



**A Reformed  
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Magazine**

# ***The Standard Bearer***

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**Vol. 74, No. 1  
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# The Impossibility of Religious Work-Righteousness

*For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.*

Romans 2:28, 29

The question which the apostle is answering in the context is the question whether a man can be righteous before God because of his religion. He is talking no more to man in general as in the beginning of the chapter, but he is addressing religious people. He is addressing the religious man. He is addressing the church member, even though it is the church member of the Old Testament, the Jew. He is taking away his religion, his piety, his religious good works, as the basis of righteousness before God. This is the general thought of the context from verse 17 to the end of the chapter.

*Herman Hoeksema was the first editor of the Standard Bearer.*

That man cannot be righteous by works, that the heathen cannot be righteous by works—that was plain. But now if a man is religious, cannot this be the basis of his righteousness before God?

Remember, the apostle is not addressing only the Jew, but he is addressing the religious people of that day. Therefore, he is addressing you and me. He is answering the question whether church membership and all that stands connected with it can be the basis of our righteousness before God.

The apostle answers: if our religion is to be the basis of our righteousness, it must be one hundred percent perfect. If circumcision, which was the heart of the Old Testament religion, considered as a work, is to be the basis of my righteousness before God; if baptism,

considered as a work, is to be the basis of our righteousness, then it is necessary to keep perfectly the law. For, the apostle writes in the immediate context, "circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision." This is so emphatically true that if one who is not circumcised in the flesh, if a Gentile, keeps the righteousness of the law, his uncircumcision shall be counted for circumcision, and he shall judge the Jew, who by the letter and circumcision transgresses the law.

The reason for what he has said in the context, the apostle gives in the text. Your religion, your baptism, your church membership, your piety, your religious activities cannot serve as your righteousness

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before God. "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."

According to the context, the text emphasizes that if your religious righteousness is to be perfect before God, as a work, you must be able to circumcise your own heart. And you must be perfect in your inward heart. Hence the apostle shows us here the impossibility of religious work-righteousness.

### **Such a Righteousness Must Have Praise of God**

The apostle says, "He is a Jew, whose praise is not of men, but of God." We would say, "He is a Christian, whose praise is not of men, but of God." This means three things. In the first place, objectively it means that God praises us. To praise is to judge, to approve, and then to tell the one so judged and approved of that approval. God judges perfectly. He also judges thoroughly.

The apostle says that the man who would be righteous by his religion must not have his praise of men. Man cannot praise. When man praises anyone, it does not signify that the man so praised is righteous. Man praises according to the standard of man. His praise is sinful with regard to the motive. Mere sinful man praises from various motives. Not only is the praise of man sinful, but it is also external. Man can only praise what is external, he can only praise what he can see. Man cannot judge, and, therefore, he cannot praise, motives. For these reasons, man's praise is meaningless as a criterion of righteousness.

Even a certificate of the church does not mean anything with respect to your righteousness before God. When the consistory gives you a certificate of membership

and writes on it that you are sound in doctrine and in walk, you do not receive a passport into heaven. Also the consistory praises what it sees.

Your praise must be according to God. But God judges perfectly. God approves only what is one hundred percent perfect. He does not approve anything which is not one hundred percent perfect. As God judges perfectly, so He judges thoroughly. That is, He judges according to the inmost root of the heart. What must our service be, to be one hundred percent perfect, so that it can be acceptable to God? It must be one hundred percent according to the will of God, and it must be one hundred percent from the heart. Your praise must be of God.

In the second place, the phrase means that you do not seek anything but the praise of God. It means that in all your religious activity your only motive is to get the praise of God. Your motive must not be to get the praise of men. It is your one hundred percent desire that God praise you. From this, all our religious activity must spring, to be according to God.

In the third place, that one's praise must be of God means that God judges because of what a man is and does. Therefore, one whose praise is of God, and who is righteous because of his religious activity, is one who has the word and the testimony of God that he is righteous before God. You must have the testimony of God, through the Spirit, that you are righteous because of your religious activities.

But this is impossible. We would read this word this way: "He is not a Christian, who is one outwardly, neither is that baptism, which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Christian, whose praise is of God." If this is the case, we can have no moment's peace. There is no righteousness in being baptized, in going to church, in being a Christian, in being pious. If our work must have the praise of God,

and if all that is not one hundred percent perfect before God cannot enter into the judgment, then I am lost.

### **Such a Righteousness Must Proceed from a Perfect, Circumcised Heart**

For what is the case: If I am to be righteous, I must have a circumcised heart. If circumcision is to be the basis of our righteousness before God, I must have a circumcised heart, and I must circumcise it. Circumcision is not that which one performs in the flesh. If that were the case, if circumcision merely meant the cutting of the flesh, then the Jew could say, "Yes, I am circumcised." The Jew could say, "I circumcise all my children, and I did it." If this could be the basis of righteousness, the Jew could become righteous. The apostle says, however, that this is not what circumcision is.

This is also true of baptism. If baptism is merely that we bring our babies to church and sprinkle a little water on them, we could say, "I baptize and am righteous."

When we read in the text that circumcision is not in the letter, the meaning is that it is not by the law. The letter is the law. The law had power to circumcise all children. The law was obeyed. The apostle is not speaking to those who were indifferent. He is speaking to the faithful Jew; he is addressing the religious Jew, who kept the law. All were circumcised by the letter of the law. But the apostle says that this is not what circumcision is.

So there is a baptism by the letter. There is an ordinance of baptism which is kept by the church. If this could be our righteousness before God, all would be righteous. But the apostle says that this is not true.

Circumcision is of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter. This is circumcision. Circumcision was a sign. The negative testimony of circumcision was that a man



could not bring forth children of God. The negative testimony of circumcision was that if God did not perform an operation upon the generations of Abraham, Abraham could not bring forth God's children.

Positively, circumcision was a sign by which God testified, and Abraham accepted, that God by a wonder of His grace would make of Abraham's children, children of God. Circumcision was a picture of the cutting away of sin.

Now the apostle speaks of circumcision of the heart. The heart is the center of our existence from a spiritual point of view. Our willing, our thinking, our desiring, is from the heart. As the heart is, so we are. If our heart is corrupt, our thinking is corrupt, our willing is corrupt, our desiring is corrupt. If the heart is good, if the heart is circumcised, the man has been circumcised and sanctified.

This is baptism also. Baptism is a sign. It is a sign of the same thing. There is no essential difference between circumcision and baptism. The only difference is that circumcision looked forward to Christ, while baptism looks at Christ as He has come into the world and made atonement. The Old Testament people of God must be circumcised to bring forth the Christ. But as soon as the Seed has been brought forth, it stands to reason that the sign is changed. When Christ has come and atonement has been made, there can be no more circumcision, but baptism. But both mean the same thing.

Now then, if circumcision and baptism must be the basis of our righteousness *as a work*, all we do is perform the outward rite. We can never circumcise the heart. We can never baptize into Christ. If it is true that circumcision is a circumcision of the heart, and if baptism is a baptism of the heart, and if it is not our work but the work of God, then we can never bring circumcision or baptism before God as work-righteousness. The apostle

means to say: "It is impossible for anyone to say, 'I am a Jew, I am circumcised,' or, 'I am a Christian, I am baptized, I observe all that stands connected with the church and, therefore, I am righteous.' Your religion must go!"

Certainly, the circumcised Jew was justified, but not as long as he looked upon his circumcision as a work. For his circumcision testified of the righteousness which is by faith in Christ Jesus. As long as we look upon baptism as a work, it can never justify us. For we are not righteous. As it is with circumcision and baptism, so it is with all our works. Our religion can never be the basis of our righteousness before God.

#### **Such a Righteousness Must Be Characterized by a Perfect Walk**

For what does the apostle say? "He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly." All who look upon the Jews as really being the Jews are condemned here. The Jews are not Jews. What is an outward Jew, that is, a Jew in appearance? An outward Jew is one who was born of Abraham, who looked like a Jew, who was circumcised on the eighth day, who was brought up in the knowledge of the law, and who observed all the religious rites.

So it is with a Christian in appearance. A Christian in appearance is one who is born of believing parents, is baptized, is instructed in the word, and is faithful in all his religious obligations. He is not one whom the consistory must run after to come to catechism. That is not even a Christian in appearance.

The apostle says, "He is not a Jew, he is not a Christian, that is one outwardly." Do not turn that around. The apostle does not say: "He is a Jew, who is not circumcised." He does not say: "He is a Christian, who is not baptized." A Christian will do these things. He will go to church and to catechism; he will observe his religious obli-

gations. He wants to go to church. He likes to go there. He will sing praise to God and listen to His Word.

But the apostle means to say that all that you see of a Jew and of a Christian does not constitute a Jew or a Christian. The reason is that all these outward things are possible to be accomplished by the outward flesh.

He is a Jew and he is a Christian who is one inwardly. He is a Jew and he is a Christian who is one in the hidden things of the heart. This hidden life of the heart will then become manifest in all his life as the spiritual background. Therefore, if you want to make your religion the basis of your righteousness before God, you must be able to say that in whatever you do you are motivated one hundred percent by the love of God.

What is the conclusion? What is your conclusion? What is my conclusion? What is our conclusion, if we review our religion? This: away with our religion as the basis of righteousness! Away with our piety! There is not one here who, on that basis, would dare to stand before God and say, "Lord, I have been religious; on the basis of my work, make me righteous." There is nothing left. There is no righteousness with us. This is the conclusion.

Then the way opens for what the apostle means to teach. Only as we cast away all our own works is there room for the preaching of the apostle. The heart of this preaching is this: the righteous shall live by faith. When we stand in judgment (and we do, we stand in judgment now; this judgment will be revealed, but we stand in judgment now) and confess that all our righteousness is but filthy rags, God will speak to us and say that our sins are forgiven. The impossible possibility has happened: the unrighteous has become righteous.

I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. □



The previous issue completed 73 years of publishing the *Standard Bearer*. In an interview with the editor recently, about the nature of the *SB*, the interviewer observed that the *SB* is now the second oldest Reformed periodical in North America. Only the Christian Reformed *Banner* has been published longer.

In the providence of God, we have made plans for the publication of volume 74. The staff reappointed the various functionaries. New writers in this volume are to include Rev. C. Terpstra, Rev. B. Gritters, and Prof. R. Dykstra. Rev. Terpstra will cooperate with Rev. S. Key in the rubric, "Taking Heed to the Doctrine." Rev. Gritters will appear with Rev. A. denHartog in the rubric, "In His Fear." Prof. Dykstra will write for a new rubric, "Christian Education." In addition, Rev. K. Koole

will write for a revived rubric, "Come, Lord Jesus." These articles are to examine events in the world in the light of Scripture's teaching on the last things.

Welcome, to the new contributors.

A hearty thanks to those who have faithfully written and have agreed to continue.

Our readers are reminded that they have opportunity to contribute as well. The letters column permits comment on the content of every issue. "The Reader Asks" department is intended to allow for questions on all kinds of biblical, theological, and ecclesiastical matters. The editorial committee will do its best to answer.

Volume 74 of the *SB*, still in very truth, and not in name only, a "Reformed" magazine.

By the grace of God, and to His glory.

—DJE

## Editorial

# The Sacraments Are Still an Issue

In the September 1, 1997 issue of this magazine, I commented on a recent ecumenical conference of Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, and ecumenicals ("That They All may be One," or "The Mystery of the Great Whore?"). This summer saw another significant ecumenical development. Four large denominations in the tradition of the Reformation adopted a "Formula of Agreement" that established "full communion" among these churches.

Adoption of the "Formula" meant that each denomination now recognizes the others "as churches in which the gospel is rightly preached and the sacraments

rightly administered according to the Word of God." It also meant that each denomination allows the members of the other denominations to partake of the sacraments in its fellowship. Members of the other churches may now come to the Lord's Table in each of the uniting denominations. In addition, the ordained ministers in the four denominations may now not only preach in all the denominations but also serve as full-time pastors and teachers in all the other denominations, subject to the procedures in the various denominations.

The four denominations are the Presbyterian Church (USA) [PCUSA], the United Church of

Christ (UCC), the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), and the Reformed Church in America (RCA).

This is a significant ecumenical development. The denominations are large, influential Protestant churches. Their combined membership is some ten million people. There is also the fact that three of the churches stand in the Reformed tradition of the Protestant Reformation, while the fourth is a Lutheran church. The accord is heralded as a healing of the rift between the two great wings of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Reformation of the church, Reformed and Lutheran.

This ecumenical event mani-



festivals important features of the present-day movement to unite all the churches. There is the declaration and expression of oneness without insisting on organizational union. Organizational union will come later. But already now there is oneness. The oneness is expressed by partaking together of the Lord's Supper. The churches in the Reformed tradition are now one with the Lutherans. The members of the Reformed Church in America are now one with all the members of the United Church of Christ.

Another important feature of contemporary ecumenicity is that the official actions of the churches are promoted by the everyday ecumenicity of the people. This was pointed out by a minister in the RCA in his defense of his church's uniting with the other churches, especially the godless UCC. Writing in the January, 1997 issue of the *Church Herald*, Dr. Louis Lotz argued that the people in the RCA and in the ELCA are themselves practicing the oneness of the churches' official agreement: "There are hundreds of Promise Keepers groups where Reformed and Lutheran men study the Bible and pray together." Lotz neglected to mention that at the meetings of Promise Keepers and elsewhere, Reformed people are studying, praying, and worshipping also with Roman Catholics, the wildest of charismatics (the Vineyard), and Mormons. Shall the RCA, therefore, unite with Rome, the Vineyard, and the Latter Day Saints? But his point is well taken. If Reformed people can have such fellowship regardless of doctrinal differences, their churches can unite. Indeed, the people put pressure on their churches to unite. There is today a powerful grassroots ecumenicity. The priests and prophets prophesy falsely, but the people themselves would have it so.

In a striking way, the uniting of the four churches makes plain

that union of the Protestant churches with Rome is not far off. The same indifference to doctrine that enabled the four churches to unite will enable them all to return to the embrace of "Mother Rome." This is particularly the case as regards the difference in sacramental doctrine. The three churches in the Reformed tradition were able to unite with the ELCA by ignoring Lutheranism's doctrine that Christ is physically present in the bread and wine of the Supper so that all who eat, unbeliever as well as believer, eat the substantial body of Christ with their teeth. They will have little difficulty similarly to ignore Rome's related doctrine of transubstantiation.

The implications of the uniting of the four Protestant churches for the union of all of them with Rome (if Rome will have them!) are even clearer. The August 20, 1997 issue of the *Grand Rapids Press* reported that the ELCA endorsed a joint declaration with the Roman Catholic Church on how humans are saved from eternal damnation. The declaration states that the two churches are agreed that "humans are saved by the grace of God, and not by anything humans can do on their own." There is sufficient agreement between the ELCA and Rome on the doctrine of justification that "remaining differences are no longer 'church dividing.'"

The theologically informed and observant son or daughter of the Reformation will have noticed at once that the declaration does not say, "humans are saved by the grace of God *only*." Nor does it flatly assert, "and not by anything humans can do. Period!"

The ELCA took this decision confessing fundamental agreement with Rome on the gospel, with its clear intimation of coming church union, the day after the ELCA approved "historic unity accords" with the PCUSA, the UCC, and the RCA.

Tremendous events are taking place in the churches in fulfillment

of the Word of God. The adoption of the "Formula of Agreement" by the four churches was a stage in the formation of the great whore of Revelation 17, the false church of the Antichrist. That this ecumenicity is the unholy counterpart to the oneness of the church of Jesus Christ is proved from the fact that the four churches united, not on the basis of the truth but by ignoring the truth. This was especially evident in the uniting of the three Reformed churches with the Lutheran church in complete disregard for the historical, creedal differences in doctrine over the sacraments.

For three of the churches, the unity could be grounded in their mutual rejection of the truth of Holy Scripture. They are notoriously apostate. The PCUSA is the church that adopted the Auburn Affirmation, which denies cardinal doctrines of the faith, and that expelled J. Gresham Machen, who was contending for the faith. The ELCA is a federation of liberal Lutherans, including those driven out of the Missouri Synod Lutheran Church a few years ago for their theological modernism. The UCC is probably the most corrupt Protestant church in North America. Such is its depravity in faith and life that it has officially approved the ordination of practicing homosexuals and lesbians. Darrell Todd Maurina's "United Reformed News Service" report of March 24, 1997 noted that the 1991 General Synod of the UCC declared that the denomination "boldly affirms, celebrates, and embraces the gifts of ministry of lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons."

With these churches, the RCA officially declared "full communion." By this decision, the RCA made itself and every member of it fully responsible for the unbelief and ungodliness of the other denominations, including the homosexual and lesbian ministers in the UCC. The RCA recognizes the other denominations "as churches



in which the gospel is rightly preached and the sacraments rightly administered according to the Word of God."

The issue that caused the most concern in the RCA was the official approval of homosexuality by the UCC. With good reason. Now the RCA has approved the UCC's approval of homosexuality. It has become a real possibility that a practicing homosexual or lesbian (the RCA has itself approved the ordination of women ministers) will be called as pastor of an RCA congregation. Adoption of the "Formula of Agreement" opened up the Lord's Table in every RCA congregation, conservative as well as liberal, to UCC homosexuals and lesbians. There is now "full communion."

This exposes every RCA congregation and every member in every congregation to the wrath of God. For the sacrament of the Lord's Supper still means something. The sacraments are still an issue. According to Question and Answer 82 of the Heidelberg Catechism, a creed of the RCA, admission to the Lord's Table of unbelieving and ungodly persons profanes the covenant of God and kindles His wrath against the whole congregation.

Nevertheless, the RCA's dismissal of the doctrinal differences between Lutherans and the Re-

formed over the Supper was even worse. Historically, these differences separated the two great branches of the Protestant Reformation. Originally, Luther and his Lutherans refused fellowship to the Reformed. As the Lutheran theology of the sacraments developed, the Reformed sharply condemned the Lutheran doctrine.

These differences were, and are, weighty. Serious theological issues were, and are, at stake: the nature of grace and salvation; the extent of grace; the nature of the ascension of Christ; the two natures of Christ Himself. These issues are confessional matters for all Reformed Christians, including Reformed Christians in the RCA. Lord's Days 18 and 25-30 of the Heidelberg Catechism make them confessional matters.

By entering into full communion with the Lutherans, without resolving the differences over the sacraments in general and the Lord's Supper in particular, the RCA judged the great sacramental controversies of the past to be vain, if not foolish. Implicitly, it denied the doctrine of the Lord's Supper in its own confession, as well as the creed's condemnation of Lutheran doctrine. At bottom, the RCA's ecumenical act declared that doctrine as such no longer matters. Doctrine may be set aside in the

interests of "love, unity, and peace."

But doctrine is the Word of God.

The "love, unity, and peace" of the "Formula of Agreement" are at the expense of, and in contempt of, the Word of God.

This is horrible to contemplate.

But this is the spirit, the ecclesiastical spirit, of our age. He will gain power.

Let us who are determined to remain Reformed listen to Calvin in this matter:

We acknowledge no Unity except in Christ; no Charity of which He is not the bond; and ... therefore, the chief point in preserving Charity is to maintain Faith sound and entire.

Agreement, or union, is, indeed, singularly a good thing, because there is nothing better or more desirable than peace. But we must ever bear in mind, that in order that men may happily unite together, obedience to God's Word must be the beginning. The bond, then, of lawful concord among us is this—that we obey God from first to last; for accursed is every union where there is no regard to God and to His Word.

"Accursed is every union where there is no regard to God and to His Word." □

—DJE

## Guest Article

Rev. Doug Kuiper

# The Fall's Effect on Language

*Rev. Kuiper is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Byron Center, Michigan.*

In the last article we considered the effect which the confusion of tongues at Babel had on language. In this article we will consider how language was affected by the fall, which will set the stage

to consider in the next article how language was affected by redemption.

Primarily, both the fall and redemption had a *moral* effect on language. *Man* fell; language did not.



And *man*, not language, is re-deemed by Christ. In this and the next article, therefore, we will be dealing not so much with language as such, but with how we *use* language.

How we use language is no minor matter. Language is God's gift to us. We must use all of His gifts, including this one, in a way which glorifies Him.



In order to understand what effect the fall had on language, we ought first to make some remarks about the use of language before the fall.

We know that before the fall, God created and gave man language. God's purpose in giving man language to use was nothing less than this, that by language man might serve and worship God. So Gordon Clark says:

Language did not develop from, nor was its purpose restricted to, the physical needs of earthly life. God gave Adam a mind to understand the divine law, and he gave him language to enable him to speak to God. From the beginning language was intended for worship.<sup>1</sup>

And worship involves, really, all of one's life.

We must bear in mind that Adam was created to be God's friendservant and officebearer. In other words, he was prophet, priest, and king over all creation, under and on behalf of God. In carrying out the work of this office, Adam had to use language. As prophet, he was to give praise and glory to God, and speak to other human beings of the wonderful works of God. As priest, he was to speak to God Himself. As king, he was to rule over creation, which involved speaking. Specifically, he was to "keep" the garden of Eden (Gen. 2:15)—not simply keeping it up and caring for it, but defending it from the enemy, Satan. This would involve fighting,

should Satan enter the garden, and that fighting would be spiritual in nature, through Adam's speech.

Before the fall, Adam performed this work in a proper way. He named the animals and Eve, calling her Woman (Gen. 2:19-20, 23). He spoke to God regularly (implied in Gen. 3:8ff.). He served and worshiped God perfectly in his use of language.

Then sin entered the world.

It was through communication, through language, that Satan enticed Eve. He said, through the serpent, "Ye shall not surely die" (Gen. 3:4). Through words, Eve responded to Satan and encouraged her husband to eat of the forbidden fruit as well. Thus Adam and Eve corrupted their natures, forfeited the right to be God's friendservants, and by nature became God's enemy and Satan's friendservant.

In the fall, man did not lose the ability to use language. That man can use language is part of his being a rational, moral creature, which he continued to be after the fall. Rather, in the fall man lost the ability, apart from grace, to use language in the loving service and worship of God.



Specifically, we note three effects of the fall on language. The first effect of the fall on language is that we miscommunicate. One person communicates information to another person, but the recipient understands something different from what the sender intended. Such miscommunication did not characterize Adam and Eve before the fall, nor will it characterize us in heaven. We will all understand each other perfectly.

To classify this as an effect of the fall does not mean that miscommunication itself is always sinful. It could be sinful, if the speaker *intends* not to be clearly understood, or the hearer *pretends* not to understand. Then deception is involved. Often, however, such miscommu-

nication is not intentional, and thus not sinful in itself.

While this first effect is an instance of not being *able* to use language perfectly, the second and third effects are instances of not being *willing* to use language in obedience to God. The second effect of the fall on language is that we use it to show our hatred of God and our neighbor, and to show that by nature we serve, not Jehovah, but Satan.

One way we might show this hatred of God and our neighbor is in the *content* of our speech. The world's speech shows that it hates God. The prophet Enoch spoke of God's judgment upon the world for the "hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him" (Jude 15). Also today the wicked blaspheme God in their speech, taking His name in vain. They murmur and complain, accusing God of being not fair. Or they deny that God exists! At the same time, in their speech they exalt men if it will be to their advantage (Jude 16).

However, such wicked speech is not found only in the world. The church also speaks wickedly at times. Particularly this is true of the false church, which, from her pulpits and mission fields, speaks the lie in the name of Jehovah! It is true also of the carnal element within the true church. Israel in the wilderness questioned whether the Lord was truly among them, because they had no water (Ex. 17:7). Some of those who returned from the Babylonian captivity spoke stoutly against Jehovah, saying that to serve God and to keep His laws is vain.

To speak hard words against Jehovah, and to speak stoutly, lies also in the nature of the true child of God. This is because we have fallen in Adam, our first father. We were shapen in iniquity, and conceived in sin (Ps. 51:5). The child of God must examine himself in this regard, to be sure that his old nature does not manifest itself.

It is also possible to show ha-



tred for the neighbor by the content of our speech. This we would do by bearing false witness, slandering, backbiting, or by telling the neighbor himself or another person that we hate him.

We might also show our hatred for God and the neighbor by the *manner* in which we speak. Often our manner of speaking will be related to the content of the speech. If the content of our speech shows hatred of God or the neighbor, we will convey that hatred by speaking sneeringly, mockingly, perhaps jokingly. Tender, careful, loving words and gestures we would not use to convey a hateful attitude.

The third effect of the fall on language is that we use it to convey lies. This third effect is certainly a specific instance of showing hatred of God and the neighbor. However, wishing to pay special attention to it, I distinguish it from the second effect.

Created in God's image, man both knew God truly and spoke the truth. Fallen man can speak only the lie, by nature. What is a lie? Certainly the lie is the opposite of the truth; but we can add also that

the lie is everything which is opposed to the truth. Christ is the truth (John 14:6) and God's Word is truth (John 17:17). Any statement or idea which opposes God, as He reveals Himself in Christ, is the lie. Furthermore, any statement made by an unregenerate person, or any idea of an unregenerate person, in whose heart the Spirit of truth does not work, is a lie. It is divorced from and opposed to the truth.

That lie is prominent in our day. The lie of evolution, the lie of man being in control of his destiny, the lie that God loves all men—all of these lies and more are effects of the fall.

To speak the lie shows, therefore, that one hates God.

The child of God must fight the tendency to lie. How easy it is for us to lie! We speak "little white lies," half truths, and we fail to glorify God in our speech. We must be sobered, and must tremble before the living God, when we remember that liars will have their part in the second death (Rev. 21:8), and that those who love and make a lie will be without the city

of God, the new Jerusalem (Rev. 22:15).



These are three effects of the fall on language. We can summarize them this way: the fundamental effect of the fall on language is that it hinders true covenant fellowship. Eternal life is experienced by the enjoyment of such fellowship with God. Furthermore, the child of God must seek the fellowship of other saints. The fall interrupted such fellowship. It did more—really it *destroyed* such fellowship. But God restored that fellowship in Christ; redemption's effect on language was more powerful than the fall's effect on language. But redemption's effect was not for all; it was only for God's elect. That means that once more it is possible for the child of God to love God, to love the neighbor, and to speak the truth. This we shall see in our next article. □

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<sup>1</sup>Gordon H. Clark, *Language and Theology*, Jefferson, MD (The Trinity Foundation, second edition, 1993), page 138.

Cloud of Witnesses

Prof. Herman Hanko

## Herman Hoeksema: Theologian and Reformer (1)

### Introduction

I shall have to write this sketch of someone whom I knew. I did not and could not know him as his family knew him. I did not and could not know him as his colleagues knew him. But he was my pastor for nearly twenty years and

he was my professor in the seminary for at least six years. We knew him in the classroom, in the coffee room at break time, during the informalities of Student Club, and in the banter and give-and-take of seminary life.

Yes, it was six years, not the normal three of a full seminary course. While I was still in college but making plans to go to seminary, Herman Hoeksema suffered a stroke. The Lord gave him a re-

markable, though not complete, recovery. We were concerned that by the time we were ready to enter seminary Hoeksema would no longer be capable of teaching, and we wanted to study dogmatics under him. I and several others asked permission from the Theological School Committee to take dogmatics with him even if it meant only auditing the courses. This permission was granted and we studied dogmatics with him during three

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years of college studies. The Lord spared him for additional years, and we were given the privilege of studying dogmatics (as well as other subjects) with him for an additional three years. So we went through the six loci of dogmatics with him twice. Not a day of study was wasted.

It is not, I am sure, possible to balance praise with blame and to be just and right in both. God uses sinful means to accomplish His will. We hold our treasure, Paul tells the Corinthians, in clay pots. But these things are not my primary concern. What is of interest to me and ought to be of interest to all of us is the fact that God used him in remarkable ways in the church. That God uses sinners is a given. That God used Herman Hoeksema is reason for gratitude on the part of all who love the Reformed faith.

Gertrude Hoeksema, a daughter-in-law, has written the one biography of Hoeksema, and the readers of this sketch are urged to read that book. Its title is, *Therefore Have I Spoken*. On it I must rely for much information not available in other sources.

So, on with the story.

### Hoeksema's Early Life

Herman Hoeksema was born on March 12, 1886 from Johanna Bakema and Tiele Hoeksema in Hoogezand, in the province of Groningen, the Netherlands. The date of his birth, 1886, will attract the attention of anyone who has knowledge of and appreciation for the history of the church in the Netherlands. It was the year Dr. Abraham Kuyper led the faithful in the apostate state church out to form a new denomination, and thus reform the church in that country.

Dr. Kuyper's work, however, was not the first reformation brought about in the state church; Hendrik DeCock, as we discussed in an earlier article, had also led faithful people of God out of the

state church, but fifty years earlier in 1834. Hoeksema was born from parents who belonged to the churches which DeCock had formed, known as *De Afscheiding*, or *The Separation*.

The people of these churches were the common folk, the poor day-laborers, the people without influence. But they possessed something more important: a godliness and piety which had deep roots in Scripture and in a prayer-filled life.

In the tradition of these folk, Hoeksema was given a very godly mother. Her godliness and spirituality were all the stronger because of the husband to whom she was united. He was a drunkard who forsook his family to enlist in foreign service, and who spent what little he earned in sin. He returned home only occasionally, and when Herman was nine years old, forcibly took Herman from his home. Mrs. Hoeksema had to get a court order, or legal separation, to prevent this from recurring.

His mother was required to take in sewing and to work long hours to support her family. Even with hard work, money was always in short supply. It was not easy to feed three growing boys and one girl and provide a Christian education for them besides. The result was that the family often went hungry and Herman took to running around with the town ruffians who sometimes engaged in stealing food to ease their hunger pangs.

It was possible for Herman to continue his education only because he was given support from the town. This education was in a trade school, which qualified him to serve as apprentice for a blacksmith. He obtained work away from home where, at 15 years old, he worked from 4:00 A.M. to 10:00 P.M. for \$30.00 a year plus room and board. The work was hard and the food he received meager and insufficient to sustain his growing body. For a year he worked here,

but at the end of the year found a better job in his hometown making wrought-iron fences.

The poverty and hard work of his youth gave to Herman a sympathy for the poor and a distaste for the selfish employer who refused to pay his help a living wage but demanded long hours and hard work. His preaching during his years in the ministry often reflected these childhood experiences.

Although he received his religious training in a church of the *Afscheiding*, Hoeksema had a friend who belonged to the churches of the Kuyper movement. Through this friend he came to hear Dr. Kuyper preach and speak, and was influenced by Kuyper's strong and uncompromising emphasis on salvation by sovereign and particular grace. It was an influence that was to be the standard of his life.

At 18 years of age, Hoeksema left the Netherlands and the poverty he knew there to find a home in America. He stayed in Chicago with his sister who had preceded him. After holding a variety of jobs and saving what he could, he was able to get his mother and brothers to this country, while he himself departed for Grand Rapids and Calvin College to study for the ministry of the Word.

### Early Ministry

Hoeksema had received gifts from God which had to be used in different ways than working with his hands. He was a man of towering intellect, penetrating insight, and originality of thought. His studies came easy to him and he was able to absorb vast amounts of material. His interest was in Dutch Reformed theology, and, because he knew the Dutch thoroughly, he was able to read with ease that ocean of Reformed Dutch thought, so rich and fertile, but so inaccessible to us today.

He was a man of many and varied gifts. In addition to the gifts of intellect, he was an artist of some ability. Later in life, when he took



up painting for relaxation, he became skillful in oils. But his artistic skills extended also into literary achievements. He wrote a dramatic production in poetry while in school; he composed a sonnet at the time of his 25th anniversary; and all his writing (and there was much of it) was characterized by a clarity and literary grace to which few attain. The clarity of his writing (and his preaching and speaking) was of such a kind that, although there were many who disagreed with his theology, no one ever complained that they could not understand what he meant. He could express profound ideas in simple language.

He was a man of iron will and steely determination. This was characteristic of his own life, which

was highly disciplined; but it was especially evident in his commitment to the truth. Having once set himself upon the course of service to the church of Christ and the truth of God, nothing could swerve him from it. No one, friend or foe, would dispute the fact that Hoeksema stood firmly for what he believed. This was so true that the word that came most often from the mouths of his detractors was "stubborn."

The evidences of his commitment to the church appeared already during his student days. When he was scheduled as a student to bring a word of edification to the congregation of Maple Ave. Christian Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan, he knew that the

congregation was opposed in large measure to Christian education. Aware of the implications of what he was doing, he prayed in his congregational prayers that God's covenant people might not in the education of their children deliver them over to the gates of hell — his forceful characterization of the public school system. So infuriated did the congregation become that his hosts did not reappear in their own home until he had departed, and the consistory made an effort to keep him from their pulpit—an effort that failed only because the student body in seminary decided that no student would go to Maple Ave. if Hoeksema could not go.

It was, however, the beginning of a long life of controversy.

... to be continued. □

**Search the Scriptures**

**Rev. Mitchell Dick**

# “Hanukkah & Temple Truth”

**John 10:22-42**

Jesus is in Jerusalem. The feast of “the dedication” is being celebrated by the Jews. This feast, though not authorized by the Hebrew Scriptures, was nevertheless celebrated annually by the Jews. It is still celebrated today. The Jews call it Hanukkah (Hebrew for “dedication”).

The purpose of the feast was (and still is) the “commemoration of the purification and rededication of the temple by Judas the Maccabee in the year 165 BC, exactly three years after it had been defiled by the wicked Antiochus Epiphanes” (Hendriksen).

Jewish tradition maintains that a special miracle occurred at the time of this rededication. Listen to the account of one Rabbi Mark Diamond:

When it came time to re-light the menorah (candlestick, MD) only one small jar of oil that had not been defiled by the Greeks could be found within the entire Temple. It would take an eight-day round trip journey to obtain new pure oil. But the high Priest, determined to rededicate the Temple even if the menorah could be kindled for only one day, lit the menorah. The next day, to everyone's amazement, the menorah was miraculously still lit. The oil burned for eight days, until a new supply of oil could be brought. The community rejoiced, thanking God for his favor.

Because of the belief that by a wonder God kept the menorah lit for eight days, the feast of the dedication is celebrated by the Jews for eight days, and is characterized by the burning of lights (hence Hanukkah is also called the festival of lights). In Jesus' day the dwelling places of the Jews were lit. Today when Hanukkah is celebrated, some time in December, a replica of the menorah is lit, one candle at a time, until on the eighth night of the celebration all eight candles shine brightly.

Hanukkah! Happy Hanukkah!

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But no Jesus. The Jews, celebrating the temple and the faithfulness of God, will have no part of Jesus. So now. So then, when Temple walked in their midst. To

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be sure, Jesus does not escape their notice. Jesus is walking in the part of the temple called "Solomon's porch," a covered colonnade running along the east wall of the temple. The Jews see Him. They come, and they gather round about him (v. 24). They are exasperated at the mystique of Jesus; they cannot figure Him out! They are frustrated because of His purity; with this One they can find no fault! They fear because of Jesus' influence; more and more people are believing this One and forsaking the traditions of the scribes and Pharisees! They are smarting from Jesus' recent reference to them as thieves and robbers and hirelings and strangers (vv. 1-13). They demand that Jesus now tell them plainly whether He be the Christ or no. Not that they will believe Jesus if He tells them He is. But they will catch this Jesus and deny and twist His words to try to condemn Him.

They come upon Jesus. They are hungry to eat Jesus up, to devour, to tear Him apart. These Jews are sharks circling the prey, wolves preparing to pounce.

Fools! A revelation here of desperate and shameful folly at the feast of the dedication! Sinful mortals imagining the Lord Jesus to be like so many of the others: easy prey, vulnerable, one who can be brought to toe the party line, and if not, eliminated. Israelites, lighting lamps of oil at their feast, yet seeking to snuff out the Light of Israel and of the world!

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Hear the words of Jesus! Jesus is *not* one of us, our equal. He and His Father are one (v. 30). Jesus is God with us. Temple.

Hear Him proclaim precious truth about our salvation. Temple truth.

Believe God Jesus. Celebrate Savior Jesus. Be dedicated to this Lord Jesus, and to His truth.

True Hanukkah! Temple truth! Happy Hanukkah!

## For Study, Meditation, & Discussion

### 1. The Temple and Jesus (vv. 22-24)

Everything in the Bible points to Jesus. The promises in Him are yea and amen (II Cor. 1:20). Law and prophets tell of Him (Luke 24:25-27). History is empty without Him and full when He comes (Gal. 4:4). Doctrine is of Him (Eph. 4:21). Wonders are signs of Him whose name is Wonderful (Is. 9:6). Everything, Genesis to Revelation, is of Jesus.

So the temple, the Old Testament "house of God." Consider the Old Testament tabernacle/temple, and its significance as the place where God dwelt with His people. How is Jesus the true Temple of God (cf. Matt. 1:23; John 2:19-21; Rev. 21:22)?

The Jews are Bible blind. The Jews at this time are celebrating the re-dedication of the temple to the service of God after it had been defiled by the heathen. But they reject Jesus, the true Temple of God! They even want to stone Him (v. 31)!

How do the unbelieving Jews show by this that they are worse than the heathen? In light of the darkness of Jewish impiety and hypocrisy, comment on the term "Judeo-Christian ethic." Evangelicals commonly use this term in an effort to unite Americans in an attempt to go back to our nation's "roots." Is it possible for Jews who celebrate "Hanukkah" and Christians who believe in *incarnation* to share an ethic? Ought Christians to celebrate any Jewish festivals in church or otherwise?

How do we show our dedication to the temple?

### 2. T.U.L.I.P. (vv. 25-29)

Dedication to the true Temple of God involves dedication to His truth.

Wonderful truth of salvation taught here. We call it Calvinism, in recognition of God's raising up a John Calvin to help guide the church back to her biblical moorings.

Calvinism! Biblical truth! Jesus' truth! Temple truth!

This truth of salvation is conveniently summarized by the acronym T.U.L.I.P. "T" is for the doctrine of *total depravity*. "U" is for *unconditional election*. "L" is for *limited atonement*. "I" is for *irresistible grace*. "P" is for *preservation of the saints*.

Discuss the meaning of these doctrines. Are these in our hearts and minds?

Five diamond points of doctrine: all here in this passage!

Total depravity is revealed in the Jews' rejection of Messiah.

Unconditional election is taught in verse 26. There Jesus says that the unbelievers believed not because they were not of His sheep. Show how this proves *unconditional* election and reprobation. (Hint: note the order of ordination and believing in Acts 13:48.)

Search for the other doctrines of grace (as Calvinism is otherwise known) in John 10:25-29. Cite other passages which support the "five points." What do the Canons of Dordt (the five chapters of which are the five points of Calvinism) have to say of these doctrines? What does Arminianism teach (cf. the "rejection of errors" section in each chapter of the Canons)? Some people say they are "four-point" Calvinists, or "three-point" Calvinists. Is this possible? Why is it so important to hold to all five points?

Show from the passage how Jesus Himself is involved in the salvation and preservation of His own?



### 3. I and my Father are one (v. 30).

This is a much debated statement of Jesus. The debate centers in the question whether or not Jesus was claiming for Himself *essential* oneness with God the Father. The question is: is Jesus here claiming to be equal with God? Is He claiming to be God? Arians of old denied it. So do today's Unitarians, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and others. They will say that all Jesus is saying here is that He is one *in purpose* with the Father.

A most important passage! What saith the Scriptures? Is Jesus God, or is He not? Is He truly and essentially co-equal with the Father, or perhaps only similar to Him, but nevertheless subordinate to Him?

The church of all ages has claimed that Jesus is God. Together with the Father and the Spirit, also the Son, come in human flesh, is very God. Such is the teaching of the church's creeds. For a good discussion of the truth of the fact and necessity of the divinity of Jesus Christ you will want to refer to the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Days 5,6,13; Belgic Confession, Articles 8-10; Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 8; Larger Catechism, Q.36; Nicene Creed; Athanasian Creed; Creed of Chalcedon.

Show how the following passages, and others, prove the church's confession of the divinity of Jesus Christ: Proverbs 8:30; Isaiah 9:6; John 1:1-3; John 8:58; John 12:41 (cf. Is. 6!); John 20:28; I John 5:20; I Timothy 3:16; Revelation 1:17.

In light of the rest of the Scriptures' teaching note the following about the verse before us, John 10:30:

When Jesus speaks of the unity of Himself and the Father He is not *necessarily* referring to essential unity. This is plain from a passage such as John 17:22. There Jesus prays that the disciples may be one as He and the Father are

one. And He is certainly not praying there that the individual members of the church may be essentially one.

But then, though we grant that Jesus' reference to His unity with the Father does not necessarily refer to His essential unity with the Father, there is strong evidence that it does, or at least that it *implies* or *presumes* an essential unity.

Prove this from the following considerations: the Jews' reaction to Jesus' words; Jesus' mention of the "many good works" He showed from His Father (v. 32—cf. John 5:17ff.); Jesus' reference to Psalm 82:6 (vv. 34-36: note carefully Jesus' comparison of Himself with these "lesser gods" of Psalm 82!); the Father's being in Jesus and Jesus in Him (v. 38b).

### 4. And the Scripture cannot be broken (v. 35b).

The word "broken" means "destroyed, annulled, done away with, deprived of authority." It is used in various connections: with reference to the destroying of the temple (John 2:19); the breaking of the Sabbath (John 5:18); the dissolving of the heavens and earth (II Pet. 3:11).

By declaring that the "scripture" cannot be broken, what is our Lord saying is His view of the Bible? What important rule of interpretation of Bible truth do we learn from our Lord's use of Scripture here? What important truth is taught here about the Bible and our evangelism? The Bible and our everyday living?

What are other important passages which teach *why* Scripture cannot be broken, and *that* scripture cannot be broken?

How do we know that *all* Scripture, Old Testament and New Testament, "cannot be broken"?

### 5. "Resorting to Jesus" (vv. 40-42)

Jesus escapes out of the hand of the wicked Jews who seek to take Him. Then He goes beyond Jordan and begins what is called

His "Perean ministry." This area, we are told, is where John was baptizing at first (v. 40). Here Jesus abides.

Many (v. 41) then "resorted" to Jesus. The Greek word is simply "came." But to come to Jesus as these people did is surely to resort to Him! For they came believing on Him (v. 42). They came turning to Him for help. They came willing to be instructed and to submit to Him. They came to be refreshed. Unto Jesus!

Other passages speak of "coming to Jesus" in the sense of resorting to Him. List and discuss some (e.g., John 5:40; 6:35, 37, 44, 45, 65).

How do we resort to Jesus? Is this similar to being *dedicated* to Jesus? When we go to our "resorts" in the summer or whenever, is Jesus on our mind? At work, in the home, at school, how do we *show* we resort to Jesus? Is He our last resort?

### 6. No better epitaph (v. 41)!

The people who came to Jesus knew John the Baptist. John had first baptized there. His ministry was unforgettable! And why was this? John did no miracle. But He spoke of the Messiah, and of Jesus as the Messiah! And now, before the very eyes and in the hearing of the people who heard John speak of Jesus, Jesus confirms what John said of Him: "All things that John spake of this man were true"!

Surely, no better epitaph could be said of a minister of the gospel! How do ministers ensure that what they say of Jesus is true? How can people in the pew be sure?

Recall the ministry of John the Baptist. What did John say of the Lord Jesus? How was his ministry so important for preparing the way for Jesus' own ministry? Discuss this astounding statement of Jesus: "Verily I say unto you, among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (Matt. 11:11).



## 7. Perspective: John 20:31

"... that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God: and that believing ye might have life through his name." That is the stated purpose both of the miracles

and teaching of Jesus in John's gospel.

How has the Holy Spirit fulfilled this purpose in you as you have contemplated the truths of John 10?

How has the Holy Spirit worked in you through this study

to be re-dedicated to the true Temple of God, Jesus?

Ah ... Temple truth! Saving truth. God with us!

Celebrate! Festival of the Undying Light!

Hanukkah! To Jesus! □

## A Word Fittly Spoken

Rev. Dale Kuiper

# Travail

**T**he word travail is often found in context with the words labor, sorrow, anguish, pain, and vexation. Travail, of course, refers to birth pangs, to the experience that a mother undergoes in the hours immediately prior to giving birth to a child. This hard labor is necessary in order for the child to be born. Scriptures use the term in the literal and figurative senses. In both usages, three features stand out: 1) As the time of deliverance approaches, the pains come closer and closer together; 2) As the interval between the pangs decreases, the intensity of the pain increases; and 3) Birth pains are the only pains that are a good sign. They are a sign of life. All other pains are indications of sickness, injury, and death.

Travail is a universal experience, not only in the physical sense but also in the figurative sense of suffering in the soul. The wicked travail under the wrath of God for the destruction that comes upon them which they cannot escape (Ps. 48:6; I Thess. 5:3). The Old Testament church is compared to a woman being with child "crying, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered" of the Christ-child that was in her (Rev. 12:2). The apostle Paul, and all faithful pastors, travail as they labor day and night in the preaching of the gospel (I Thess. 2:9). And every believer travails and groans within himself as he awaits the redemption of his body (Rom. 8:23).

Jesus, the Man of Sorrows, travailed in body and soul as no woman ever travailed. In John 16 the Savior speaks of going away from His disciples: "A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father." He has in mind the great travail of His cross death, and His birth in the resurrection. God saw the travail of His soul, and was satisfied (Is.

53:11). So God raised Him up the third day as the first-begotten of the dead, the firstfruits of them that sleep.

We live in the last hour, the time of travail just before another great birth! In Matthew 24:4-8, Jesus speaks of some of the signs that must take place before His second coming: wars and rumors of wars, nation rising against nation, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places. "All these are the beginning of sorrows (literally, birth pains)." These things increase in frequency, they grow in intensity and power, and they are a sign that all is well, for Jesus brings them about and uses them to bring the end of this present world. Not only will the church of Christ travail under that great tribulation, but the creation itself will partake of it. Paul writes that "we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" (Rom. 8:22). The whole creation awaits the coming of Christ, its Creator. We who have the firstfruits of the Spirit await the coming of our Head and Redeemer. As we wait, we travail together.

When, out of the womb of this old, groaning creation, Christ brings forth the new heavens and the new earth, we will remember no more the travail and persecution that is ours to endure. "A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world" (John 16:24). That is the way it will be for every member of the church of God's Son. No more pain, no more tears, no more sin! "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18). □

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# Jesus, Jehovah-Salvation

**I**n discussing the doctrine of Christ, the Mediator and Head of the covenant, we are called to consider the names by which the Savior is revealed to us.

We do well to consider these things. Not simply abstractly. The purpose of going to the Word of God concerning these things is that we are able to confess from the heart, and with the knowledge and confidence of faith, "I believe what God has revealed in His Word concerning my Savior!"

I believe in Jesus.

What a glorious confession that is! In that brief confession of faith is found our only comfort in life and death. For in Jesus and in Him alone God reveals Himself as the God of our salvation.

God is revealed in all His works. He reveals Himself every day and everywhere in His creation and in the works of His hands.

But it is only in the name "Jesus" that He is revealed as the God of our salvation. For as Peter preached it (Acts 4:12), "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

## A Glorious Name

The name Jesus is a glorious name. It is a name with divine origin.

The name Jesus was given Christ after His birth. But it was a name appointed for Him from eternity.

The personal name of the Savior might not be left to the choice of Joseph and the virgin Mary. For His name must in itself serve to reveal God, and reveal Him as God from a significant and wonderful viewpoint, that He might be glorified forevermore.

And so, immediately after Joseph discovered that Mary was pregnant, and while he was contemplating putting her away privately, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:20b, 21).

Therefore Joseph did as the angel had said, and took Mary as his wife. "And he knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS" (Matt. 1:25).

Also Luke points to the significance of this name, when he records in Luke 1:30-33 the revelation of the angel Gabriel to the virgin Mary. "And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

So we read in Luke 2:21, that

"when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb."

That name Jesus is of divine origin, and is the revelation of the eternal purpose of God Himself.

God names His Son *Jesus*.

That is precisely why we are sure to find all our salvation in Him. Because *God* names Him *Jesus*, we find in His name our only comfort in life and death.

But what exactly is the significance of that name Jesus?

The name Jesus signifies that this man-child is the revelation of the God of our salvation. He is *Jehovah-Salvation!*

The significance of that name was revealed already in the shadows of the Old Testament. Moses, the representative of the law, was not able to give rest to the children of God. He had to give way to Joshua. Joshua would lead the weary children of Israel into the rest of their inheritance. As the type of Christ, leading His church across the Jordan of sin and death into the heavenly Canaan, Joshua led Israel into the promised land. He did so as a picture of Jesus. In the shadows of the Old Testament, the Savior was revealed in the significance of His name.

The name Jesus is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Joshua, *Jehovah-salvation* or *Jehovah-saves*.

Jesus is the One who crushes the head of the enemy and brings His elect into the spiritual and eternal rest. In Jesus we behold Jeho-

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vah, the eternal, unchangeable God, whose love for His people is unbreakable. In Jesus we see Jehovah as our Savior, who came down to us in our sin and misery and death, to save us from the bondage of our guilt and to realize His eternal covenant of friendship with us.

Jesus is Jehovah-salvation.

That means, of course, that Jesus is *Jehovah*. He is *God*.

He is the Word become flesh, the same eternal Word (according to Colossians 1) by whom and for whom all things were made. He is the same Word (according to John 1) who was with God and was God. He it is who gives power to become the sons of God.

Salvation is of God and of God alone. Either Jesus is God, or He is no Savior. And precisely because He is God, He is the Savior.

### A Complete Savior

When we understand that virtually all the work of God is concentrated in and around the name Jesus, then we will also begin to understand the true spiritual significance of that name.

That means that in Jesus Christ we have all that is implied in our justification before God. He accomplished salvation *for* us.

In Jesus we see Jehovah God come to us.

In Bethlehem we see the birth of Him whose name is also Immanuel, God with us. Jesus is Jehovah beneath our sin and guilt. The perfect, spotless Lamb of God took our guilt and sin upon Himself.

The only possibility for our salvation is that this Jesus stood before God in our place, took our guilt upon His shoulders, and carried it into the very depths of hell for us, so removing it from us forever. That is what Jesus did by going to the cross and shedding His blood for us. The precious blood of *Jesus* was the price of redemption for you and for me. He was buried in our grave. He fully

satisfied the justice of God. And the proof is in the resurrection. He arose in victory!

It is because of that work of Jesus for us, that John can write under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in I John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

But that work of Jesus, being complete, is also a work that He performs *in* us.

Don't change that name of Jesus. The angel said to Joseph, "Thou shalt call his name JESUS, for he shall save his people from their sins."

Don't change that to this: "Thou shalt call his name JESUS, because he *is willing* to save *all*." That is what will happen, if you stop with a Jesus who is only a Jesus *for* us.

There are many who will grant you that Jesus saves by His justifying work. But according to them, that justifying work was performed for all! They say that Jesus died for all men and wants to save all men and offers salvation as a free gift to all men with the desire that they accept Him. By His work He merited the *right* to salvation. And now He wraps it up in a package and brings it to your door, and says, "Please accept this now."

But that is not the Jesus of the Bible!

A Jesus who died for all, but who saves only those who let him save them, is not God, but a powerless *j*esus with a small *j*. That is a *j*esus who must depend on the will of man for the effectiveness of his work.

Don't you see? That cuts the very heart out of the gospel, and denies the power of our Almighty Savior, the *complete* Savior.

Our Jesus, who saves us, not only accomplished salvation *for* us, but He also works that salvation *in* us. Not only must we be freed from the guilt of our sins, but we must be delivered from the bondage of corruption, from the power

and dominion of sin and death. And again, our Savior is *Jesus*. Because He merited the right to bestow salvation upon His people, God filled Him with all that is necessary to carry out that bestowal and actually to give us the benefits of that salvation. Jesus does not merely *offer* you salvation; but He powerfully, effectively, irresistibly *works* it in you.

Being a complete Savior, He so works within us by His Holy Spirit that in Him we have the experience and the consciousness of the forgiveness of sins that is ours, of righteousness and life everlasting. He applies to us all the blessings of salvation. He doesn't ask to enter our hearts; He *enters* them. He makes room! He changes our hearts of stone into hearts of flesh, dethrones sin and enthrones Himself, regenerates us, calls us out of death into life, sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts, creates in us the knowledge of sin, and awakens within us a longing for God and His fellowship. He causes us to turn from sin unto the living God. That work of Jesus *in* us is a powerful work. He performs that work without any help from us. He comes into our hearts when we do not even know it. He gives us the power of a new life.

Oh, yes, it is true that He uses means to work His power in us. He is pleased to work that salvation in us by His means of grace and through His Spirit. Scripture teaches that it is especially by the Word preached that Jesus is pleased to work His salvation in us. He says through that preaching, "Seek, and you shall find." And when He speaks that to your regenerated heart, you seek. Not otherwise. "Knock and it shall be opened unto you." And when He says that through the preaching of His powerful and efficacious Word, you knock. And it is opened unto you.

That is the gospel.

It is not a fifty-fifty proposition. It is not a matter of the free will of



man. Far more wonderful is our salvation!

His name is *Jesus*. Salvation is

all of Him, the revelation of the God of our salvation.

He is the only and complete Savior.

But then we have not yet said all concerning the name *Jesus*. There is more yet to be said. □

**Go Ye Into All the World**

**Rev. Thomas Miersma**

## **Preaching and Missions without a Debilitating Offer (1)**

**I**t has sometimes been said by the advocates of the offer that as Protestant Reformed Churches we cannot do mission work or preach the gospel in evangelism. Not only is this false, but, as I want to point out, the opposite is in fact true. It is my contention that it is those who hold the offer who have truncated the gospel, subverting its power and the word of grace. It is they who cripple mission work and debilitate the preaching of the gospel. The so-called free or well-meant offer on the mission field makes the gospel weak, ineffective, and anemic. Because of this, the preaching of the offer is not genuine mission work. In considering this thesis we should first consider what the preaching of the gospel, also on the mission field, really is.

### **What preaching is**

Preaching is, first of all, the public and authoritative declaration of what God has done in Christ. It is the glorious wonder of Christ crucified and raised which is to be published and proclaimed to all who hear. The preacher comes as a herald and ambassador of Christ to say, "thus saith the Lord." In that preaching, Christ is displayed in all the full-

ness of His death and resurrection, as the wonder work of God's sovereign mercy, to save and redeem effectually His people from their sins. The gospel is the glad tidings of the God of our salvation, that God has fulfilled the promises which He spake to the fathers in the Old Testament in His Son Jesus Christ, and has accomplished atonement and reconciliation for the sins of His people. It involves the objective declaration of the facts of the gospel as the truth of God in Christ, together with the horrible reality of man's sin, depravity, and corruption, and of his terrible guilt before a Holy God.

The good news of the gospel includes the whole counsel of God; it is not limited to the objective facts of the cross, to what is called in dogmatics the locus of Christology. It includes the wonder of God's electing grace and mercy, His sovereign eternal good pleasure, and His eternal purpose and glory in Christ and His church — and that as good news. It includes also the glad tidings that God in Christ saves to the uttermost. That Christ, by the effectual working of the power of His death and resurrection, regenerates and quickens dead sinners to life, calls and converts men, and works repentance and imparts saving faith unto men who were dead in themselves and bound in sin. It includes

all the loci of dogmatics from Theology to Soteriology to Eschatology.

Its purpose is to preach the whole Word of God, to set before men their wretched and miserable state and condition in themselves and to proclaim the wonder and glory of God in Christ, whose own arm has wrought salvation, and who reaches down to save His people from their sin. It leads one to stand in the presence of the holiness of God and the glory and wonder of His grace, to worship Him out of a broken and contrite heart, and to seek earnestly to walk before Him in newness of life in true gratitude. That word of the gospel is as much present, in principle, when one preaches on the glory of God's institution of marriage, as it is when one preaches a sermon on Jesus' death. It is complete, full, and uncompromising. It hides nothing in the closet of theology. It is that gospel which is the power of God unto salvation. It is a gospel which is proclaimed as propositional, factual truth, as a gospel of certainty, of what is surely to be believed. It preaches Christ, as the apostle Paul says to the Galatians, "before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you" (Gal. 3:1).

It is in the light of that glorious gospel that we also distinguish

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two aspects in the preaching, following the Canons of Dordt, that of command and promise. The gospel in its proclamation confronts men with the call to repent and believe. By the very reality of sin and the glory of God's work in Christ, men are confronted with the command and duty to repent and believe. This command is not only explicit in the preaching but implicit in the very truth of man's sin and the glory and wonder of the gospel. That call is a serious one, for, standing before a Holy God, wretched and miserable in themselves, and standing before the glory of His wonder in Christ, men ought to repent and believe. That they cannot do so of themselves because they are fallen does not change the seriousness of this demand. Nor does the particularity of the gospel in any way mitigate the truth that what is good and acceptable in the sight of that Holy God of the wonder is that man should repent and that the called ought to come unto Him.

That command, however, in the good pleasure of God, has a two-fold effect upon them that hear. In the heart of the wicked and unbelieving it works a hardening of heart, stubbornness, and rebellion. The glorious gospel of Christ is for them a savor of death unto death. Seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, but willfully reject the gospel and put it away from them. It is foolishness unto them. They do not obey the gospel.

In the heart of God's elect, however, God works by that demand of the gospel the obedience of faith, graciously calling forth faith and repentance by the power of His grace, and quickening in us the obedience of faith. This is wrought both by the grace of God through the objective call of the gospel and the internal, efficacious working of the Spirit in the heart. It is one work of God by an efficacious, irresistible call.

To that command God has

joined the promises of the gospel, as the sure word of His grace to His people. By the promises He addresses His sheep by name and calls them, according to their spiritual characteristics, into the certain spiritual blessings which they have in Christ. By the promises of the gospel God comforts the broken-hearted and assures them of pardon for sin and life eternal. He speaks His Word as Jesus did to the man sick of the palsy, "Thy sins are forgiven thee" (Luke 5:20). Those promises are unconditional and particular, and that exactly because they are personally addressed and intended, and grounded in the finished and accomplished work of Christ. They are God's sure Word unto His people. The promises of the gospel therefore do not address God's people as merely offered to be accepted or rejected, nor as a check to be endorsed by our believing, but as a receipt stamped "paid in full" with our name on it. They address us as weary and laboring, as those who sorrow and mourn because of sin, as hungering and thirsting after righteousness, as saints who fear God. By them Christ calls His sheep by name, and we hear His voice and follow Him.

By that command and particular promise God leaves no one in doubt, neither the wicked nor His children, as to their own duty, their spiritual state, or the certainty of the truth of the gospel. It is in the light of this reality of the gospel, that we must evaluate the well-meant offer or the so-called free offer of the gospel.

### **The offer historically**

The theory of the offer belongs to a certain semi-Arminian trend which has been present in the Reformed and Presbyterian community since the time of the Synod of Dordt. It is an attempt to marry the conditional universalism of Arminianism to the truth of the sovereign, particular grace of Calvinism. Perhaps the best descrip-

tion of this error is to call it hypothetical universalism.

This synergism was first taught at the time of the Synod of Dordt by John Cameron in France and England, and, both then and later, by his notable disciples Amyraud in France and Davenant, the British delegate to the Synod of Dordt. In its original form it was an attempt to join the Reformed and Arminian doctrines of election by teaching two distinct decrees of election, one an Arminian decree that God decreed to save all and every man in Christ on condition of faith, and the second a semi-Calvinistic decree, that God decreed to fulfill the conditions and give faith only to some. Briefly, this is the notion that God wants to save all but wills to save only some. It is a contradictory dualism, a two-track theology. Its universal election is conditional and Arminian, and in the light of the notion of a particular decree to save some, it is also only hypothetical. This view was resisted by the Synod of Dordt, which teaches in the Canons, whenever God's intention, design, and purpose are mentioned, only an intention and design to save the elect.

As Amyraud and his following continued to teach this notion after the Synod, his views were condemned, under the leadership of Francis Turretin, by the second Helvetic consensus as Arminian and inconsistent with Dordt. Similarly, when the views of Davenant and his followers were promoted in England, they were opposed by the Puritan John Owen in his book *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*.

It is particularly in the area of the doctrine of the covenant, both in connection with preaching and baptism, that this Amyraudian heresy continues to raise its head. This usually takes the form of a general conditional promise, the so-called Heynsian view. This view involves more than a general conditional promise, it involves a separation not only between the



covenant and election but also in the work of Christ. In Reformed theology all of God's works are rooted in eternity, in His decrees. To teach that God's covenant is established with elect and reprobate, upon conditional promises, as an objective bequest to all who are baptized or brought under the preaching, is first of all to teach something about God's eternal decree of that covenant. All of God's works are eternal. Their realization in time is the working out externally (*ad extra*) of that which He has purposed in Himself internally (*ad intra*). Slogans, such as calling this principle scholastic, rationalistic, etc., simply evade the issue.

Along with this separation of the covenant and election is to be found a dispensational-like corruption of the doctrine of the Mediator. To maintain this separation, those who hold it teach that Christ is the "*Mediator of the covenant*" but the "*Head of the elect*." In doing this they do not mean merely to draw a fine distinction between the meaning of two terms, Mediator and Head, but to separate them. This covenant of which Christ is the Mediator, according to this view, is established by promise, though conditionally, with elect and reprobate, all who are outwardly included in the church. Christ is the Mediator of God's covenant with Esau.

This involves a fundamental corruption of Christ's work as the Mediator. It is exactly as He is the legal representative Head of the elect, the Christ, that He in His mediatorial work establishes and confirms the new covenant in His blood, as the Lord our Righteousness. This is plain from the teaching of the Canons, which explicitly join Christ's mediatorial office and His headship and make it clear that He is the Mediator of the elect alone. Thus we read, "Election is the unchangeable purpose of God, whereby before the foundation of the world, He hath out of mere grace, according to His own will,

chosen, from the whole human race, which had fallen through their own fault, from their primitive state of rectitude, into sin and destruction, a certain number of persons to redemption in Christ, whom He from eternity appointed the Mediator and Head of the elect, and the foundation of salvation" (Canons I, Art. 7). That Christ is the "Mediator and Head of the elect," could not be clearer. The same is true when we read, "... it was the will of God, that Christ by the blood of the cross, whereby He confirmed the new covenant, should effectually redeem out of every people, tribe, nation, and language, all those and those only, who were from eternity chosen to salvation, and given Him by the Father..." (Canons II, Art. 8). Again the Canons explicitly join the blood of the covenant and God's purpose in it to the mediatorial work of Christ and election.

The original form of this error was an assault upon the doctrine of election. It developed into an assault upon the Reformed doctrine of the atonement. Under the influence of its promoters in England and Scotland the focus was shifted to the idea that one could preach that Jesus was dead for all but had died only for some. That is, hypothetically, Jesus' death was not simply sufficient, considered in itself, for all, but designed and intended to be available to all upon condition of faith and repentance. This was an attempt to marry the Reformed and Arminian doctrines of the atonement, to teach a provision for all men in the death of Christ but an efficacy only for some. This trend came together in the Marrow Controversy in the Presbyterian Church of Scotland. This dualist conception of the atonement was condemned by the Presbyterian Church of Scotland as Arminianism.

It has sometimes been contended that the Synod in Scotland was influenced by liberal or rationalistic Arminian thinking, that it

condemned the Marrow Theology because of its evangelicalism or out of narrow-mindedness. That there were in this complex controversy elements of this, as well as miscommunication in understanding one another's position, is well possible. What concerns us, however, is the central doctrinal issue, whether one may teach that Christ's atoning death is universal in scope, and in some sense designed and intended for all, or so as to be available for all. May we preach, as the offer inherently does, that Christ is dead for all, though He died only for some? May we deduce from Christ's sufficiency a universal scope to the atonement, such that it may be offered to all, or presented as intended or available to all?

In connection with this we may look at our own Canons of Dordt. The Canons certainly teach that Christ's death is "sufficient to expiate the sins of the whole world" in view of the fact that the Person of the Son of God died in our flesh (Canons II, Art. 3). How could it be any less than this? The point is, however, that Christ died for certain persons, and bought for them saving faith and the blessings of salvation through faith; and they are not all men, nor all who sit under the preaching, nor all the baptized. The Canons (and the Westminster Confession is essentially no different) find in this sufficiency of Christ only that it leaves men without excuse in their unbelief, as there is nothing lacking in Christ or the gospel why they do not believe (Canons II, Art. 6). As to the intent and design of Christ's death, the Canons draw two conclusions, that it was intended for the elect alone and not universal (Canons II, Art. 7, 8), and that its infinite worth and value is for the benefit of "us," that is, God's elect, redeemed, believing people. Notice this in the language of the Canons, in explaining the source of this infinite worth and value, its bearing upon Christ's qualifications,



and its necessity. The Canons say, "which qualifications were necessary to constitute him a Savior for us; and because it was attended with a sense of the wrath and curse of God due to us for sin" (Canons II, Art. 4). In discussing the blessed fruit of this infinitely valuable sacrifice of Christ, the Canons find it

of benefit strictly for certain persons, us. In the light of this, to preach otherwise, a Christ for all or available for all, is to present not only that which is hypothetical, but hypocritical. The Canons do not find in the sufficiency of Christ a universal offer, but a profound comfort for a believer, whose

sins are so great that only a sacrifice of infinite worth and value is sufficient to take them all away. When the men who promote the offer take up this subject in the Canons, they engage in *eisegesis*, the reading into the Canons of their own speculative notions.

... to be continued. □

Contending for the Faith

Rev. Bernard Woudenberg

## The Source of the Liberated Covenant View

*For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.*

Acts 2:39

**T**he realization that the covenant view of Herman Hoeksema is, in its basic elements, the same as that of the great Dutch theologian Herman Bavinck opens up some very striking dimensions to the controversy which preoccupied the Protestant Reformed Churches for nearly a decade during the middle of this century; and it substantiates pretty much what Hoeksema always maintained, that his views were nothing essentially different from that which had been held traditionally in the Dutch Reformed churches. At the same time, moreover, it gives rise to another question: from where then did the position of Schilder and the Liberated Churches arise?

The answer to this question is not easy to arrive at, although a

number of possibilities do suggest themselves. One that might seem rather natural to us would be that it came from Prof. W. Heyns, the Christian Reformed professor at Calvin College who taught essentially the same view in the early part of this century. This would be possible, since Heyns' *Manual of Reformed Doctrine* was republished in the Netherlands during the 1920s and had not gone unnoticed. And yet the likelihood that a European scholar of Schilder's stature would have turned to a minor theological figure in America for his ideas is rather remote. More likely it would be that Schilder and Heyns (who was himself an immigrant and thoroughly Dutch in his thinking) had come from a common background in the Netherlands. But what, besides the Secession tradition to which Bavinck and Hoeksema held, might that be?

While searching around in this direction we came upon another work which begins to give some answers to this question, an unpub-

lished doctoral thesis by Dr. Anthony Hoekema, written in 1953 under the title, *Herman Bavinck's Doctrine of the Covenant*. In it a number of very interesting ideas are brought to the fore.

To begin with, Hoekema lays to rest the idea that Heyns and Schilder may have represented another strain of original Secession thought, for he writes:

The fathers of the Secession of 1834 were all committed to the view that baptism, as a seal of the covenant of grace, signifies and seals regeneration. These men, among whom Smilde includes Hendrick DeCock, H. P. Scholte, A. Brummelkamp, and S. Van Velzen, believed that, by a judgment of charity, the baptized children of believers should be held to be sanctified in Christ (as the Dutch formula for baptism says), that is, regenerated, until the opposite appears from their life and walk. They did not commit themselves, however, as to the time of such regeneration: whether that occurs, as a general rule, before

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baptism, or later. This judgment of charity, furthermore, does not imply that every single baptized child is sure to be saved; there will always be chaff among the wheat; and hence there remains in the church constantly the need for earnest self-examination.

Apparently on this crucial point there was no such second strain. If Hoekema was correct, and we have no reason to believe he was not, there was a unity of opinion among the original Secessionist theologians which set them apart from the position of Heyns and Schilder on several critical points. This does not mean there was complete unanimity among them; for, in fact, much of what Hoekema suggests came from a book by E. Smilde entitled, *Een Eeuw van Strijd over Verbond en Doop* (A Century of Strife about Covenant and Baptism). There was evidently considerable and strong differences among those theologians, resulting in a century-long struggle centering in the covenant and its relation to baptism. Nevertheless, regardless of these differences, when it came to the identification of baptism with regeneration, and thus with the elect in whom alone regeneration can take place, there was essential agreement—setting them distinctly apart from the position which Heyns, Schilder, and the Liberated were later to take up. That position was not a part of the original Secession tradition, and must have come from some other source. But where? And with this again Hoekema is of help.

His study goes on to introduce us to another book, published in 1861 under the dual authorship of K. J. Pieters and J. R. Kreulen, with the title *De Kinderdoop volgens de Beginselen der Gereformeerde Kerk* (Infant Baptism according to the Principles of the Reformed Church). This book, Hoekema says, presented “a view of the covenant and infant baptism quite different from that sketched in the above paragraph.” It would appear therefore that this

was a book which did not presume to agree with the Secessionist leaders which had gone before, but which took distinct exception to what they had taught. It was written, as Hoekema goes on to say, in “opposition to the point of view indicated above as that of the fathers of the Secession.” Pieters and Kreulen apparently were not satisfied with what was being taught as the Reformed view of baptism, and sought to set forth another view. Their claim was to be in accord with Reformed principles, but it differed from that which was being taught. It is well, therefore, that we give some attention to what Hoekema tells us they taught.

His description of their view begins in this way:

These authors, in setting forth their doctrine of the covenant, do not take their point of departure in God’s decree. They do not wish to identify election with the covenant of grace. They say that, when we consider baptism, we must let eternal election rest, and leave it aside.

The sound here is, of course, familiar. All through the history of the Christian church there have been efforts to mitigate what the Scriptures clearly teach concerning the decrees of God and His sovereign control over all things, particularly as they determine precisely and individually who shall be saved. This was true not only of those with whom Paul had to deal in the book of Romans, but continued on with the Pelagians, the Semi-pelagians, and the Arminians, all of whom gained a following in their day, only to be repudiated as heretical by the mainstream of the Christian church. But it is a drive that will not be stopped. As each new movement seeks to repudiate identity with the error that went before and to affirm its own orthodoxy, it tries again to do that in which the previous error failed, namely to separate itself from the implica-

tions of divine sovereignty, particularly in the doctrines of election and sovereign grace. So apparently it was with Pieters and Kreulen. They wanted to maintain that their views were in accord with Reformed principles, but at the same time they wished to escape the doctrine of election by making a wall of separation between it and the covenant of grace, especially in the practice of baptism.

This was no doubt because, through the centuries which had followed the establishment of the Dutch Reformed Church and the solidifying of its doctrines at the great Synod of Dordt, there had grown an increasing concern with the doctrine of the covenant as it relates to the most intimate of spiritual relationships between God and His people in the line of continuing generations. In focusing on this, Pieters and Kreulen seemingly saw an opportunity both to maintain the doctrine of election abstractly, and to block its practical application. The doctrine of the decrees and election of God they wished to confess to be true, but something to be kept apart from the experience of the covenant in practical life.

But there is more, as Hoekema goes on to point out:

These men stress the two-sidedness of the covenant, and make much of the demands of the covenant, and of the conditional form in which God’s promises appear. The covenant promise, that God will take us to be His children and heirs, must not be interpreted as being equivalent to salvation, but must be understood in a covenantal way (*verbondsgewijze*): that is, objectively. The conclusion is inescapable, adds Smilde, that the covenant promise is here simply thought of as an offer of salvation, as that comes to the sinner in the preaching of the Gospel.

Here we see what these men had in mind. They, like those with whom Paul had to deal in Romans



6, clearly felt that emphasis on the sovereignty of God in salvation can only take away every sense of the need and responsibility to turn from sin and live a sanctified life. For that stress had to be laid on the demands, warnings, and threats of Scripture as incentives to live the sanctified life. The promises of God in the covenant are certainly real and sure, but only in an objective way. They tell us what God will do for those who subjectively show the willingness to meet the conditions which God requires of man. And, furthermore, unless this be true, there is no way in which man can ethically be held responsible for his sin.

Thus we come to baptism itself:

Baptism, so say Pieters and Kreulen, is not a seal of internal grace, but only a sign and seal of the promise of the covenant. That promise is, however, objectively represented. The forgiveness of sins and the adoption as children mentioned in the prayer of thanksgiving after baptism in the baptismal formula are not to be understood subjectively, but only objectively. Pieters calls the idea that infants before and at the administration of baptism must be understood to have already received the grace of regeneration a Baptist conception, and states that it conflicts with the practice of the Apostles. When the baptismal formula speaks of the children of believers as being "sanctified in Christ," this is meant only in an objective sense, according to these men. The covenantal holiness of the children of believers must not be understood in any other way than merely as an objective dedication of these infants to God.

What it all comes down to in the end is the meaning of baptism. According to the primary theologians of the Secession, as we have seen, baptism is a sign and a seal of regeneration. It is an external and visible sign of what God promises to do by sovereign grace in the hearts of the covenant children of believing parents. It is not in ev-

ery child, for the principle of divine and sovereign election also here certainly applies; *for they are not all Israel, which are of Israel*. Nevertheless, God has promised that He will keep his covenant in the line of generations, and by a "judgment of charity" we are to look upon them as children of God until it becomes evident that they have not been touched by His grace.

With this, however, Pieters and Kreulen were not satisfied. They wished both to limit the covenant on the one hand and broaden it on the other. They did not want the promise of the covenant to include what God would do unconditionally in the hearts of covenant children. And they thought they could escape this by simply identifying the covenant with the promise objectively, that is, with the external expression of the promise. Children of the covenant are "sanctified," not in the sense that God works faith, forgiveness, and salvation in the heart, but in the sense that He makes these available to every baptized child—if that child will meet the conditions which He sets forth. This He does the same for all. Baptism is an offer of salvation which is made to every child baptized within the church of God.



All of this, Hoekema tells us, Herman Bavinck distinctly rejected; and several provincial synods struggled with its propriety. But there can be little question that what was taught by Prof. Heyns and defended by Klaas Schilder was essentially set forth in this same vein.

They hold, as did Pieters and Kreulen, that the covenant must be kept separate from the decrees of God, and particularly from the doctrine of election. While not denying the reality of predestination, they wanted it kept separate from the practical reality of life set forth in the covenant. According to them, bringing predestination into

the practical realities of life can only discourage human effort, as well as remove moral responsibility for sin of all kinds.

The emphasis to be made in the covenant, for Heyns and Schilder as it was for Pieters and Kreulen, is upon the demands and warnings of God as conditions which man must fulfill according to the covenant of grace. This, and not sovereign grace, holds the key to Christian life; and the covenant is the objective statement of the promise of God as to what He will do for those by whom the conditions are met.

Baptism, therefore, is not a visible sign of the inner spiritual reality which takes place when the Spirit of God cleanses and implants a new heart, but an objective statement of the conditional promise which comes to every baptized child regardless of whether or not he be elect and will ever receive the gift of regeneration and faith.

All of this, when it was presented by Prof. Heyns to Herman Hoeksema in his school days, Hoeksema rejected as emphatically as had Bavinck in his day, which in turn did much to prepare him for the struggle with the Christian Reformed view of common grace, permeated as it was with this "Heynsian" scheme of thought. When then the rumble of these same ideas began to come across from the Netherlands after the Second World War, Hoeksema found it hard to believe that they were also held by his friend Klaas Schilder, especially when Schilder personally assured him that he did not agree with Heyns, and his differences from us were only in terminology and emphasis. Literally for years Hoeksema waited to receive an explanation, until the conclusion could no longer be escaped that Schilder and the Liberated were in fact not only committed to the same Pieters/Kreulen covenant view Heyns had held (and thereby to the common grace implicit in it), but were also determined that the



teaching of it should be allowed in our churches as well. Then he knew that our position would have to be once more set forth positively and without compromise, which

was done in the "Declaration of Principles." And with that the pen of Schilder, so long silent concerning our differences, began to flow

with a series of articles which have now been published under the title, *Extra-Scriptural Binding—A New Danger*, to which we must turn next. □

## News From Our Churches

## Mr. Benjamin Wigger

### Congregational Activities

The consistory of the PRC in Edgerton, MN called a congregational meeting in late August for the purpose of voting on two proposals. They were to consider a proposal to install central air-conditioning in their parsonage, and they were asked to approve money for the repair of the floor in the kitchen of their church. Both proposals passed.

Edgerton's council also recently approved submitting a brief letter of concern to the editor of the *Enterprise* regarding stores being open on Sunday.

The council of the First PRC in Holland, MI called their congregation together for a special congregational meeting in early August also to consider two proposals—one to approve the sale of their church building to the Lord of Life Lutheran Church, and the other to approve the final plans for their new church building. At that meeting, approval was given to sell the church property, while the proposal to approve construction of a new building was tabled, so that the council could investigate an alternate plan as well as modifications to the proposed design.

At a special congregational meeting held in mid-August, the members of the Lynden, WA PRC considered two proposals regarding the use of funds from the Janet VanDenTop estate. First, they approved the purchase of portable

partitions for use in their church basement, and second, they also approved the purchase of a new telephone system for their church and parsonage.

Rev. R. Miersma reports from Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, AB, Canada that the work on their new church building is progressing well. He writes, "The outside of the building is virtually finished.... The first week of September the pews arrive. No word on the organ yet, which is being built in the Netherlands. We hope to be in the building sometime in September."

We also report that building plans for the Grace PRC in Standale, MI are progressing well. Prices are being received from subcontractors, and the building committee is revising the plans slightly to keep the costs within reason.

### Denominational Activities

The Hope Herald presented their annual Fall Concert September 7 in the Grandville, MI PRC. It was an enjoyable evening of praise to God as this men's chorus concluded their summer season.

Our seminary held its convocation on September 4 in the Byron Center, MI PRC. Prof. R. Dykstra spoke on the subject, "Holding Fast the Faithful Word."

This year, students from our churches in seminary include: Mr. Nathan Brummel in his 4<sup>th</sup> year, presently in his internship in our Hope PRC in Redlands, CA; Mr. Gary Eriks in his 3<sup>rd</sup> year; and Mr. Michael Kortering in his 2<sup>nd</sup> year. In addition to this, there are two men, Mr. Philip Rainey and Mr. Angus Stewart, from the Covenant PRC in Northern Ireland; Mr. Mark

Shand, from the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia; and Mr. Korstiaan den Engelse, from the "Bond" in the *Hervormde Kerk* in the Netherlands, beginning as first-year students. There are some students from the Heritage Netherlands Reformed Church who also continue to take a number of courses.

We remember in our thoughts and prayers pastors-elect Jim Laning (Hope PRC in Walker, MI) and Martin VanderWal (Covenant PRC in Wyckoff, NJ) in their classical examinations and subsequent ordinations, the Lord willing (my writing of this being before Classis East meets on September 10). We also remember in prayer Candidate Daniel Kleyn and his wife as they continue to labor in Northern Ireland and await God's will.

A "Get-Acquainted Open House" for Mr. and Mrs. Mark Shand and their family of four children was held at the Byron Center, MI PRC on September 5. Also included with this open house was a grocery shower.

### Evangelism Activities

In evangelism news from our South Holland, IL PRC, we find that one of their ads this summer promoting the pamphlet, "Modern Bible Versions," written by Prof. D. Engelsma, appeared in the June 7 and 14 issues of "World Magazine." This ad appeared in an issue in which the cover story featured the NIV committee dropping its plans for their "gender inclusive" version of the NIV, due to so much reaction against its lack of faithfulness to the Scriptures. This turned out to be a very timely advertising of the booklet, which en-

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*Mr. Wigger is an elder in the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.*



abled South Holland to mail out their introductory "packets" to many different areas.

#### Minister Activities

Our South Holland, IL PRC was to call a pastor from a trio of

the Revs. A. denHartog, K. Koole, and J. Slopsema.

#### *Food for Thought*

"Many books in my library are now behind and beneath me. They were good in their own way once,

and so were the clothes I wore when I was ten years old; but I have outgrown them. Nobody ever outgrows Scripture; the book widens and deepens with our years."

—C.H. Spurgeon □

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of South Holland Protestant Reformed Church express their Christian sympathy to Mr. Arthur Zandstra and family in the death of his wife,

##### MRS. ALICE ZANDSTRA.

May they find the comfort and peace of the gospel in Psalm 73:24-26: "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."

Gil VanBaren, Vice-president  
George DeJong, Clerk

#### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Martha Society of the Hull PRC express their Christian sympathy to Mrs. Reka Andringa in the loss of her sister,

##### ROSE DEN BOER.

May she and her family find comfort in these words from Job 19:25, "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth."

Rev. Moore, Pres.  
Mrs. Lorraine Collmann, Vice-Sec.

#### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Society of Southwest PRC expresses its Christian sympathy to fellow members Tom and Brenda DeVries and their family in the sudden loss of her sister,

##### HEIDI BAAS.

"It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him" (Lamentations 3:22-24).

Rev. Ron Cammenga, president  
Lisa Groenendyk, secretary

#### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On October 10, 1997, our dear parents and grandparents,

**LOUIS and MARTHA REGNERUS,** will celebrate their 45<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. We thank our heavenly Father for the years He has given them together and for the covenant care and godly instruction they have given us. We pray they will continue to experience the blessings of our faithful God.

"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).

- ❖ Ed and Kathy VanderMeulen  
Marisa, David, Tim, Kara
- ❖ Ryan and Nancy Regnerus  
Ryan, Kelly, Aaron, Katie, Mary
- ❖ Homer and Evelyn DeJong  
Courtney, Tyler, Case, Douglas, Cailey
- ❖ Bill and Elaine Regnerus  
Kim, Bill, Sandy
- ❖ Joe and Marcia VanBaren  
Kyle, Ross, Corrie, Caleb,  
Anneke, Tunis
- ❖ Lou and Cheryl Regnerus  
Luke, Jade, Leah, Glen, Carly
- ❖ Jim and Brenda Regnerus  
Karyn, Stephan, Janna, Lennae
- ❖ Dave and Amy Regnerus  
Jared, Katrina

South Holland, Illinois

#### NOTICE!!!

There has been a change of clerks in Lynden, Washington. The new clerk is:

Robert Kelley

7062 Guide Meridian Rd., Sp. #30

Lynden, WA 98264

(phone: [360] 398-2591)

Please note change in your Yearbook.

#### NOTICE!!

The congregation of Georgetown PRC extends its congratulations to our pastor,

##### RONALD VANOVERLOOP,

on 25 years of faithful ministry.

We are thankful for his willingness to serve in God's kingdom. We have been blessed for the past three years by his preaching and godly example which lead us to our Savior.

Our prayer for Pastor VanOverloop as he continues his labors among us is found in I Peter 5:2-4: "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a willing mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock, and when the chief shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away."

#### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Martha Society of the Hull PRC extend Christian sympathy to Mrs. Richard Moore and Mrs. Gus Streyle in the death of their sister,

##### MRS. AUGUST SPITZER,

of Leola, SD. May the words of Romans 8:28 comfort them, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God."

Rev. R. Moore, Pres.

Mrs. Lorraine Collmann, Vice-Sec.