to believe that dance was sin," Boomsma said. "But I do think this (decision) is part of our painful growth."

I not only empathize, but sympathize too with that delegate and all others who now must have their children brought up also under this decision — while they still know in their hearts that the dance is sin.

More: if the dance and the movie are now "redeemable" (whatever that might mean), what will be the next sin which the church will take upon itself to "redeem"? Will it perhaps be homosexuality — as the G.K.N. of the Netherlands has already done? If much more work is done along this line, the church will have redeemed all that which is now sinful — and there will be no more concern

about sin. What a strange way of ridding oneself of sin and of making the church "holy"!

Thirdly, in all honesty, can any say that this decision represents "painful growth" in theology, that it represents increased spiritual sensitivity, that it points to a growth in the holiness and godly life of the church? Can any say that this represents spiritual development beyond what Calvin expressed, or other Reformed writers, or even over the decision of the C.R.C. of 1928? I would dare any to say so!

Finally, one would expect that the Synod and individual consistories ought to take remedial action to "rehabilitate" those "sinners" who were disciplined because they had fallen into the evils of the dance in earlier years. There ought to be public apologies expressed to all those who were disciplined for what now turns out to be not sinful after all.

We too, as Protestant Reformed, must learn from all of this. Though we have continued to condemn "worldly amusements," though our stand is not so dissimilar from the C.R.C. of old, yet the pressures of worldliness can be seen in our midst too. We must be on guard — lest we also succumb to the pressures of such worldliness. If any of us would want also the dance, or the movie, these would be welcomed with open arms within the C.R.C. — but such have no place with us. Let us maintain the standards set forth long ago already by John Calvin.

## Book Reviews

**THE CHURCH IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY: Elect From Every Nation;** by Louis Praamsma; Paideia Press, 1981; 289 pp., \$9.95 (paper). [Reviewed by Prof. H.C. Hanko]

This is the last volume in Dr. Praamsma's series on the history of the Christian Church. This book is a translation from the Dutch in which language it was originally printed.

Dr. Praamsma has done good service to the Church in writing a series of books on Church History from the conservative Reformed position. It is a necessary addition to the library of all who read and study in the field of Church History and it ought to have a place in the libraries of our high schools, colleges, and seminaries.

Dr. Praamsma has read widely in the field of Church History, in the original literature of every

period, and in the history of Western civilization. He has produced a book, therefore, which catches the breadth and scope of the wide variety of currents which have swept the modern church. And he has succeeded in bringing it all together in an interesting and significant volume. The modern day church is described against the background of the wars, social upheavals, and technological developments of our modern times. It will aid greatly in an understanding of our modern period and it will help to put the church in its proper perspective.

The book has, in this reviewer's judgment, one weakness. It gives altogether insufficient attention to the *true* church of our Lord Jesus Christ and, in this failure, it does not relate the history of the true church to the history of Christendom in its broader scope. A great deal of time is spent on the effect of



the two world wars upon the church, on the theology of liberal theologians, and on the history of the ecumenical movement. But there is almost nothing in the book about conservative Presbyterianism and the history of the Reformed Churches.

**MY GOD IS YAHWEH** (Elijah and Ahab in an Age of Apostasy), M.B. Van't Veer (translated by Theodore Plantinga); Paideia Press, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada; 440 pp., (cloth) \$14.95. [Reviewed by Prof. H.C. Hoeksema]

According to the dust jacket, the author "lived a comparative brief but active life as a scholar, pastor and church leader. He held several pastorates in the Reformed Church of the Netherlands and authored a number of important publications in Dutch, including a dissertation on catechism instruction in relation to the writings of John Calvin." More than this we are not told concerning the author; nor are we informed as to the origins of this book. It is not a book of sermons, neither is it a commentary in the usual sense of the term.

Nevertheless, this is a delightful and well written work about the ministry of the prophet Elijah. It begins with the rebuilding of Jericho (I Kings 16:34), and it concludes with the calling of Elisha (I Kings 19:19-21). The book is well written, and, in my opinion, in general offers a sound explanation of this particular segment of Old Testament history. Anyone who wishes to preach on the history of Elijah could well profit from many of the insights in this book.

Although I cannot compare the English version with the Dutch original, it strikes me that this work also appears to be well translated.

My only negative comment is that the book does not completely cover the history of Elijah, and I was at a loss to understand why the author ended where he did.

Recommended.

**CALVIN AND THE ANABAPTIST RADICALS**, by Willem Balke; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1981; 338 pp., price not given; (paper). [Reviewed by Prof. H.C. Hanko]

This book, originally published in Dutch and translated by William J. Heynen, is a welcome edition to the literature on the "radical" movement of the Reformation. While the chief enemy of the Reformers on the continent was surely the Romish Church, the Reformers were troubled, almost from the beginning, by different groups of people who had also left the Romish Church, but who hold views fundamentally different from the Reformers. These constituted an entire wing of the Reformation and are usually all included under the general

name, "Anabaptists," a name which designates those who denied infant baptism and required re-baptism of those who joined them. Yet the views of these "radicals" on baptism were by no means the only points in which they differed from the Reformers. They held divergent views on such important doctrines as the nature of the church, the incarnation of Christ, and the doctrine of sanctification.

This book deals almost exclusively with Calvin's defense of the truth of Scripture over against the Anabaptist position. The book is divided into two parts: the first part deals with Calvin's attitude towards the Anabaptists in his successive editions of the *Institutes* and his actions against the Anabaptists during his first and second stays in Geneva. The second part is primarily doctrinal and gives a systematic summary of Calvin's teachings over against the doctrines of the Anabaptists.

The book makes extensive use of quotations from both primary and secondary sources and is for this reason also a valuable book. It gives, on the whole, a fair and balanced treatment of both the Anabaptists and Calvin and succeeds rather well in putting the whole controversy in its proper historical light.

The book seems to be somewhat overstated at times. E.g., the author, in the interests of his thesis, seems to find references to the Anabaptists in Calvin's writings where it is at least doubtful that this is true. Nevertheless, the book gives an insight into the Anabaptist controversy which is important to an understanding of the Reformation period.

**THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS**, Henry Stob; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich. 267 pp., (paper) \$11.95 [Reviewed by Prof. H.C. Hoeksema]

As the author himself points out in the Preface, "This volume contains some of the occasional papers and addresses which, in the course of years, were delivered to restricted audiences or published in journals with a limited circulation." Most of the chapters of this little volume were familiar to me from my having read them when they first appeared in various journals. And with many of these writings I disagreed when I first read them, and disagree also today. This does not change the fact that Dr. Stob is an interesting writer, well able to express his viewpoint. His approach, however, is frequently more philosophical than theological.

My general negative criticism is that the title *Theological Reflections* is a bit pretentious. Only a limited number of the essays in this book actually fit under that title, in this reviewer's opinion.

Let me end this review on a positive note.



Chapter 28 is an essay which first appeared in *The Reformed Journal* in 1952. It is entitled, "Catechesis: On Using and Revising the Compendium." In this chapter I found much worthwhile instruction concerning the subject of catechism instruction. Every seminarian and pastor, and especially those who are from time to time charged with revision and improvement of our catechism materials, could profit from some of the instruction and the cautions in this chapter.

**THE NEW CENTURY BIBLE COMMENTARY** (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., Grand Rapids, Mich.)  
**EXODUS**, J.P. Hyatt; 351 pp. (paper), \$7.95  
**ISAIAH 1-39**, Ronald E. Clements; 301 pp. (paper), \$7.95. **JOB**, H.H. Rowley; 281 pp. (paper) \$7.95.  
 [Reviewed by Prof. H.C. Hoeksema]

These three commentaries on the Old Testament are of very limited value. Perhaps it may be said that their main value in the library of any conserva-

tive student of Scripture would be negative, that is, they would serve as examples of how not to interpret Scripture.

My main criticism of them is that the viewpoint of all three of them is that of higher criticism. The commentary of Exodus is shot through with the documentary hypothesis. The commentary on Isaiah 1-39 proceeds from the higher critical viewpoint that Isaiah is the product of more than one human writer and that its parts were written at different times; this theory really denies the prophetic character of the book. And the commentary of Job questions the historicity of Job.

Besides, as far as explanation of the text is concerned, for the most part these volumes furnish very little more than a running commentary. They provide very little substantive explanation of the Scriptures.

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On August 15, 1982, our parents, MR. AND MRS. STUART BYLSMA will celebrate 35 years of being married in the Lord. The Lord Who has united them in marriage has been good to them, blessing their home with children and grandchildren. We, their children and grandchildren thank them for the dedicated covenant instruction and loving care that they have given us. We thank above all our Lord and Father for them and pray that He who has joined them together may keep them in the days ahead and to all eternity.

"But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children's children." (Psalm 103:17)

Gary and Marilyn Bylsma  
 Rev. Richard and Marcia Flikkema  
 Jan and Carole tenHaaf  
 Phyllis Bylsma  
 Tim and Sharon Rus  
 and 12 grandchildren

### NOTICE!!!

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in Doon, Iowa, on September 1, 1982, at 8:30 A.M., the Lord willing. Delegates in need of lodging are to inform the clerk of the Doon Consistory of their need.

Rev. David Engelsma, Stated Clerk

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Consistory of the Hull Protestant Reformed Church expresses its heartfelt sympathy to our fellow officebearers, elders John Hoksbergen and Tony Jansma, in the death of their brother-in-law, MR. JOHN HAVERHALS. "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." (Philippians 1:21)

Rev. Ron Cammenga, Pres.  
 Bert Van Maanen, Clerk

### NOTICE!!!

Classis East will meet in regular session on September 8, 1982 at the Hope Prot. Ref. Church. Material to be treated in this session must be in the hands of the Stated Clerk at least three weeks prior to the convening of this session.

Jon Huiskens, Stated Clerk

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On July 28, 1982, our beloved parents, MR. AND MRS. DICK KOOIENGA, celebrated their 55th wedding anniversary. We, their grateful children, thank them for the covenant instruction they have given us. We thank our heavenly Father for sparing them for us and for each other these many years. Our prayer is that the Lord will continue to bless them and keep them in His abiding care.

Bob and Joan Miedema  
 Earl and Lois Dykstra  
 Rog and Lou Kooienga  
 Arnold and Donna Dykstra  
 Don and Judie Sall

Don and Mary Kooienga  
 Stan and Bette Dykstra  
 34 grandchildren  
 29 great-grandchildren

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Our parents, MR. AND MRS. JAKE REGNERUS, SR., celebrated their 35th wedding anniversary on June 18, 1982. We are thankful to our Covenant God for having kept them for each other and for us. May they experience God's richest blessings in future years.

"For the Lord is good, His mercy is everlasting and His truth endureth to all generations." (Psalm 100:5)

their children and grandchildren  
 Joan Regnerus  
 Jake and Rene Soodsma  
 Rebecca, Heide, Benjamin  
 Jack and Sue Regnerus  
 Matthew, Sarah

Steve and Ev Oosterhouse  
 Mary, Elizabeth  
 Rich and Jan Regnerus  
 Jonathan, Jaclyn  
 Norb and Sandee Alsum  
 Sandeelynn

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On July 28, 1982, our dear parents, MR. AND MRS. VERNON DE VRIES, celebrated their 30th wedding anniversary. We, their children and grandchildren, are grateful to our heavenly Father for keeping them for each other and for us through these years. May the Lord continue to bless and keep them that they may long live together in all godliness and holiness.

"Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel." (Psalm 128:6)

Rev. Michael and Dawn De Vries  
 Jeffrey, Connie, Russell, Karen  
 David De Vries  
 Carla De Vries  
 Ruth De Vries  
 Tom De Vries



## News From Our Churches

Three months ago we reported concerning the difficulty of our bulletin typists to find room for the numerous spring bulletin announcements. Things are quite different now: announcements are spread out across the page and excess space is often given to a variety of poems and other quotes. One bulletin clerk, considering what was written about overflowing bulletins, I think, added this little handwritten note to the bottom of a bulletin which had announcements widely spaced: "How's this for making a little news look like a lot?" A few weeks later that same bulletin clerk wrote, "Sorry, I couldn't stretch it this time!" Needless to say, there was a lot of white showing on that bulletin.

As we reported earlier, much of the bulletin overcrowding problem in the spring is due to numerous speeches that are addressed at that time to a variety of church groups. Since we now have the space, I will briefly list to whom the speeches were addressed, the speakers and the titles of the speeches that have been announced on bulletins since the beginning of the year:

- Kalamazoo Church — Prof. Decker — "Assurance of Salvation - What is it?"
- Ladies' Society of Hope in Walker, Michigan — Prof. Hanko — "Organ transplants, Right or Wrong?"
- Adams St. Chr. School Mothers' Club — Rev. C. Hanko — "Prayer and Our Children"; Mrs. Marilyn Decker — "Early Years' Training in the Home"; Prof. Hanko — "Authority to Serve"
- The Eastern League of Men's and Ladies' Societies — Rev. Haak — "Faith Healing"
- A Ladies' League meeting in Edgerton, Minn. — Rev. Slopsema — "The Wise Woman"
- Men's Society of South Holland, Illinois — Rev. Houck — "Return to Historic Calvinism"
- Mr. and Mrs. League Meeting at Holland, Michigan — Rev. C. Hanko — "Schisms of 1953"
- Spring Lecture in Grand Rapids — Prof. Decker — "The Believer and His Bible"
- Office-Bearers Conference at Holland, Michigan — Rev. Miersma — "Putting on the Whole Armour of God"
- Lecture sponsored by our Covenant Church of

Wyckoff, New Jersey — Rev. R. Hanko — "The Church and Her Creeds"

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The following announcements were taken from the June 20th bulletin of First Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan: "Seminarman Ken Hanko has returned from Florida. The consistory decided to discontinue the work there at least for the summer months due to the negative response of Synod and the poor attendance there during the summer." And "Last Monday evening it was decided to accept the offer of the Franklin St. Church of Christ for our church property. Approval of the new building plans will be delayed until after the closing of the sale." *Standard Bearer* readers who have seen the big, beautiful church building on the corner of Fuller and Franklin can appreciate, I'm sure, the difficulty of reaching that decision.

Since we're on the subject of First Church, maybe now would be a good time to throw in a little tidbit about First's old parsonage: A few months ago *The Standard Bearer* business manager, Mr. Vander Wal, noticed something familiar about the return address of a letter requesting some of our pamphlets. Closer examination revealed that the address was indeed that of the former First Church parsonage (located next to the church) which at that time was being rented out to a party not affiliated with our churches.

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Quite a bit of the news in this column is on the old side. To continue in that vein — only a little deeper this time — we include a discovery made by Seminarman Gritters while he was doing some research for a term paper on 1953. He found the following article of interest in the April, 1953 Minutes of Classis East: "Moved to send a letter of sympathy and greeting to our brother, Rev. ———, who soon must submit to a major operation, and our stated clerk shall execute this."

Mr. Gritters added this editorial comment, "And you thought stated clerks had to be qualified now!"

CK