

The STANDARD BEARER

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Reformed theologians generally have felt that it is absurd to speak of the covenant as an agreement, a mutual alliance, between the infinite God and the speck of dust that is man; and therefore they usually admit that it is unilateral in its establishment. But if this be true, it depends throughout on God alone. It is no longer a pact; it has no conditions; and God sovereignly performs all that belongs to the establishment and realization of the covenant. He alone, and sovereignly, determines who are to be received into the covenant relation with Him; and on His faithfulness alone it is based. God is faithful: that is the reason why the covenant is eternal. He maintains it: that is why it cannot be broken. It is an everlasting covenant.

—H. Hoeksema, *The Triple Knowledge*, II, 516

MEDITATION

The Hope That Endures

Rev. C. Hanko

And hope maketh not ashamed: because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. Rom. 5:5.

It was Pentecost, the feast of fifty, the harvest feast.

The risen Lord had allowed the seven weeks of seven days to pass by since the morning of His resurrection. Christ had come forth from the realm of the dead as the Firstfruits of those that sleep. Joy had thrilled His soul as He experienced an entirely new, heavenly life that now was His forever. Eagerly He prepared for the opportunity to share this joy with His disciples, as He filled their souls with wonder at His amazing, glorious change. He had another mission, for the angels and the saints in heaven awaited His arrival. When His work was finished here, having appeared to his disciples in various forms, always alerting them to some new phase of His glorious resurrection, He went through the heavens to take His place at the Father's right hand. Who can fathom the infinite depths of joy and blessedness when the Lord of all united all heaven under His control? While the song of triumph echoed through the vast expanses of the heavens, Christ turned His attention to His Church on earth, the harvest that must be brought in before heaven and earth can be perfectly one.

In the upper room in Jerusalem were gathered one hundred and twenty saints. It was but a small handful of people, and yet they were the most blessed people in all the world. They were filled with mixed feelings. On the one hand, they were almost bursting with joy, because their Lord, Who had been crucified, was risen, was seen of them, and had been taken into glory. On the other hand, there was still so much that they failed to understand. It had all happened in such a short time; each event, one upon another, in such rapid succession that they could not keep up with them. There was still in their minds the question of the kingdom. How and when would Christ establish His kingdom? What did the cross, His resurrection, His ascension into heaven have to do with His kingdom? One comfort they had: Christ had instructed them to wait in Jerusalem for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, Who, He assured them, would solve all their problems. They were waiting with much prayer for the fulfillment of that promise.

Suddenly it happened. On the first day of the week the Holy Spirit was poured out upon them. Almost as

suddenly their minds were enlightened; the mystery was solved; a new joy flooded their hearts as they were united anew with their Lord by a bond of living faith. By faith they saw Jesus, now crowned with glory in the highest heavens. He was their Lord and their God, preparing for them a place in His heavenly kingdom, even as He made them citizens of that kingdom by His Spirit in their hearts. He had been delivered over unto death on account of their transgressions, He was raised unto life and glory because He had merited their justification before God. (Rom. 4:25). The Spirit of adoption was also the Spirit that assured them of ever blessed covenant fellowship with God in Christ Jesus. He is the Spirit Who is given also to us by that same glorified Lord!

The question often arises in our hearts: Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord, and who shall stand in His presence? Who is worthy? Who is fit? Shamefacedly we answer: "No one: especially not I." Yet the Holy Spirit points us to Christ as the One, the only One found worthy. The wonder of grace that we experience is, that we are included with Him, so that we can confess from the heart: "We, then, being justified by faith, have peace with God in our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. 5:1).

Peace with God! That includes such blessings as the forgiveness of sins, the adoption to sons, the right of being heirs to our own mansion in Father's house, up there in the cloud shrouded, yet dazzlingly glorious heights of Sion's holy hill.

We not only have the right to that home above, but we also rejoice in the confidence that we shall share in Father's glory: home at last, when all the weary night is spent. We have access, that is, we have the right, along with the desire to ascend those lofty heights with a song in our hearts. "Let those refuse to sing, who never knew our God; but children of the heavenly King may speak His praise abroad."

The way grows long, and often wearisome. As we travel over rugged terrain, through deep, dark gorges, along taxing miles of canyon, even that heavenly city fades from view. We walk by faith, and not by sight. The enemy attacks; we falter shamefully; we even fall into sin. Keenly we feel the need for daily forgiveness, even for sanctifying grace to be renewed every morning. Yet through it all we rejoice with a

joy unspeakable and full of glory. (Rom. 5:3, 4). Gratefully we realize that we are blessed with every necessary blessing of salvation by the Spirit that is given to us!

Wonderful gift of the Spirit!

By opening for us the Scriptures, our road map to the heavenly City, the Spirit enlightens our minds, quickens our will to seek the things above with a lively hope.

We ask ourselves: why do I want to go to heaven? Is it the desire to meet dear ones who have already gone to sleep in the Lord? Is it to be delivered from the present misery of sin and death, never to sin any more, never to suffer any more? All that is really secondary. My main desire is to be with Christ, Who draws me to Himself by His efficacious power. To be with Christ includes seeing my God in the face of Jesus, beholding His beauty, being satisfied with the radiant light of His perfections, in intimate communion of life at the wedding feast of the Lamb. One thing, just one thing have I desired of the Lord. That will I seek after, that I may behold the beauty of the Lord and be saturated with His glories. (See Psalm 27:4). Then I will be like Him, as fully as that is possible for any creature, enjoying to the full His blessedness, to declare with my whole being: "My God, how GREAT Thou art!" Now, in anticipation, we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God!

That hope is real. True enough, it far exceeds our fondest imaginations, for it belongs to those things that we have never yet seen, nor heard, nor were invented by our limited imagination. Yet it is as real as anything we now know.

That hope is absolutely sure. When faith utters the word 'hope' it attaches a meaning to it that this world can never know. In this life we are forced to speak of our hopes with a shrug of the shoulders, expressing an uncertain "I hope so." Scripture even warns us not to speak with proud certainty concerning the day of tomorrow. It is only proper to say: "If the Lord wills and I live." (James 4:13-15). When we speak of that heavenly City, we can speak with all the confidence of true faith. Faith declares: "I know Whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." (II Tim. 1:12).

That hope is living, active, for it reaches out toward that heavenly City with eager longing. Have you never watched the clock as you eagerly awaited the arrival of a dear one, even wondering at times whether the clock had stopped? As you went to the window time after time, did you not wonder that time could so sorely tax your patience? So, as you pause for breath on your pilgrim's journey, the mountain peak of your hope can seem so far away.

Paul speaks of tribulations that work patience, of patience that works experience, and of experience that works hope. Our comfort is that the power of Almighty God works within us by His Spirit, even as we struggle and falter on our upward climb to Sion's heights. Tribulation is not strange to any of us. The word Paul uses means literally "pressure." Satan applies his pressure upon us; the world exerts her pressure; our own flesh adds its pressure to make us stumble, to make us fall. Pressures from every side, while the road is steep, the load is heavy, the cross is painful, so that in this tabernacle we groan. But there is always present the working power of God in those tribulations, teaching us the invaluable lesson of patience.

Patience is the elasticity, the give and stretch of our faith. It keeps us alert. It creates endurance. By it we gain experience, so that we as trained, well-equipped soldiers can stand throughout the evil day. Each day prepares us for the next. Each victory helps us to be ready to meet an even more formidable enemy with greater confidence. We learn to sing in ever richer hope: "We're marching upward to Sion, that beautiful City of God!"

Blessed work of the Spirit, Who leads us from faith to faith, from strength to strength, and from hope to higher reaches of hope.

Is it all as easy as that? How about the old man of sin who still fights us at every turn of the way? How well we realize that he burdens us with excess luggage for his own luxurious comforts. Too often we experience the doubts and fears that he raises, causing us to ask: Does not that hope ever put us to shame?

What if that hope we cherish proves to be nothing but a hallucination, a vain dream? The world also has her illusions that end in disappointment. The Indian has his "happy hunting grounds." The Vikings had their Valhalla. Round about us arise various voices denying the infallibility of the Scriptures. They tell us that Abraham had his idea of life beyond the grave; Moses gave us his version of his hope; and David expresses his personal expectation. How can we be sure that they were not misguided by the superstitions of the heathen nations? After all, when we face death we face an enemy enshrouded in thick darkness.

There is another conceivable possibility. Granted that the hope of the believers has been realized for them, how do I know that this hope will also be attained by me? When I consider my own depravity, along with my strong inclination to hate that which is good, and to cherish all that is evil, the fear creeps up in my soul that some day I will still perish at the hand of my enemies. When I consider my sins that weigh as a heavy burden of guilt upon my soul, ever threaten-

ing to crush me, I know that if it depends upon me, I'll never make it. What if, approaching the journey's end, it should slip from my grasp?

Still another possibility stirs my soul. Granted that my heavenly home is real, and that I also am heir to that salvation, the thought persists, What if the future glory should disappoint my fond expectations. I see the beauty of a sunset, and I ask, "Can heaven be more beautiful than that?" I hear a choir sing the "Messiah", and I ask, "Can heaven's choirs outdo that?" I experience the warm comforts of fellowship with my family and church members, and my soul enquires, "When I am compelled to leave this all behind, will heaven's communion far exceed even this?" I see an invalid who has never known a moment without pain, never enjoyed the pleasures of this life, and the question demands an answer, "Will the joys of heaven really make all this present suffering more than worth while?"

Powerfully faith rises to the occasion to brush all these objections aside with the confident assertion: "Hope maketh not ashamed!"

Heaven is real! God's Word vouches for its own divine authority. God's promises are sure unto all eternity!

Heaven is sure! Faith is from God, and that faith cannot fail us. Faith is knowledge, a sure knowledge wrought in our hearts by the Spirit of truth in Christ Jesus! Faith itself is certainty, for faith trusts in God, Who grants it to us. It is the living bond that unites us in living fellowship with the living Savior in heaven. He Who has begun a good work will surely finish it!

Heaven will exceed our fondest imaginations. All the sufferings of this present time will fade into oblivion at the sight of that glory. What mortal tongue can tell the wonder of heavenly life, making use of all our faculties, and of all our gifts and talents, each in his own capacity, to devote ourselves completely to the sole purpose that God's glories may shine forth to His praise in all His wide and vast creation? Then we shall realize, even better than now,

that all that we are and all that we have is the fruit of Christ's indwelling Spirit in us!

How can I personally know that I possess this?

To that the apostle answers: We know, because "the love of God is spread abroad in our hearts." One of the gifts which the Holy Spirit takes from Christ and shares with us is the gift of God's love. God lives His own glorious life of love and fellowship so intensely in Himself, that He must needs share this with all His people in Christ. The overflowing Fountain of grace draws to Himself a people to delight in His blessedness forever.

It is as simple as this: God loves His people in Christ. He has foreordained them to know Him, delight in Him, adore Him, worship Him, bursting forth in humble adoration to the praise of His glory. He delivers that people from the deepest woe of sin and hell into the most perfect blessedness of sons in His house, who adoringly confess: "We love thee, because Thou hast first loved us."

We take up the song that has thrilled the hearts of the saints of all ages, "I love the Lord, because He hath heard my voice and my supplication. Because He hath inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call on Him as long as I live." (Psalm 116:1, 2). From the lisping lips of the small child, as well as from the rasping voice of the aged saint, the one beginning to climb Sion's Holy Hill, the other almost attaining his goal, comes the same refrain, "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so."

Pentecost has come and gone.

What remains is the Spirit of the risen Lord with and in His church. I know, because He loves me so much, that He has spread His love abroad in our hearts.

That love abides in faith and in hope.

I shall never be put to shame in that hope.

The half has not been told.

Thanks be to God for His abiding gift of the Spirit.

NOTICE!!! CALL TO SYNOD

According to the decision of the last Synod, the Consistory of The Protestant Reformed Church of Hull, Iowa, notifies the Churches that the 1975 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches will convene on Wednesday, June 11, the Lord willing, at 9:00 A.M. in the above mentioned church.

The pre-Synodical service will be held on Tuesday evening, June 10, at 8:00 P.M. Rev. D. Engelsma, President of the previous Synod is scheduled to preach at this service.

Synodical delegats are requested to gather with the Consistory before the service.

Those requesting lodging are to contact Mr. Henry Hoekstra, Hull, IA 51239.

Consistory of The Hull
Prot. Ref. Church.

Rev. J. Kortering, Pres.
Henry Hoekstra, Sec'y.

EDITORIAL

A Gravamen In The Garb Of A Request

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

In the *Reformed Journal* (April, 1975, pp. 7-10) there appears a significant article from the pen of Dr. Harry R. Boer entitled "Reprobation: does the Bible teach it?" — significant, I believe, because it fits into what seems to be a world-wide pattern of attack and erosion with respect to the Reformed faith. But more about that significance later. What makes this article important is the fact that it is actually a transcript of an address to the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church. It does not appear in this year's synodical Agenda, nor could I find it listed among the unprinted personal appeals in the Agenda. Hence, I do not know, as of this writing, whether this address will reach and be treated by the 1975 Synod of the Christian Reformed Church. Possibly it could be excluded from treatment on technical grounds; but that, it seems to me, would only mean that it could appear on the Agenda a year later. However that may be, the fact is that this address to the Christian Reformed Synod is public. And we wish to comment on its form and its content, both to keep our readers informed as to what is happening on the Reformed scene and to instruct our readers.

Dr. Boer's address to the Synod is purportedly a request to Synod to furnish Scriptural proof for the doctrine of reprobation as taught by the Canons of Dordrecht. It concerns especially Article 6 and Article 15 of Canons I. The request itself reads as follows:

It is stated in Article 6 of the First Head of Doctrine of the Canons of Dort that the fact "that some receive the gift of faith from God, and others do not receive it, proceeds from God's eternal decree." Article 15 of the same Head of Doctrine similarly says that it is "the express testimony of sacred Scripture" that "not all, but some only are elected, while others are passed by in the eternal decree, whom God, out of His sovereign, most just, irreprehensible, and unchangeable good pleasure, has decreed to leave in the common misery into which they have wilfully plunged themselves, and not to bestow upon them saving faith and the grace of conversion. . . ."

In Article 15 no Scripture is adduced to show what is "the express testimony of sacred Scripture" that supports the doctrine in question. The two texts adduced in Article 6 are certainly not perspicuous in teaching what they are alleged to teach.

Having been for some time concerned about this, I asked my consistory in 1969 to inform me what this

express testimony is. The consistory declined this request stating that I can address this question to the church only in the form of a gravamen. Unable to concur in this judgment, I next addressed the request to my then classis, Chicago South. In 1973 the Classis gave me the same answer that the consistory had given me. I now address my request to the Synod. There is urgent reason arising from a publicly known harmful, and to a large extent officially existing situation in the Christian Reformed Church, and further from the missionary context in which I work, that leads me to ask the Synod to receive and deal with this altogether important question.

In the rest of his rather lengthy article, Dr. Boer clarifies and motivates the request quoted above. Because of its length, we shall not quote the entire article, but summarize parts of it and quote only as necessary. However, there is an important section of clarification in the remainder of the article which it is necessary to quote in full. This is numbered "I" and reads as follows:

Permit me to make two clarifications. First, my request is not an appeal from consistorial and classical refusals to hear me. Nor is my request to be construed as a gravamen against the doctrine of reprobation. My address to Synod is a request for information: what is "the express testimony of sacred Scripture" that teaches the doctrine confessed in the credal quotations adduced above?

Second, both quotations include the decree of election in their scope. I do not request Scripture support for the doctrine of election. Election is not only well attested in the Scriptures, it is constitutive of the whole doctrine of redemption. It is therefore a most fundamental and necessary doctrine. The fact that it is this forms no small part of my concern in addressing you. I also exclude from my concern a request for Scriptural evidence that there is a judgment of God on unbelief and sin committed by unrepentant men in history, which the second half of Article 15 associates with the doctrine of reprobation.

My address is therefore confined solely to a request to receive from you specification of "the express testimony of sacred Scripture" with respect to the doctrine of reprobation as taught in the two articles cited and as limited in this paragraph.

The rest of this document consists mainly of explanation and motivation.

In "II" Dr. Boer calls attention to the fact that the doctrine of election "is rapidly going into eclipse in

the Christian Reformed Church." And he blames as a "very basic cause" of this eclipse "the prevalent, public, and officially condoned attitude of the Christian Reformed Church to the doctrine of reprobation as this is set forth notably in the citations from I/6 and I/15 in the Canons of Dort given above." As to the factualness of Dr. Boer's claim here, I can only comment that I believe he has 20-20 vision. Whether, however, this is proper motivation for his request to synod is an altogether different question.

In "III" Dr. Boer claims that "It is psychologically and theologically next to impossible to preach on election in the Christian Reformed Church even if one genuinely wants to do so." And what is the alleged reason for this claimed impossibility? Dr. Boer says: "This disturbing circumstance is caused by the existence alongside the doctrine of election, and inextricably bound up with it, of the companion doctrine of reprobation." In this section Dr. Boer goes on to claim that "As a teaching of the Church it (the doctrine of reprobation) has become a credal appendix that appears to have no function in the body ecclesiastic." He further characterizes the doctrine of reprobation as a "diseased appendix." And he goes on to claim that "The diseased condition arises from the fact that the general disbelief in the doctrine has not resulted in its rejection as a central doctrine of the Church." Still speaking of reprobation in relation to election, he warns: "The Church cannot long preach a doctrine which she believes when it is part and parcel of a doctrine which she no longer believes."

In "IV" Dr. Boer claims that the public situation with respect to the doctrine of reprobation "has an official aspect which makes that situation even more ominous." In this connection he refers to the fact that in the Christian Reformed Church the doctrine of reprobation "played no role of any kind whatever in the debate that was carried on for four-and-one-half years" in connection with the Dekker Case. He claims, I believe correctly, that neither the study committee, nor the numerous overtures to the Synod of 1967, nor the decision of Synod ever raised the relevance of the doctrine of reprobation in connection with the so-called Dekker case.

In "V" Dr. Boer offers as a further reason for his request his position as a missionary engaged in a textbook writing ministry in the service of English-speaking African theological students. And he writes: "I believe I am entitled to know the position of my sending denomination on the question of the Biblical basis for a doctrine so closely related to the central Reformed affirmation of the sovereignty of God and man's salvation as reprobation."

In the concluding section of this document, Dr. Boer summarizes his request, quoting once again from the Canons of Dordrecht the specific passages for which he requests the Scriptural proof. And then he writes:

I have not been able through my own study to discover this "express testimony." Scriptural support adduced for it by Reformed theologians does not impress me, and in any case I am not bound by their exegetical judgments. My consistory and my classis have declined to respond to my request for Scriptural verification. Had they done so there would have been a basis for synod's finalizing action. I wish to know officially what the explicit Scriptural support is for this doctrine which the Form of Subscription binds all office-bearers, and presumably ecclesiastical bodies when they are called upon to deal with matters directly and inseparably related to it, both "diligently to teach and faithfully to defend."

I think it will be plain from the above account, regardless of one's opinion for or against the document, that it deals with a matter of the utmost seriousness. Dr. Boer himself states that the doctrine of reprobation as taught in our Canons is inextricably connected with the doctrine of election. Hence, it is fair to conclude also that the doctrine of election as taught by the Canons is necessarily involved in this document of Boer also — whether the document is viewed as a request or as a gravamen. And recognition of this part alone is sufficient to brand this document of Boer as important. It deals with matters which are of the very genius of the Reformed faith and confession. Reformed believers, therefore, will do well to observe what the outcome of this bit of strategy of Dr. Boer will prove to be.

As far as the formal, church political aspect of Dr. Boer's document is concerned, first of all, it seems to me that the document is patently and transparently not a request, but a gravamen against the Canons. For the benefit of any of our readers who may not be acquainted with this term, a *gravamen* is an official charge of error against one of our Three Forms of Unity, brought under the provisions of the Formula of Subscription. Since a gravamen is against the *confessions*, its claim will necessarily be that the teaching of the confession is not in harmony with the teaching of Scripture itself. It is our claim, contrary to Dr. Boer's avowals, that his document is nevertheless such a gravamen. It is only disguised — and rather poorly disguised — as a request. Why do I make this claim? My reason is that while this document of Dr. Boer claims to be nothing more than an innocent request, its entire tenor, as well as various specific statements, is critical of the Canons on the doctrine of reprobation. In the first place, we must bear in mind that this request — contrary to

appearances — does not “drop out of the blue,” so to speak. For one thing, Dr. Boer has been a minister of the Christian Reformed Church, I would guess, for at least thirty years. For all these years he has subscribed to the Canons. Is he suddenly now discovering that there is allegedly no Scriptural proof in the Canons for the doctrine of reprobation? Did he, then, blindly subscribe to the Canons for all these years? One would be inclined to address to the doctor the words of Jesus to Nicodemus, “Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?” For another thing, we must view this document of Dr. Boer in its proper setting on the Reformed scene. It is exactly these two points of the Canons which have not only been criticized in the Netherlands, but have been rejected by the Gereformeerde Kerken, and that, too, on the ground that the teaching of these articles is not the teaching of Scripture. It is well known that various theologians in the Netherlands, and especially Dr. G. C. Berkouwer, have long been making propaganda against the Reformed doctrine of reprobation and double predestination. For another thing, Dr. Boer himself has written critically on this doctrine in the past. Besides, he is critical of the lack of interest in and attention to the recent book of his fellow liberal, Dr. James Daane, *The Freedom of God*. All this in itself, however, would not be sufficient reason to characterize Boer’s document as a gravamen. But there are also specific critical statements. In the first place, while it is technically true that “in Article 15 no Scripture is adduced to show what is ‘the express testimony of sacred Scripture’ that supports the doctrine in question,” yet Dr. Boer certainly knows very well that in Canons I, Rejection of Errors, Article 8, the Canons do adduce three Scriptural passages in support of reprobation to which Dr. Boer does not pay the least attention. They are: Romans 9:18, Matt. 13:11, and Matt. 11:25, 26. In the second place, his statement concerning Article 6 is critical in a very serious way of the Canons; and besides, it begs the question. That statement is: “The two texts adduced in Article 6 are certainly not perspicuous in teaching what they are alleged to teach.” This is a round about way of saying that the Canons do not prove their point in Article 6. Besides, of course, this is merely a claim of Dr. Boer, and a claim for which he offers no iota of proof. The burden of proof is on him to show that the Canons are at fault here. I do not believe they are. I, therefore, could as well say to Dr. Boer, “None is so blind as he who will not see.” In the third place, Dr. Boer in “III” of his document is obviously critical of the doctrine of reprobation, blaming it for the silence about the doctrine of election in his denomination. He refers to reprobation as a diseased credal appendix. And, finally, even if there were no explicit Scriptural proof offered by the Canons whatsoever, — and

this is the case, you know, with many articles in our confessions — it simply will not do for a man to subscribe for many years to the confessions and then suddenly to ask for proof. If he has doubts as to the Scriptural validity of Articles 6 and 15 of Canons I, then the burden of proof is on him, not on the Synod. Dr. Boer is using the disguise of a mere request to make his point that no Scriptural proof *can* be adduced for the doctrine of reprobation as taught by the Canons. Why he did not follow the method of gravamen, or whether he thought this method was too tedious and doomed to failure in advance, I do not know. Whether the strategy of his request is to put the Christian Reformed Synod before the same issue that was faced in the Dutch churches several years ago, and in this connection, so to speak, to put the Synod between a rock and a hard place, I do not know. But any Synod would be justified in giving the same answer as that which was given by Boer’s consistory and by Classis Chicago South. And in that case, of course, the burden of proof would rest squarely upon Dr. Boer’s shoulders.

Materially, of course, I do not agree with the position of Dr. Boer’s article whatsoever. And yet it would be beneficial and would result in a “moment of truth” if the issue raised by Dr. Boer would eventually somehow be treated by the broadest ecclesiastical assembly of the Christian Reformed Church. Perhaps Boer’s request will not reach the 1975 Synod. Perhaps he will be told that he must register a gravamen. If that should take place, I hope that Boer will register such a gravamen. Why? Not because I believe that Dr. Boer is correct in his assessment of the reasons why the Christian Reformed pulpits are largely silent concerning both reprobation and election. Not because I believe that the fault is to be laid at the door of the Canons. Not because I believe that the much maligned Reformed doctrine of double predestination (that is, election *and* reprobation) is at fault. But because I believe that principally the Christian Reformed Church contradicted the doctrine of sovereign reprobation (and therewith inevitably the doctrine of sovereign election) in 1924 when it adopted the doctrine of common grace and of the free offer. And if a future Synod of the Christian Reformed Church would be compelled to face the real issue of Dr. Boer’s document, this would result in a “moment of truth.” Does the Christian Reformed Church truly hold to the Reformed doctrine of reprobation, or is the general silence concerning this doctrine and that of sovereign election evidence of the fact that the Christian Reformed Church, while credally subscribing to these doctrines, nevertheless wants nothing of them?

And that leads me to my final point. I began by calling this document of Boer significant. I had in mind the fact that on the worldwide Reformed scene

there has for several years been a process of erosion going on with respect to these truths. I already referred to the fact that theologians in the Netherlands have for a long time already openly contradicted this doctrine of reprobation (and with it, inevitably, sovereign election) and that the Dutch churches have officially opened the door to the denial of the teachings of our Canons in these two articles. I have in mind, too, the fact that Dr. K. Runia, at that time still in Geelong, openly denied this doctrine. And he, of course, has now been followed at Geelong

by Dr. S. Woudstra. And I have in mind, too, that already in the Christian Reformed denomination reprobation has been denied by more than one theologian. Is this document of Dr. Boer an opening wedge in an attempt to make this denial *official*? Time will tell. But meanwhile let all Reformed believers be on their guard, and understand that with the denial of sovereign reprobation the denial of sovereign election goes hand in hand. And with the denial of sovereign predestination Reformed churches deny all that is precious of the Reformed faith.

QUESTION BOX

About Breaking God's Covenant

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Recently I received two questions about this subject, both from the West Coast, but from different localities. The one question asked in general whether it is possible to break God's covenant. The other question was more specific. It arose out of the discussion of the question whether the elect can or do break God's covenant. My questioner evidently was of the opinion that this is impossible. I draw this conclusion from the following two specific questions which he asks: "1. If the elect can break God's covenant, how can the five points of Calvinism possibly be maintained? 2. If the elect can break God's covenant, what meaning can text such as Phil. 1:6 and Psalm 73:23, 24 have then?"

Reply

It seems to me that the two specific questions quoted above actually constitute two rather strong arguments for the position that God's covenant cannot be broken. To question number 1 I would have to answer: if the elect can break God's covenant, the five points of Calvinism cannot possibly be maintained. And to question number 2 I would have to answer: if the elect can break God's covenant, the texts cited, both of which refer to preservation and perseverance, would be meaningless.

Yet I feel that the argument of these two questions, however valid it may be, approaches the subject rather indirectly. I would prefer to approach the subject directly and from the viewpoint of the very nature of the covenant of grace. And then I would point out that this question is closely related to the question what we understand by God's covenant. If you define the covenant, as we do, as the eternal relationship of friendship between God and

His elect people in Christ Jesus, then it certainly follows, too, that that covenant cannot be broken. It is eternal, and it is an everlasting covenant. And it lies in the very nature of the case, therefore, that an *eternal* covenant and an *everlasting* covenant is unbreakable. And if, further, you maintain, as we do, that the covenant of grace is in the deepest sense of the word unilateral both in its establishment and its continuation and realization, that is, that the covenant is throughout strictly *God's* covenant, in no sense dependent upon you and me for its maintenance or its existence, then you can understand, too, that the covenant is absolutely unbreakable, and can understand also *why* it is unbreakable. Now this is not merely some dogmatic reasoning, but it is the plain teaching of Scripture every time it speaks of an everlasting covenant, as, for example, in the well-known words of Genesis 17:7, "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant; to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." Further, it is this aspect of God's covenant which is emphasized in the well-known history of the revelation of that covenant to David in II Sam. 7 when the Lord assures David: "I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: Thy throne shall be established for ever." II Sam. 7:14-16. These are the sure mercies of David, mentioned by the prophet Isaiah and celebrated in Psalm 89.

All this is plainly taught also in our Baptism Form. The entire second paragraph of the "principal parts of the doctrine of holy baptism" teaches this; and it is emphasized especially in the very last part of that paragraph in the following language: "In like manner, when we are baptized in the name of the Holy Ghost, the Holy Ghost assures us, by this holy sacrament, that he will dwell in us, and sanctify us to be members of Christ applying unto us, that which we have in Christ, namely, the washing away of our sins, and the daily renewing of our lives, till we shall finally be presented without spot or wrinkle among the assembly of the elect in life eternal." This language clearly presupposes that the covenant can never be broken. And this forms the basis for what to me is a most beautiful and comforting statement at the conclusion of this doctrinal section of the Baptism Form: "And if we sometimes through weakness fall into sin, we must not therefore despair of God's mercy, nor continue in sin, since baptism is a seal and undoubted testimony, that we have an eternal covenant of grace with God." The whole thrust here is exactly the truth that God is a faithful covenant God, *our* unfaithfulnesses notwithstanding. The eternal covenant of grace with God cannot be broken and is not broken even when we sometimes through weakness fall into sin. And if this were not true, then it would certainly be true that all our sins would be so many reasons to despair of God's mercy and to give up the battle against sin and to continue in sin. But we must not despair of God's mercy, nor continue in sin, because in baptism we have a seal and undoubted testimony that we *have* an *eternal* covenant of grace with God. If we understand this, then we can also understand that the arguments in the two questions quoted above are pertinent.

Finally, I think it should be pointed out that we sometimes speak rather loosely and inaccurately in connection with the sins of those who are brought up in and live in the sphere of God's covenant in the midst of the world of those sins as being a breaking of the covenant. Sometimes this language is used with respect to the elect members of God's covenant, but sometimes it is also used with respect to the Esaus, who do not belong to the covenant, but who live in the sphere of and under the dispensation of the covenant. In the latter case, this is very plainly inaccurate: for one who does not belong to the covenant of grace could hardly break that covenant. But in the former case, it is also inaccurate: for it is exactly the nature of the covenant relation of friendship with the living God that our sins cannot break that bond of friendship. It is possible to violate God's covenant, to sin against grace, to transgress God's covenant. And we must never forget that it is precisely in the sphere of God's covenant that all our sins are more emphatically sinful. We may also say that by our sins, as far as *we* are concerned, we make that covenant bond impossible. But thanks be to God, His covenant is faithful, for He is faithful. And this is the comfort of God's people in the midst of all their present sin and imperfection. Do not object that such a doctrine will make men careless and profane. For, first of all, this is impossible for a true child of God, as our confessions also emphasize. And, secondly, it is precisely the faithfulness and unbreakableness of God's covenant that is the basis and the incentive for daily repentance and conversion from sin.

Thus I would answer this question. If either of my questioners is not satisfied, call again!

ALL AROUND US

Prof. H. Hanko

Rectification

In the April 15, 1975 issue of the *Standard Bearer*, I commented on an article which appeared in the *Wayland Globe* concerning an ecumenical mass which was attended by the sixth grade students of the Byron Center Christian School. The article in the *Wayland Globe* spoke in its title of the fact that the students of the sixth grade of Byron Center Christian School had attended this mass with the sixth grade of a Roman Catholic School in the area. The mass was held during Unity Week and was, on the part of the students of the Roman Catholic School, intended to

be an expression of their desire for unity. The caption of this article spoke of the fact that the students from Byron Center Christian School had participated in this mass. On that grounds I criticized the actions of the Christian School for engaging in this act of ecumenism.

The principal of Byron Center Christian School, Mr. Bonnema, called me up about the article, and I later talked with him and the teacher who teaches the Sixth Grade in Byron Center Christian School. They both assured me of the following facts: they had told

the Roman Catholic teacher who extended the invitation that they had no intention of participating in any respect in the celebration of the mass. They made it very clear to the teacher that they could not, for conscience' sake, have any part in it — not the kneeling, the singing, the chanting, nor any other activities involved in the mass itself. At the celebration of the mass, the students, along with their teacher, were only observers. They witnessed the celebration of the mass — nothing more. Furthermore, they informed me that after they had returned to their classroom, they spent nearly three hours discussing together the celebration of the mass in the light of the principles of the Reformation

which was a part of their heritage, and the teacher used the opportunity to give to the students a greater appreciation for the heritage of the Reformation in the light of the perversions of Rome. Further, the teacher, Mr. Los, also went with the class and did not leave the matter with a student teacher.

I am glad to hear this, and happy to present this information to our readers. The article in the *Wayland Globe* was in error on this key point. We offer our sincerest apologies to the teachers and students of Byron Center for reporting the erroneous information in the *Wayland Globe*, and for our criticisms which we made which arose out of this erroneous article.

More On The Abortion Issue

The editor of our paper received a letter from one of our readers which he referred to me because the letter had to do with what I had written in the April 1 issue of the *Standard Bearer*, on the subject of abortion. The letter reads as follows:

I am having difficulty with a statement on page 296 of the *Standard Bearer*, Volume LI, number 13, April, 1975.

In the second column I read: "The ultimate decision rests with parents, or perhaps with the mother alone. Hence murder is condoned.

"But we want to emphasize again that abortion in all cases *except* when the choice is very concretely between the life of the unborn child and the mother is murder."

Is this a case of situation ethics? Here it is assumed that in certain instances God in His providence places a believing mother and believing doctor before an impossible decision, and the killing of a life becomes a good thing acceptable to God.

God leaves it up to the mother and doctor to decide which life shall be more useful in God's kingdom here on earth.

So far my question.

(In another connection I included) the following illustration. A Mr. Ceres was crossing a bridge over a gorge when upstream in the swollen river he spotted a figure struggling to stay afloat. This called for quick action, for farther down stream was a treacherous falls and certain death.

Quickly he took hold of a nearby life belt with rope attached. This he tossed over the railing as the struggling figure neared the bridge.

Now he saw that it was a neighbor lady with her ten year old son clinging to her back. She was able to get hold of the life belt and Mr. Ceres started to pull them up on the bridge, but his strength was not equal to the weight of the two.

The mother then pleaded with Mr. Ceres to help

her get rid of the son who was still clinging to her.

Mr. Ceres had been hunting and had carried his rifle (surgical instruments). A single well-aimed shot loosened the boy's grip and Ceres was able to pull the mother to safety.

In our Men's Society (the men) were of the opinion that God would never cause such a situation to happen.

Please, what is your verdict?

The question which confronts believing parents at a time when the life of the mother is threatened is a difficult one. In fact, we do not hesitate to say that the question is so difficult that believing parents may very well pray that they never face it. Nevertheless, it happens. The difficulty of the decision which they are called to make however, is in part, due to other matters. It is not always easy to tell when the life of the mother is actually threatened by childbirth. Even conscientious doctors oftentimes do not know with certainty. Parents have told me of their own personal experiences in this respect. They have been themselves informed by doctors that further children would seriously endanger the life of the mother. They have, nevertheless, been given children from the Lord without any harm whatsoever to the mother. The same thing is true during a pregnancy. The doctor may very seriously inform the mother that her life is threatened by a continuation of the pregnancy, but the doctor does not always know.

This problem is compounded in our day by the fact that all doctors are not equally conscientious about this matter. Doctors may sometimes, on the flimsiest of medical evidence, inform the mother that continued childbearing would be a threat to her health and life.

In all these cases, parents must certainly get the opinion of more than one doctor, and, if at all possible, they should try to get the opinion of a Christian doctor.

It is for these reasons that I stated in my article: "... except when the choice is *very concretely* between the life of the unborn child and the mother..." The choice must be as clear as it is possible to make it in the light of all available medical evidence. It is for this reason, too, that the analogy of the story of Mr. Ceres is not completely appropriate.

But all of this does not yet get at the question. The question, if I understand it correctly, really asks concerning the *grounds* on which one makes a choice of this nature. When parents are confronted very specifically and definitely with the choice between the life of the mother and the life of the unborn child, what can serve as the basis for their decision?

I think it is important at this point to remember that a decision has to be made. It will not do just to let matters take their course. It is true that believing parents believe that the ultimate outcome of the matter is in the hands of the Lord. But at such a crucial point in their lives, the Lord calls them to make a decision — prayerfully and before His face. It is a decision which may be difficult and heart-rending; but it must be made. It is a decision comparable to the kind of decision which a believer faces when he has, e.g., a tumor in his brain. The doctors have assured him that he will die without surgery, but surgery carries with it the risk of destroying his mind.

If parents do not make such a decision and simply let matters take their course, the mother will die, and perhaps the baby also will die. To refrain from doing anything is also a decision of sorts, but it also can carry with it the gravest responsibilities. Are the parents who let matters take their course with the result that both mother and baby die any less guilty of murder than those who let a loved one die through neglect and failure to provide proper medical care when they knew such care was necessary? Is not a doctor guilty when he refuses to treat a person for a sickness when it is within his power to do so?

In this context, the question very really comes to a decision concerning the life of the mother and the life of the unborn child. It seems to us then, that the grounds on which such a decision has to be made are suggested by our correspondent when he writes: "God leaves it up to the mother and doctor to decide which life shall be more useful in God's kingdom here on earth." I would modify this somewhat. I would think that the decision rests alone with the parents. This does not mean that they may not consult others, but the final decision is their's to make. And then it would seem to me that the decision would have to be that the mother "is more useful in God's kingdom here on earth." She has responsibilities towards her husband and family. She has a definite place and calling already established in God's Church and kingdom. It would, it seems to me, be incredible under these circumstances, to take the life of the mother in order to save that of the unborn child.

Nevertheless, we must remember that the responsibility always remains to do all in one's power to the very end to save both the mother and the child. We never know with certainty what God will do in these matters. Our lives are, after all, in His hands alone. He gives life and only He can take it away. And He rules over life in ways that oftentimes amaze the most capable of doctors.

There are two remarks which I want to make by way of conclusion. In the first place, there are many other circumstances which may enter into the decision. We cannot anticipate them all in this article. Although these circumstances do not materially affect the principle we have stated above, conscientious and believing parents must make their decision before God's face and in the light of all the circumstances. In the second place, we do not want to suggest in any way that the decision is an easy one. We may well hope and pray that we are never confronted with it. But we may nevertheless be assured that when the decision is forced upon us and we make our decision in prayer before God, God will bless that decision as well.

THE VOICE OF OUR FATHERS

The Proof For The Trinity

Prof. Robert D. Decker

(An Exposition of Article IX of the Belgic Confession)

Article VIII of the *Belgic Confession* states the Biblical doctrine of the Holy Trinity, viz., that God is one in essence, yet nevertheless distinguished in three Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The church believes that these three, while they are to be distinguished according to their personal properties, may never be separated, for: "... they are all three co-eternal and co-essential. There is neither

first nor last: for they are all three one, in truth, in power, in goodness, and in mercy." (Article VIII, *The Belgic Confession*) In its ninth article the *Confession* treats "The proof of the foregoing article of the Trinity of persons in one God." For the complete and rather lengthy text of Article IX the reader ought to consult the Liturgical section of *The Psalter*, pp. 26, 27. In its opening sentence, which reads, "All this we know, as well from the testimonies of holy writ, as from their (The three Persons of the Godhead, R.D.) operations, and chiefly by those we feel in ourselves." The *Confession* speaks of a double or two-fold proof for the doctrine of the Trinity. That two-fold proof is, first of all, the testimony of the Scriptures; and, second, it is found in the operations of the three Persons of the Trinity, especially those operations in the heart of the believer.

Turning to the Scriptures for proof for the Trinity, the Article cites two passages from Genesis: Chapter 1:26, 27 and Chapter 3:22. The first of these familiar passages reads: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." There is more than these verses than may meet the eye. Notice the rather striking use of the plural form of the first person personal pronoun, "us," and the plural form of the possessive, "our". At the same time the verb, "said," is in the singular form. Thus there is a plurality of Persons in God, but also a basic oneness. The same is taught in Genesis 3:22 which reads: "And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us . . ."

In addition to these passages from the Old Testament there are others which prove the Trinity. There are the "Angel of Jehovah passages" such as Genesis 18:2; 19:1, 24; and many more. Psalm 33:6 speaks of the creation of the heavens: "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath (or Spirit, R.D.) of his mouth." In Chapter 61 of Isaiah the prophet speaks of his being anointed by the Spirit of God. The doctrine of the Holy Trinity is taught, therefore, already in the Old Testament Scriptures.

Nevertheless this truth is taught more clearly in the New Testament. Article IX is correct when it states: "... but that, which appears to us somewhat obscure in the Old Testament, is very plain in the New." Mentioned in the article are five passages from the New Testament: Matthew 3:16, 17; Matthew 28:19; Luke 1:35; II Corinthians 13:14; and I John 5:7.

Matthew 3:16, 17 speaks of the baptism of Jesus. The three Persons of God are all present: the voice of

the Father is heard from heaven, the Son is being baptized, and the Holy Spirit descends upon Him in the form of a dove. Luke 1:35 is the well-known passage which speaks of the announcement of Jesus' birth to Mary by Gabriel. In this announcement the angel speaks to Mary of the Holy Spirit that shall come upon her, of the power of the highest that shall overshadow her, and of the child that shall consequently be born who shall be the Son of God. Matthew 28:19 is the baptism formula which speaks of our being baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Apostolic benediction also mentions all three Persons: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen." (II Cor. 13:14) I John 5:7 speaks clearly of the three Persons of the Trinity as being one: "For there are three that bear record in heaven, The Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one." The difficulty is that this passage is the object of a good deal of dispute. Most of the most reliable of the ancient manuscripts do not contain this verse which leads many New Testament scholars (even among the conservatives) to believe that it does not actually belong in the New Testament. It is not our purpose to discuss this whole question. Just two matters ought to be noted. First, the doctrine of the Trinity does not depend upon this verse from I John. If this verse indeed does not belong to the sacred record the Trinity is still plainly taught in many other passages. Hence, in the second place, whether it is actually to be received as part of Scripture or not, it teaches the truth. There are three that bear record in heaven, and these three, the Father, the Son (Word), and the Holy Spirit, are one. In all these passages and more, therefore, "... we are fully taught, that there are three persons in one only divine essence." (Article IX) Proof for the Trinity will be found in the Bible.

The *Confession* also speaks of the operations of the three Persons as proof of the doctrine of the Trinity. Moreover, it is "chiefly by those (operations) we feel in ourselves" that we know this doctrine. The idea is that the threeness of God becomes manifest in the works of God. And those works of God are distinguished as those which God performs without us and those within us. Still more, it is chiefly by those within us that we know that God is three Persons in one divine being. Those works or operations within us are such operations as: regeneration, the calling, faith (conversion), justification, sanctification, preservation, and glorification. By our being born again, called out of darkness into God's fellowship, united to Christ by faith, justified through the shedding of His blood, made holy and preserved by His Spirit and Word; by these operations we know the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as the God of our salvation. We may

also observe those works of God without us. These include the work of creation, that of providence, that of redemption in Jesus Christ; His cross and resurrection, and ascension to glory. This the article further explains in these terms: "Moreover, we must observe the particular offices and operations of these three persons towards us. The Father is called our Creator, by His power; the Son is our Savior and Redeemer, by his blood; the Holy Ghost is our Sanctifier, by his dwelling in our hearts." This does not mean that God the Father only was involved in our creation, but not the Son or the Spirit. Nor does it mean that the Son without the Father or Spirit is alone involved in our redemption. Rather, the idea is that all the works of God, "the particular offices and operations," are of the Father, through the Son, and in or by the Holy Spirit.

The emphasis here ought not escape our attention. Note well, our creed speaks of knowing this doctrine of the Trinity from "the testimony of holy writ," and from "their operations . . . chiefly by those we feel in ourselves." This does not mean that we know this truth from two sources; Scripture and our experience. Ultimately our only source of this knowledge is the Word of God. Apart from the objective Word of God's revelation preserved in the Holy Scriptures we simply cannot know God. But the point is that knowledge is never merely a matter of our intellects. It's not mere "head knowledge". So very often it is exactly at this point that the Reformed faith is criticized. The accusation has it that being a Reformed, a Protestant Reformed Christian means one has a head full of doctrinal facts but no real experience. Nothing could be further from the truth. Our knowledge of God is always a knowledge received out of His Word as that Word is applied in our hearts by the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, I know not merely that God is the Father of His elect in Christ, but I know that God is *my* Father for Jesus' sake. And I know that because the Spirit witnesses with my spirit that I am a child of God. (Romans 8:16)

On the basis of the above-mentioned proof the

article speaks of several heresies over against which this doctrine has always been defended by the true Church. It has been defended over against unbelieving Jews, who deny Christ and therefore the Trinity. Mohammedans with their belief in Allah also deny the God of the Scriptures, and this truth has been defended over against them. Several heretics are cited by the article, *viz.*: Marcion, Manes, Praxeas, Sabellius, Samosatenus, Arius, "... and such like, who have been justly condemned by the orthodox fathers." Marcion rejected the entire Old Testament and retained only a mutilated form of the New. He denied the literal incarnation. God's Son according to him had only a visionary body. Manes (also known as Mani) is the father of Manichaeism (to which Saint Augustine was addicted for a time). He also denied the incarnation and taught that God created Christ as the ideal man who in this body came to earth to save mankind by his teachings. Praxeas and Sabellius were the founders of Sabellianism, which heresy rejected the doctrine of three eternal subsistences within the one divine essence. Paul of Samosata taught that Christ was a mere man who became progressively more divine by allowing God to penetrate his earthly life more completely. Arius too denied the divinity of Jesus Christ.

Finally, with this article of our creed we confess: "... although this doctrine far surpasses all human understanding, nevertheless we now believe it by means of the Word of God, but expect hereafter to enjoy the perfect knowledge and benefit thereof in Heaven." This doctrine always transcends our comprehension, for God "only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen." (I Tim. 6:16). We do expect to enjoy the perfect knowledge and benefit (not in the sense of comprehension) when the covenant shall have been perfected in glory and we shall know and enjoy the fellowship of God perfectly. Now we see and know in part, but then face to face; and we shall know even as we are known. (I Cor. 13:12)

TEACHER URGENTLY NEEDED

The Hope Christian School of Redlands, California is in urgent need of a teacher for the 1975-76 term for the lower grades, grades 1-4. Any prospective teacher interested should promptly contact: Mr. Otto Gastra, 917 Campus Ave., Redlands, California 92373. Phone: (714) 793-3991. Who will help?

*FROM HOLY WRIT***Exposition of Hebrews 13***Rev. G. Lubbers***THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE VARIOUS EXHORTATIONS OF HEBREWS 13 TO THE MAIN ARGUMENT OF HEBREWS.**

There is a school of thought which holds that these exhortations in the last chapter of Hebrews are rather detached injunctions by the writer which have little or no direct relationship with the teaching of the rest of the epistle. These injunctions, so it is held, could very well have been appended to any other letter which, for example, Paul had written to the church at Rome.

It may be well to give a brief survey of these various injunctions which we find in Hebrews 13. We will itemize them as follows:

1. Christian brotherly love, including showing hospitality to the wayfaring stranger, and to those who are evilly entreated, vss. 1-3.

2. The honorableness and chastity of holy wedlock in distinction from the impurity of whoremongers and adulterers, vs. 4.

3. The sin of covetousness as contrasted with childlike trust in the Lord God of Israel, vss. 5, 6.

4. The injunction to imitate the godly walk and teaching of the apostles and teachers, giving heed to their triumphant end, vss. 7, 8.

5. An admonition not to be led astray by Jewish doctrines and observances, but rather to be edified by God's grace, vss. 9-15.

6. An exhortation that we do good and communicate to others, vs. 16.

7. An exhortation to be obedient to the leaders, the elders in the church, vs. 17.

8. An exhortation and petition that the writer be remembered in the prayers of the saints to be restored to them the sooner, vss. 18, 19.

9. A beautiful prayer for the blessing of the congregation by the God Who raised up Christ from the dead, vss. 20, 21.

10. An appeal that the congregation receive the chief admonition of this letter in the fear of the Lord, vs. 22.

11. An expression of the writer's hope to visit the Hebrew Christians with Timothy at an early date, vs. 23.

12. The salutation and apostolic benediction.

When we study all these exhortations carefully and analyze them, we find that we must disagree with the

aforementioned position that these exhortations are not the outflow and application of the teachings of this letter proper.

Some of these exhortations stand in direct relationship with the great exhortation to the Hebrews that they be not moved from the hope of the gospel, nor depart from the living God as He reveals Himself in Mt. Zion, the city of the living God in Christ the Messiah. (Heb. 12-14) And we add that this is true of some of these exhortations on the very surface of them. Thus it is the case in vss. 9-15 of this chapter, where the Hebrews are warned against being led astray by the Jewish teaching concerning meats; they must not be carried about with diverse and strange doctrines, which have not profited those who were occupied therein. This is a direct reiteration of the main theme of this letter. Even the allusion to the acceptable sacrifices spoken of in vs. 16 indicates that the writer is still thinking of this main theme here, and would drive this point home. Likewise this is reflected in the exhortation that the believers of the Hebrews imitate the walk and teaching of those who had been their instructors, the apostles and evangelists. They have to consider their departure out of this world, triumphantly in faith and hope and love. This is a very direct repetition of what the writer had already written in Hebrews 2:1-4.

Although the former paragraph rather conclusively proves our position, we would still add that there are other of these exhortations which flow from the great principle of a better covenant, which is based upon better promises, to wit, that the law is now written not simply on tables of stone but upon the tables of the heart. (Heb. 8:10-12) We now have the promise of the Lord, spoken by the prophet Jeremiah, fulfilled in Jesus Christ. It is the law written in the heart, which was a better covenant, based upon better promises. (Jer. 31:31-34) This is the great, central teaching of the letter to the Hebrews. All is "better" now. And we may add to this that there are also exhortations here which are very much implied in this basic and central teaching of Hebrews. Thus the matter of chastity in and outside of wedlock is the teaching that we have been saved from dead works to serve the living God. (Heb. 6:1; 9:14) We must purge our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

And, lastly we see this in the various exhortations which underscore brotherly love. In this the love of God, which is written in our hearts in the new and better covenant, reveals itself. It belongs to the grace

necessary in our lives to make our calling and election sure. (II Peter 1:5-10) And when we read that beautiful benediction prayer in vss. 20, 21, we see that all we have is through the "blood of the everlasting covenant." This refers to the blood of the Mediator, Jesus, Whose blood speaks better things than that of Abel.

All this indicates that these exhortations are very germane to the total argument here in this epistle, and not some loosely appended afterthought injunctions.

THE NEED OF ABIDING BROTHERLY LOVE (Hebrews 13:1-3)

The writer enjoins brotherly love. Writes he, "Let brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them, and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves in the body."

Basically this "brotherly love" (*philadelphia*) is the love of God in our hearts, which we have to all the saints. (Eph. 1:15; Col. 1:4) It is not a so-called love of the brotherhood of man as advocated by all who love to speak of the "fatherhood of God" over all men. Such is the stand of all unbelief, and in the highest sense of the anti-christ himself. And the world is full of this in its philanthropic works, which are not rooted in the love of God. This brotherly love here is very uniquely a love which a fellow-Christian has for his brethren in the Lord. Wherefore the apostle Paul writes in Ephesians 1:15, 16 that he does not cease to give thanks unto the Lord for these saints, whereas he has "heard of their faith in the Lord Jesus and of their love to all the saints." This is indeed a living faith, which shows itself in works. (James 2:14-26) Paul writes in the same vein in Eph. 3:17, 18, where he speaks of Christ so dwelling by His Spirit in our inner man that we may be able to *comprehend with all the saints* what is the breadth and length, the depth and height of the love of Christ. This is the love by which faith is wrought in our hearts. (Gal. 5:6) There is a "brotherhood" in the world to which we belong as Christians; a certain suffering is fulfilled in the midst of these saints. And we know ourselves akin to them in their life and sufferings. (I Peter 5:9) Such is this brotherly love in its nature and operation. It knows of a unique ministering to the saints as the fulfillment of the law of Christ, the fulfillment of the law and prophets, the golden rule as taught by Jesus in Matthew 7:12. This is the fulfillment of the very *Magna Carta* of the kingdom of heaven, both in the Old and New Testaments.

Now this brotherly love must "remain." This refers to the exercise of this love in the midst of the saints in all its dimension. The law of the Lord is very wide. We must owe no man anything save that we owe him ever and abiding love. It is a debt which is paid, but —

never paid up in full. It is the law of heaven and earth. And this love must not wax cold and inoperative. There is a danger that such it might become in these saints. Had not the apostle written in Hebrews 10:24, 25 concerning the necessity of giving heed to each other and to good works? And must they not do so much the more as they see the day approaching? There was therefore danger of their faith not being strong, their hope not lively, and their love waxing lukewarm and indifferent in the midst of trials and persecutions for the Lord's sake.

Yes, they must not be as those in whom the seed is sown in stony ground, nor as that which is sown among the thorns. The former are those who are enthused for a little while, but have no depth of earth; and when persecution comes, they are offended. And the latter are those in whom the cares of life and the deceit of riches choke the Word, and they bear no fruit of the gospel in their lives. (Matt. 13:20, 21) This is an ever present peril to the saints in every age, and it was so to these Hebrews Christians. But God works grace through His admonitions of the gospel, and thus He keeps His own elect from falling into the sin of not walking in brotherly love.

This brotherly love must reveal itself continuously in the very concrete situation of the Hebrew Christians as they live as those suffering for Christ's sake. Some of these brethren are homeless; they are lonely wayfarers, and must travel from place to place. They are not welcome in the Jewish community or by those of the unbelieving Gentile world. They must therefore experience the communion of the saints by being received into their homes. Had not Jesus said in Matt. 25:44, 45 that what we do to one of these little ones of Him, we do it unto Him, even if it be but a cup of water? The believers in Thessalonica have been commended that they had shown that they were *taught of God (theodaktos)* in their showing brotherly kindness and love to all who were in Macedonia. (I Thess. 4:9, 10) And is not being taught of God the grace of those who have come to Jesus because the heavenly Father has drawn them by irresistible grace? (John 6:45) And in the marvelous providence of our heavenly Father He brings such "strangers" to our door, that we may show them love. And without knowing, we show kindness to those who are even more precious than angels. We show kindness to those concerning whom the angels rejoice before the throne of God, when one such sinner repents. Abraham indeed showed hospitality to angels unawares. Yes, he showed kindness to the Angel of the Lord, the Christ in the Old Testament dispensation as He visited His people. And Lot also showed kindness to and entertained angels unawares. (Gen. 18:3; 19:13) Well may we heed this added incentive to this exhortation that brotherly love continue.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

The Shakertown Pledge

Rev. G. Van Baren

Recently, I (and I assume all the clergymen of our area) received a special mailing from G.R.A.C.E. (the ecumenical council of clergymen and rabbis in Grand Rapids) encouraging participation in a "hunger week" beginning last April 13. This was designed to make people aware of the hunger problem in the world as well as to raise monies to help relieve the problem. Enclosed in this appeal was a suggested Bulletin insert for the Sunday of April 13, entitled, "The Shakertown Pledge". I do not know how many churches actually printed that in their bulletins. Probably many did. It is another instance of propaganda conditioning those within the churches (and synagogues) for the coming antichristian world power. For although this "pledge" contains elements which one might not dispute, much of it involves ideas which can only prepare and condition many for the coming of the antichrist and his kingdom. The "pledge" reads as follows:

I declare myself to be a world citizen.

I commit myself to lead an ecologically sound life.

I commit myself to lead a life of creative simplicity and to share my personal wealth with the world's poor.

I commit myself to join with others in reshaping institutions in order to bring about a more just global society in which each person has full access to the needed resources for their (sic) physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual growth.

I commit myself to occupational accountability and in so doing I will seek to avoid the creation of products which cause harm to others.

I affirm the gift of my body, and commit myself to its proper nourishment and physical well-being.

I commit myself to examine continually my relations with others, and to attempt to relate honestly, morally, and lovingly to those around me.

I commit myself to personal renewal through prayer, meditation, and study.

I commit myself to responsible participation in a community of faith.

The document goes on to explain the idea of this "pledge":

We believe that there are two important steps that can be taken:

— First, we must commit ourselves to work for a globally just society in which no one goes without.

— Second, we must be willing to simplify our own lifestyles and begin to move toward a just World Standard of Living.

This is what is "new" about the Shakertown pledge. Declarations of world citizenship are not new. Devotional and worship commitments are important — but are hardly new. No, what is "new" in the Pledge is the firm declaration that *personal piety*, *social conscience*, and a *simple lifestyle* are all essential parts of a religious life that possesses integrity.

One notes many points which are disturbing, to say the least. There is the proposed declaration of "world citizenship". This can not mean, of course, that all men live on one earth. That has always been true. Nor does this merely suggest that one has certain obligations, and that too, before God, to use material things aright. But this suggests the fact of "citizenship". That certainly implies a political relationship. Usually, we regard ourselves to be citizens in a specific country, whether of United States, England, Canada, or elsewhere. But the "pledge" would seek to remove that concept from one's mind. We must rather think in terms of "world citizenship". That would suggest ultimately a world power, a centralized world government. One is encouraged to think in terms of that.

That is foretold also in Scripture (Rev. 13 is a clear example of this). Man will finally conclude that the solution of his problems is to be found in world-oneness; in a world power. And from his point of view, this is correct. The "wound of the beast" of Revelation 13, incurred evidently at the tower of Babel and the confusion of speech, will be healed. Divisions among mankind must cease. Man must become united. There must be world citizenship rather than national citizenship.

And all this is being printed on church Bulletins to encourage cooperation of the churches with this antichristian viewpoint.

Secondly, this "pledge" has something to say concerning the redistribution of wealth. It not merely recognizes inequalities in the question of wealth, it not only points out injustices in connection with that, but it pledges an individual to work toward redistributing his personal wealth to the world's poor. And, this is proposed as a "pledge" for a Christian.

In considering that, one must beware of a conclusion based on greed in which he would insist that he will keep what he has. He will not give. These material things belong to him. But on the other hand, the principle set forth in the "pledge" is hardly Christian. Fact is, there seems to be more than a tinge of socialism suggested there. There is the implication that all ought to share equally of this world's goods; that there is something inherently unchristian to have more than others. Now Scripture does not teach that. In the Old Testament, rich men as Abraham, Job, David, Solomon are not required to redistribute their wealth so that all might have equality. In the New Testament one does not find a command to work for such equality. On the contrary, the rich are called to be properly compassionate and the poor to receive thankfully.

One might add that the giving of the child of God is first of all to assist fellow-saints. When Paul at Antioch took collections for the drought-stricken Jerusalem, these collections were given there to the *church*. But also, these mercies of Christ are to be given with the Word of God accompanying it. One who receives must know that this gift is not comparable to the "giving" by the world, but is rather the fruit of the mercies which the Christian has experienced from Christ.

The pledge, then, seems to lead into a distortion of Christian giving to make it appear more as socialism or Communism than a reflection of Christ's mercies.

In the third place, this "pledge" commits one to a "reshaping of institutions in order to bring about a more just global society in which each person has full access to the needed resources. . . ." Again, one must be quick to say that there are many institutions today in need of "reshaping". This is true both in government as well as within the church world. There ought to be a spiritual reformation. But that, obviously, is not what this "pledge" has in mind.

The "reshaping is that governments and churches may bring about a "more just global society. . . ." One pledges to compel institutions to take the same point of view as the "world citizen". Where views clash against this "world citizenship" viewpoint, the individual must see to the "reshaping" of these contrary views and the organizations which hold them. The "pledge" does not mention the means which must be used to reshape organizations. Some have advocated "peaceful" means; others insist that violence is justified to accomplish the end of reshaping of the institutions.

The child of God may not be participant in such "reshaping". He confesses that organizations are often very corrupt. He must also point out this corruption and emphasize the calling for spiritual

reformation. He sees the evidences of sin in the institutions of men. But this is not the same as insisting upon a "reshaping" in order to bring about a "more just global society".

In the fourth place, the "pledge" speaks of one's relationship to others so that one "relates honestly, morally, and lovingly to those around me." That does sound good. Sounds a bit like the Boy Scout oath. Or a modified golden rule. Yet it must be noted that Christ has no place in this proposal (nor in any of the others). The "pledge" suggests a relationship between mankind which presumably is common to man. Anyone can practice such relationship — if only he tries enough. But the child of God is to love his neighbor for God's sake. His relationship proceeds out of a regenerated heart. He shows in word and deed that he does belong to Christ. We may not confuse that relationship with the "social gospel" of our day.

Fifthly, the "pledge" speaks of "personal renewal through prayer, meditation, and study." That, too, would fit in well with the principles of the antichrist. The Pharisees of Jesus' day could observe this requirement well. There is in it no personal regeneration or conversion. There is no God specified to whom one is to pray. There is no mention of Christ — just: prayer, meditation, and study. Reminds one of the idea of salvation by good works. It sets forth a course of "righteousness" that any can observe. All can "profit" by pledging to do this. But this in no way compares to the specifics required in Scripture. In the Bible one learns how he must study the Word; pray to the Sovereign God for Jesus' sake.

Finally, the "pledge" speaks of "responsible participation in a community of faith." That is worse than that oft-seen statement, "Worship God in the church of your choice." The "pledge" speaks only of a "community of faith". What would that be? Surely it would include Protestant and Roman Catholic, but also Jew. Each of these participate in a "community of faith". Even other religions can not be excluded from this statement. A Moslem could also speak of his participating in his "community of faith". That all emphasizes again that man is interested in "religious" beings — and it matters not what religion this might be. Surely the way is open for the coming of the antichrist when men are ready to pledge to participate "in a community of faith" — for that is what the kingdom of the antichrist is: a community of faith — in man.

No, the child of God can not participate in such an unholy "pledge". It shocks him that so many "churches" can be ready to "pledge" all of this. But it does remind us again that soon then our Lord must return on the clouds of glory.

"Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus!"

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

Fleshly Impatience

Rev. John A. Heys

The child of God has three enemies with which he must fight all through his earthly life: the devil, the world and his flesh. And that flesh is to be reckoned with, if we are to understand his struggle in the midst of this world. We must not be too quick to blame the devil for the sins which we commit. And we sin so often when there is no world to tempt us or to bring pressure to bear upon us. Paul writes in his epistle to the Romans that, "The carnal (fleshly) mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." Twice here in Romans 8:7, 8 he makes mention of the flesh, for he speaks of the fleshly mind and of the flesh of man which is incapable of doing anything pleasing in God's sight.

Abraham had such flesh as well as we do. This flesh is not something that became man's after the cross of Christ. Paul is speaking of the flesh of men in the Old Testament dispensation as surely as he is speaking of the men of his own day. In fact, ever since the fall of Adam the flesh of man has not been subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

And that flesh of Abraham began to manifest itself after God made plain to him that his heir would be one that would come forth out of his own bowels. He at last had something definite in the way of a promise from God concerning his seed. No longer did he have to look around at Lot or at his eldest servant, Eliezer. He had it directly from the mouth of God that he would have a child that was his own flesh and blood.

God did not say that this child would be the flesh and blood of Sarah. This we now know to be true. And this could easily have been deduced by Abraham, for she was his only wife. For God gives a man children through his wife. Of course, there is the flesh again that may reason that Sarah may die and God may give him another wife, and hence he cannot be sure that this promise of one that would come forth from his bowels means also that he will be Sarah's flesh and blood. But as things stood at the moment, the logical conclusion to draw, since Sarah is his wife, and he has been promised a child of his own flesh and blood, is that Sarah will mother this child.

Sarah was elated at this revelation of God that Abraham would have a son of his own and gave some very serious thought to the matter. She was getting older, and she had been barren all her life. Her

husband was approaching his eighty-sixth birthday, and she herself was a woman of seventy-five. In her favour may be stated that she was very interested in God's covenant promises and rejoiced to hear that Abraham would have a son of his own even at this late date in his life. But to her shame it must be said that she became impatient and led Abraham also into a stand of fleshly impatience.

Sarah tried to help God, and the very thought of doing so is loathsome to one who knows the truth concerning God. He needs no help from man. He had just shown Abraham that the covenant stands because of His faithfulness. And while Abraham slept, God passed between the pieces of the beasts and swore to keep His covenant which He had established with His people in Christ.

Without making it a matter of prayer, without walking by faith with the matter, Sarah suggests to Abraham that he take Hagar, her maid, and raise up this promised child through her. Hagar was given no voice in the matter, although she readily agreed and was likewise moved by the flesh. And Abraham likewise without making it a matter of prayer and without walking by faith took Hagar and sought this promised son through her. He, too, was moved by fleshly impatience. God was too slow. Abraham could not wait patiently for God to give him a child through his lawful wife, Sarah.

To understand a bit Abraham's position let us bear in mind that the promise of making him a great nation — which implied a son — was now about ten years old. Abraham came out of Ur of the Chaldees and into Canaan when he was seventy-five years old (Genesis 12:4); and when Ishmael was born to him and to Hagar, he was eighty-six years old (Genesis 16:16). That was a long time to wait. It is a long time for a young couple that is just married and prays to God for covenant seed. It was even a longer time for Abraham and Sarah who now have passed the prime of their lives and have waited and been unable to bring forth children. The matter is not as serious as it would be today. For in Genesis 11:26 we read that Terah, the father of Abraham, begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran after he was seventy years old. But with Sarah's barrenness and the fact that he was older than his father when he begat his firstborn, these ten years seemed like a long time to both Abraham and to Sarah.

Sarah was the instigator. The thought of taking Hagar did not originate in the mind of Abraham, nor in the mind of Hagar. It was all the thought of Sarah. And one wonders that she would be willing to share Abraham with Hagar. That element she did not think through carefully. And it is only after Hagar conceives and Sarah is despised in her eyes that Sarah begins to realize what she had done and what a serious thing it was for her to give her husband this maid to raise up seed for her.

This much may be said in Sarah's favour that it shows that she was covenant minded. Her interest in God's covenant promises is commendable. It is her fleshly impatience and refusal to wait for God to work out His own plan that is to be condemned. There is even a certain element of humility and self sacrifice that Sarah was willing to undergo in order that she might see God's covenant promise fulfilled. But her deed still is wrong and is to be branded as a deed of the flesh, and then of fleshly impatience. How correctly Paul states it when he writes to the Romans, "When I would do good, evil is present with me."

Hagar is to be rebuked for her part in the whole matter. It is true that she was a maid and under orders. She was Sarah's possession. But we ought to obey God rather than man. And there is no evidence that Hagar had any interest in the covenant. She did not submit to this arrangement of Sarah because she too was impatient for God to fulfill His covenant promise to Abraham. It was on her part a carnal matter. And perhaps also a very appealing and flattering thing to be given to the master of her mistress, and thus to elevate her above the position of a maid and servant. She became impudent and showed her pride as soon as it became plain that she had conceived by Abraham and would bring forth a child for him.

Sarah, in spite of her carefully laid plans cannot, of course, be sure that God will give a son. It could be that Hagar would only bring forth and continue to bring forth daughters to Abraham. And Abraham cannot be sure either that he will receive a son through Hagar anymore than he could through Sarah. All in all it was failing to figure with the God Who gave the covenant promise.

Abraham, though the plan did not originate with him, also revealed fleshly impatience and perhaps was motivated by much more than the desire to receive covenant seed. The thought of receiving Hagar, and of Hagar being given to him by his lawful wife, appealed to him; and his flesh readily accepted such an arrangement. We can only say that Abraham, too, deserves a severe rebuke for his deed and part in the whole transaction.

And God showed His disapproval. When He sends

an angel to Hagar, who had been driven away by Sarah, He instructs that angel exactly to call her, "Hagar, Sarai's maid." There you have it. God did not for one minute consider Hagar to be another wife of Abraham. Let it not be stated or held that God approved of bigamy in the Old Testament times. Had He done so, Hagar would have been called Abraham's wife.

Hagar suffered for her part in the whole transaction. She was driven away by Sarah, and even allowed to be driven away by Abraham. To placate Sarah, who now became furious after she saw the implications and results of her plan, Abraham told Sarah to do with Hagar as she pleased. She dealt hard with Hagar so that she fled from her cruel hand. The abuse she received was like a whip to drive her into the wilderness where the angel of God meets her and sends her back. But Hagar suffered for her part in the transaction.

Sarah suffered, and she above all deserved to suffer. For the whole transaction was her way of trying to help God. Hagar did not raise up children for Sarah. Sarah had said to Abraham, "Go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her." But that was not to be. That child became Hagar's. And that child became Abraham's. And this hurt Sarah more than she wished to confess. She had by her fleshly impatience created an impossible condition in her family. And again, let no one say that God approved of bigamy in the Old Testament. He shows clearly by the troubles and strained relationships that result from it that He visits such breaking of His law with evidences of His displeasure and strong disapproval. Things will never be the same again in Sarah's family and life after this bit of fleshly impatience.

And although a man can take these matters in stride more easily than a woman, Abraham suffered also because of his part in the fleshly impatience. A strained relationship developed between him and Sarah. He asked for it by readily accepting the suggestion of Sarah. He did not behave as a man of understanding, nor surely as a man of faith; and he got himself into an impossible situation in his family life. Sarah was unjust in blaming Abraham and saying, "My wrong be upon thee." But this is part of the punishment that Abraham must now bear for not taking the matter to God in prayer, and for not waiting patiently for Him to fulfill His own covenant promises. But as we said at the beginning, that flesh has to be considered and with it we must reckon, because it is there and must be curbed.

Well may we take heed and watch our own flesh. We may not be, and most likely are not in Abraham's and Sarah's position. But there are a host of other circumstances under which we become impatient.

God's ways very seldom are our ways; and He is so often much too slow for us. We must guard against running ahead of Him and do wisely when patiently we wait for Him to unfold His counsel. Lest we think foolishly, as Asaph did, that clean hands are worthless and pure hearts are vain, we had better let the Word of God be our guide and go to Him in prayer.

In sickness and affliction it is so easy to become impatient and to question God's love. Recovery is so slow, and we would like to have Him hurry it up. And

when it is terminal and the pains are there every day, we sometimes hear a child of God ask why the Lord does not take him and bring an end to the miseries. The family seeing the pain and misery also wonders that God keeps His child in such pain for so long. But here, too, rather than to be impatient, go to the Word of God and be assured that all things work together for good to those that love God. And go to Him in prayer seeking the patience of His grace, lest we walk after the flesh and be displeasing in His sight.

STUDIES IN ISAIAH

Israel Rejected In Just Judgment

Rev. Robt. C. Harbach

"For Thou hast rejected Thy people, the house of Jacob, because they are filled from the East, and (with) sorcerers, like the Philistines; and with the children of foreigners they go hand in hand" (Isaiah 2:6).

I. *The Suffering of it.* A. Deserted. *For, or because!* Calvin spots the connection of the discourse when he imagines that Isaiah, in amazement at the blatant evils of the nation, suddenly breaks off his line of thought to turn to God with, "Thou dost rightly reject a nation so desperately wicked, *because*, abandoning itself to dark Satanic depths, it is *not* walking in the light" (v. 5)! *Thou hast rejected Thy people.* With the rejecting of the Jews there would be a receiving of the Gentiles. The fall and diminishing of the Jews became the riches of the Gentiles, the casting off of the Jews the reconciling of the world (Rom. 11:12-15). There would be a temporary rejection of the elect, but He will not reject them utterly (Ps. 94:14; I Sam. 12:22). But these are the unbelieving reprobate Jews who claim to be God's chosen people and the house of Jacob, who say they are Jews, but are not, who are the synagogue of Satan, for which the wrath of God comes on them to the uttermost. After the rejection of Christ on the cross, the Jewish church became a synagogue of Satan and God said of it, "Your house is left unto you desolate" (Mt. 23:38).

B. Unpardoned. "and Thou wilt not forgive them" (v. 9; cp. Ex. 34:7), which is the exact opposite of, "Father, forgive them." Calvin points out that Isaiah does not speak "of every individual, but of the body of the people, which was so deeply infected by its vices that there was no hope of cure." Matthew Henry with still more force says that *the nation* of the Jews, as far as its connection with the religion of Jehovah is concerned, would be wholly cut off to an "irreversible doom . . . never to be formed into such a body again, nor ever to have their old charter restored to them again."

II. *The Deserving of it*, for reasons which follow. 1. They became expert practitioners in occult arts. "Rejected . . . because they are full from the East with sorcerers." *From the East* indicates the source of all occultism, going back to Babylon. "Babylon hath been a golden cup in the Lord's hand, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine, therefore the nations are mad" (Jer. 51:7). Babylon was the original source from which the occult arts flowed. Egypt and Greece derived their apocryphal religions from Babylon. The esoteric system of the Phoenicians and the Romans came from the same source, and ". . . the secret system of Free Masonry was originally founded on the mysteries of the Egyptian Isis, the goddess-mother or wife of Osiris" (Hislop). Here, too, is the origin of all Satanism, as a study of the god Aesculapius reveals. Babylon, the great mother of the whores of the abominations of the earth, represents the kingdom of Antichrist in the aspect of its seductiveness. By her golden cup she entices to drink of her allurements, the exquisite poetry and prose in the whore's (anti-christian) literature; her seductive science, the heady cup of her philosophy, the brilliance of her music, the allure of her entertainment. The occult arts go back to the time of the Chaldean Semiramis who reigned in the time of Abraham. She infected the minds of many with the mystery-cult religions of the East. These "mysteries" were introduced privately, little by little, under the pledge of secrecy and the sanction of an oath, so that what could not safely be revealed all at once and openly in all its hideousness was inculcated stealthily and secretly. Semiramis was a beautiful but abandoned queen of Babylon, a paragon of unbridled

lust and licentiousness. She is identified with Venus, the mother of all impurity. With her, Babylon became the "grand seat at once of idolatry and consecrated prostitution" (Hislop). A study of the secret societies will show a connection with heathen idolatry and the foul evils lurking in the bosom of the Babylonian system.

They are filled with sorcerers *like the Philistines*, who were deeply involved in the Babylonian arts, including witchcraft. The latter was to be found in the guilds. In Lydia, the population of the city of Thyatira was divided into tradeguilds. Each guild had its own patron-god and its heathen feasts in honor of its pagan deity. "In the existing state of society it was impossible to dissociate membership of a guild from idolatry, and the idolatry was of a kind that by its symbolism and its efficacy exerted great influence on its adherents, making them members of a unity (at once a labor-union and a secret society — RCH) which was essentially non-Christian and anti-Christian." (Ramsay, Hastings Bible Dictionary). Their religious banquetings, even in the highest Greek culture (cp. Socrates), were celebrated with base revelry and immorality.

2. They became friendly with foreigners: "and with the children of foreigners they (strike hands with) go hand in hand." The heathen do not use the common handshake, but hold the hands palm up while another strikes downward with his hands on the upturned palms, to reciprocate holding his own palms upward to receive a pat on the palms. So they became friendly with aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. They went so far as to reject their own heritage and history to find rapport with those ignorant of God's mighty acts. Their land became a hot-bed of syncretistic admixture with Syrians, Ammonites, Moabites, Edomites, Philistines and Phoenicians. The more they became fond of them, their fashions and customs, the more cultured they thought them to be.

3. They made gold their god: "and his land is full of silver and gold, and there is no end to his treasures; and his land is full of horses and there is no end to his chariots" (v. 7). They came more and more to depend upon the money and the armies of these foreign powers. This is true of the Roman Catholic Church which has heaped up riches by selling indulgences and masses, and by the paying of tithes and fees for praying souls out of purgatory. The Vatican with its army and treasuries is a picture of any nation's reliance on its military might and of everyone gone money-mad. This goes double for the secular, hybrid nation of Yisraeli which relies on other nations for its own scientific, economic and military development. This is true of the Soviet state. Communism cannot make it, on its own, without the opulent aid of capitalist nations. Israeli, Russia and the USA all have

this in common that they are depending on their own treasuries and armies as though they could not be safe, easy and happy without them. Yet in plain honesty they all must admit that they are not so with them. It comes down to this, Blessed is the nation (ha goi) whose God is the Lord. That nation is identified by a comparison of Matt. 21:43 with I Pet. 2:9 as the Church!

4. They gave idols their homage: "and his land is full of idols. To the work of his hands they do homage, (to) that which his fingers have made" (v. 8). The word for *idols*, having intentional, similar sound to *Elohim*, the Putter forth of all power, is *elilim*, *nothings*. Images, far from being books of the ignorant laity, are in pedagogical value worthless. Jeremiah taught this, too, calling idols non-entities, no gods and lies, and the men who use them stupid. These absurd godlets are gross and ghastly caricatures of the one true and living God (Jer. 2:11; 10:14, 15, 10). "They that think one God too little will find two too many" (Matthew Henry). Nor will the ungodly world evolve out of and above their empty idolatries. "But the rest of humanity, who were not killed by those plagues, did not repent from the works of their hands, so as to cease worshiping demons and the idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood, that can neither see nor hear nor walk. Nor did they repent of their murders, or of their magic arts, or of their immorality, or of their thefts" (Rev. 9:20-21, The New Berkley Version).

5. They degraded themselves: "and the little man (common man) is bowed down, and the big man is humbled, and Thou wilt not forgive them" (v. 9). They degraded themselves with their abominations. Now they learn to their terror that there is the abomination that makes desolate. Now they will be thrown down to the rocks and to the dust in final judgment, all of them, men lost in the crowd and outstanding public figures alike — "the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the chief captains, the mighty man, every bondman and every free man shall hide themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains." Society, at the day of judgment, is still constituted as it always has been. Modern civilization, politically, shall not have advanced beyond the ancient establishment of monarchy. Such idealism is not to be realized. Kings, princes and orders of nobility remain on the earth till judgment comes. No utopia of peace and prosperity is to be expected in this world, wherein all nations convert their instruments of destruction into implements of agriculture, with the noise of war forever silenced. For that day will find soldiers and military men embroiled in blood, sweat and tears up to its very end. Nor will there be a complete end to human slavery, with all men free and no more class

distinctions. For the final judgment will find slaves and their masters still in the world. Religious and political advocates of the social gospel will then, if not before, find it to be an utter failure. For the

world with all its evils, its social and economic injustices will continue under the burden of them until Christ comes to throw down all the wicked and judge them for their sins.

Book Reviews

THEOLOGICAL DICTIONARY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT, Vol. I, edited by G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren; translated by John T. Willis; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich. 479 pp., \$18.50 (cloth). [Reviewed by Prof. H.C. Hoeksema]

This is the first volume of what promises to be a very ambitious project on the Old Testament similar to the recently completed series, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, also published by Eerdmans. This *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* is also a translation from the German language. There is no question about it, in my opinion, that for those who can afford these expensive volumes, they will prove to be valuable helps in the study of the Old Testament. A work of this kind is intended, of course, only for those who are at home in the Hebrew language. However, the translators have made a concession: "This English edition has attempted to serve the needs of students of the Old Testament who do not have the linguistic background of more advanced scholars, without sacrificing the needs of the latter. Not only are Hebrew words transliterated, but wherever a precise technical scheme is not necessary, a simpler, more readable transliteration is employed, to enable the reader to sound out and thus become familiar with the word discussed. Meanings of foreign words are given even where they are obvious to advanced scholars. And where the Hebrew text versification differs from that of English bibles, the English verse is given in

parenthesis. Such features will help all earnest students of the Bible avail themselves of the manifold theological insights of this monumental new work." While this will undoubtedly prove to be a convenience for many students, it is nevertheless a sad commentary on the inability of far too many students of Scripture to make use of the Hebrew language.

The present volume covers the words from 'abh to badhadh.

While there is much valuable material to be found in this volume, I must needs add a word of caution to my recommendation. The reader is informed already on the dust jacket as follows: "The emphasis, though, is on Hebrew terminology and on biblical usage. Besides philology, form-critical and traditio-historical methods are employed, with the aim of understanding the religious statement in the Old Testament." This means, of course, that one cannot simply accept all that is offered in this volume: for the authors are addicted to the viewpoint of higher criticism. In perusing this first volume, I discovered that in many instances this is very obvious. In other instances, however, this critical approach to Scripture is more subtle. Hence, the believing Reformed scholar must be warned to be very discerning when he makes use of a volume like this in his research. However, as anyone at home in this field will know, this is true even of some lexicons. Hence, this is no reason why I should not recommend this book as a valuable addition to one's Old Testament library.

THE CORINTHIAN CATASTROPHE, by George E. Gardiner; Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, Mich.; 56 pages, \$.95, (paper). [Reviewed by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema]

The author of this little paperback is pastor of Calvary Undenominational Church in Grand Rapids.

This is a book about the Charismatic movement. The author is an avowed foe of this movement, although, as he informs us in the Introduction, he had his training in a Bible School which was Pentecostal. In answering the question why he wrote another book on this subject in a day when the market is flooded with books on this subject, he states: "Because if someone had shown me the clear

warnings, the logical pronouncements and the spiritual patterns in Paul's epistle when I was a young Christian, seeking to know and please my Lord, I could have been spared years of bondage, disillusionment and despair. I can only pray that God will use this writing to spare others the same." Certainly, part of the value of this book lies in the fact that it is written by a convert from Pentecostalism.

While one could not expect from a book of this size a detailed expose of Pentecostalism, nor a thoroughgoing exposition of the pertinent Scripture passages, nevertheless this is basically a Scriptural approach; and it is clearly and rather crisply written.

News From Our Churches

April 30, 1975

The annual spring lecture, planned by the Lecture Committee, was held in First Church on April 24. The "Musical Number" in the program consisted of several selections by the Covenant Christian High School Choir, under the direction of Mr. Roland Petersen. The topic of the lecture for the evening was "The Christian Marriage and the Problem of Divorce." The speaker, Rev. David Engelsma, began by assuring his audience that every pastor is well aware of the fact that there exist in many marriages problems — for some of which the only merciful solution, it would seem, is divorce. What he had to say therefore, he insisted, was not at all out of ignorance of the realities of the situation. He proceeded, then, to deliver a powerful exposition of the clear teachings of *Scripture* with regard to the matter of divorce. Divorce, except for the cause of fornication, is *never* the solution to those problems.

It goes almost without saying that the position of our churches on the divorce question, as it was articulated by Rev. Engelsma, is not a popular one in much of today's church world. One thing is certain, however — the near capacity audience in First Church that evening must surely have been left with an appreciation for the fact that our stand is based squarely on the Word of God, and, further, that the essence of that position is not so much that it's *against* divorce, as that it's *for* marriage, which pictures, in a beautiful way, the blessed union which exists between Christ and His Church.

According to the printed program, the evening's lecture will be available on tape. Tapes may be ordered from the RFPA, Post Office Box 2006, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49501.

* * * * *

As is customary at this time of year, church bulletins are filled with announcements concerning programs of one kind or another. Perhaps I could list some of those which have been held recently.

Rev. Joostens, we notice, has been kept busy of late. At the Mr. and Mrs. League Meeting, held in Hope Church on April 22, he spoke on "Our Christian Calling in Supporting Worldly Organizations." On April 15, he spoke at the Ladies' League Meeting, which was also held in Hope Church. His topic at that time was "The Intermediate State of the Soul." And on March 19 he was the speaker at the Spring Breakfast, sponsored by the Mothers' Club of Adams Street School.

On April 1, Prof. Hanko spoke at the Officebearer's Conference in Southeast Church. His topic was, "The Discipline of the Mentally Troubled." On April 3, Prof. Hoeksema delivered a public lecture, sponsored by the Publication Committee of our Holland Church. He lectured on "God's Sovereign Love for the World." On April 6, the Loveland Protestant Reformed Church Choral Society, under the direction of Mr. Gerald Kuiper, presented an Easter Program in the church after the evening service. On that same evening the Hope Choral Society presented an Easter Concert in Hope Church. South Holland's Choral Society rendered its Easter Singspiration a week earlier, on March 30th. And in Grand Rapids on that night the Beacon Lights sponsored an Easter Singspiration in First Church.

The annual spring Western Ladies' League Meeting was held on April 16 at the Doon Protestant Reformed Church. The theme of the program was, "Lord, Lead Thou Us." On the 18th of April, two of
(continued on back page)

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Mr. and Mrs. Society of the Hull (Iowa) Protestant Reformed Church wishes to express its sincere sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Ken Hoksbergen in the passing of her father, MR. PETER DECKER. May they find comfort with the promise found in Revelation 14:13 — "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord."

Mrs. Leon Uittenbogaard,
Sec'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The members of The Martha Ladies Society of Hull, (Iowa) Protestant Reformed Church expresses their sympathy to one of our members, Mrs. Wm. Hoksbergen, in the loss of her brother, MR. GERRIT H. TE SLAA. "But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him." (Psalm 103:17).

Rev. J. Kortering, Pres.
Mrs. John Brummel, Sec'y.

IN MEMORIAM

The Mary Martha Society of the Redlands Hope Protestant Reformed Church hereby wishes to express its sincere sympathy to one of its members, Mrs. Mary Gail Gastra and family, in the loss of their father and grandfather, MR. GARRETT MOUW.

May the Lord comfort them in this bereavement and give them grace to rejoice in the assurance that "blessed are the dead who die in the Lord."

Rev. Marvin Kamps, President
Mrs. Shirley Feenstra, Treas.

Read the
STANDARD BEARER!

our day schools presented annual All-School programs. The theme chosen by Hope School in Grand Rapids was, "God's Most Elegant Books," while that of our Loveland Protestant Reformed Christian School was, "Rejoice, The Lamb Reigneth." On April 21, the Men's League Meeting was held in Southeast Church. The program consisted of a debate on the topic, "Resolved that it is a proper activity for our churches and/or individuals to be involved in world relief efforts of other Christian groups." And, finally, the Young Peoples Federation Board sponsored the Church League "All-Star" basketball game. Half-time activities were to consist of a volleyball game between the students of the Seminary and the members of the Federation Board.

* * * * *

Several other items, gleaned from various church bulletins, might be more interesting if they're quoted directly. I'd like to do that:

From Faith's April 13th bulletin - "The consistory has set this week Thursday the 17th as open house, so that the congregation can see their parsonage. The time will be from 7-9. Cookies and coffee will be available. Since the sidewalks are not in, you are requested to enter through the basement to minimize tracking."

From Loveland's March 16th - "Taped sermons will be heard at both services today. The pastor is unable to preach, due to laryngitis."

From Southeast's April 6th - "The Council has decided that at the Communion Service the communicants will partake of the elements in unison."

From Edgerton's March 30th - "Beginning next week, our afternoon service is moved to 7:30 P.M. This will continue through the summer months."

* * * * *

Informational letters and questionnaire cards relative to the 50th Anniversary Celebration have been, I think, distributed in each of our churches. The committee asked, remember, that the cards be mailed by the 15th of May, in order that appropriate arrangements can be made for food, lodging, games, etc. If you're reading this May 15th issue of the *Standard Bearer* on May 15, the deadline is today. You haven't forgotten, have you?

D.D.

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