

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Fleeing to the cross and clinging to the feet of the Savior, we hear the verdict: No condemnation! No condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, since He bore the full burden of God's wrath for the sins of all His people. With the Psalmist we confess ever anew: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."

See "God's Just Judgment" — page 362

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THE STANDARD BEARER

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MEDITATION

God's Just Judgment

Rev. C. Hanko

Will God suffer such disobedience and rebellion to go unpunished?

By no means, but is terribly displeased with our original as well as actual sins; and will punish them in his just judgment temporally and eternally, as he hath declared, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."

Heid. Catechism, Lord's Day 4, Question 10

Humble Submission

The tone of this question and answer is quite different from the previous one. There we made bold to ask whether God was not doing us an injustice by

demanding of us the impossible. God's law confronts us day and night with the demand: Love Me, for I am God! Love me whether awake or asleep, when you

eat your meals, when you work, when you speak or act. Let the deepest impulses of your soul and all your thoughts be directed in love to Me, so that your life is permeated with that love. We find in ourselves the very opposite. I hate God. I hate my neighbor. I am so completely prone to hate, that I transgress every command of God, and am not able to keep one of them. Yet He demands love.

That was our problem in the previous question and answer. We now are conscious of our wilful disobedience whereby we, in Adam, ate of the forbidden tree. We realize that this was nothing short of rebellion against our God. We transgressed His covenant, allying ourselves with God's enemy, Satan. According to the strict justice of God we deserve that God's image in us be perverted into "Blindness of mind, horrible darkness, vanity and perverseness of judgment." We are become "wicked, obdurate in heart and will, and impure in (our) affections." (Canons III, IV, art. 1). Wilful disobedience and rebellion characterize our entire lives.

"Will God allow such disobedience and rebellion to go unpunished?" We are standing before the tribunal of the Judge of heaven and earth, Who by the Scriptures and by the testimony of the Spirit in our hearts brings us to trial in our own consciences every moment, every day. Every attempt at self-defense has disappeared. As guilty sinners we bow our heads before the condemning verdict of our God: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things, which are written in the book of the law, to do them."

In humble submission we confess that God "is terribly displeased with our original as well as our actual sins." We say with David, "Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight; that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." (Psalm 51:4, 5). The original guilt, and therefore the original depravity of Adam, is passed on in the generations to each of us. To that we add our personal, daily transgressions, which we commit before the very face of God. Therefore God has just reason to be displeased, even terribly displeased with us. God's displeasure is not a momentary flare-up of temper, that soon fades away. Even as God is eternal, His displeasure is eternal. Because sin is transgression of God's holy law, God is filled with consuming wrath against the sinner. Because sin dishonors God's holy Name, God arises in defense of His Name. We are told in the second commandment, "For I, Jehovah thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me." God does not merely hate sin; He hates the sinner. God does not cast sin into hell. He casts the sinner

into everlasting torment for his sin. The workers of iniquity must perish. Therefore our Catechism speaks of God's just judgment both temporally and eternally.

The Gospel Of God's Judgment

This just judgment of God is poured out upon the wicked already in this present time.

God writes VANITY over the lives of evil men. They never succeed. Their lives are like a treadmill, wearying them to total exhaustion, yet getting them nowhere. They try to dethrone God, but they never succeed. They build their tower of Babel, but God always disrupts their efforts. Man accrues a fortune for himself, but leaves it all behind when he dies. He may have a Brink's truck with all his treasures following his hearse to the cemetery, but he knows nothing about it. Man makes a name for himself, but this is often forgotten before he dies. The wise preacher of the Scriptures warns us: "It is all vanity, and vexation of spirit." The wicked have no peace, saith my God.

This is strongly confirmed in Romans 1 — "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." We are told here that these ungodly men "hold the truth." They know that God is the only true and living God, for God manifests Himself unto them in all the works of His hands. God surrounds them with His power as the ever-glorious God. It is exactly for that reason that man's rebellious heart suppresses the truth "in unrighteousness." Even the pagan in the jungles who never heard of the ten commandments knows that God must be served, that stealing is stealing, that murder is murder, that adultery is adultery. Let someone steal his goods, or rape his wife, or kill his child; the pagan knows that this is sin against God, and condemns him for it, even though he condones the same sins in himself. Paul tells us that man's conscience accuses him. God never leaves himself without witness that He is God, so that no man has any excuse in the day of judgment.

Under the righteous judgment of God sin breeds sin. Romans 1 goes on to describe the rapid degeneration of the sinner who forsakes God. Because he banishes God from his thoughts, God gives the sinner over to the vain and foolish worship of idols. Idolatry leads to immorality, as is evident from the idol worship in heathen countries where male and female gods are worshipped, and immorality is a part of the worship. That same corruption develops rapidly in high society, as well as in the slums. Every form of evil lifts its vile head, producing sin upon sin in the individual, in the nation, and in the whole human race, until the measure of iniquity is full. Romans 1

ends with the blood-chilling note concerning evil men: "Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." Sin is a cruel tyrant who binds in shackles, only to destroy. This same truth is taught us in James 1: 14, 15, "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Sin leads us like a dumb ox to the slaughter. Still worse, like an adulterous woman, the sinner becomes pregnant with sin, even repeatedly, producing a large family of vile children: Evil desires, evil words, evil deeds. This goes on from bad to worse, to ever bolder sins, until the conscience is seared as with a branding iron, and hell swallows up another victim. It is indeed terrible to fall into the hands of the living God!

Under the judgment of God even the prosperity of the wicked leads to their destruction. Asaph in Psalm 73 had been jealous of the wicked as they wallowed in their abundance, especially when he compared this to his own afflictions. He brought his problem to the Lord, and learned, "Surely thou didst set them in slippery places (like a steep bobsled run); thou castest them down into destruction." James in his epistle pronounces God's wrath upon the boastful rich by saying, "Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter." (5:5). How evident this is today in an affluent world. Does abundance cause the nations to recognize God as the Giver of these gifts? Does it fill their hearts with thankfulness? On the contrary, we live in a pleasure-mad, sports-mad, money-mad age, in which young and old indulge in gamblings, lotteries, drinking, gluttony, immorality of the worst sort, and every form of corruption. There are more unhappy marriages, more broken homes, more abortions, more woeful miseries than ever before. The measure of iniquity is rapidly filling up upon the earth!

In all this God does not leave Himself without witness. He speaks louder than ever as His judgments increase. Countless tornadoes reap their destruction upon the earth; numerous earthquakes cause the souls of men to tremble, be it but for the moment. The air, the streams, the lakes, and the oceans are becoming putrid with pollution. The prophecies of the book of Revelation are being fulfilled before our eyes. Yet no one cares. Formerly these visitations were still referred to as "acts of God," but now they are referred to as freaks of nature or scientifically explainable disorders. There was a time when a national prayer day would show some semblance of fear, but even that semblance is disappearing. We are reminded of Pharaoh, who was continually warned of impending disaster, but whose heart was calloused by

the blows of judgment that fell upon the land. Or we think of Ahab, who was not ready for God's wrath to be poured out upon him as long as he walked in sackcloth in a pretence of mourning. But, when he defiantly went to battle in spite of Micaiah's warning, he was ready to be sent to hell. God causes the cup of iniquity to be filled by every individual, by every nation, and by the whole world; then comes the end. The Judge of heaven and earth stands at the door. (James 5:9).

From this temporal judgment of God upon the wicked follows the eternal torment of hell. Hell is not annihilation, but isolation. Hell is being forsaken of God. The wicked are cast away with a wrathful, "Depart from Me, thou worker of iniquity." Weeping, gnashing of teeth, everlasting fire express symbolically the anguish of God's just vengeance, that causes the souls to writhe in remorse forever. Anyone who knows God's justice must confess: "Our God is a consuming fire."

The Gospel

"The gospel," you ask? Does the justice of God whereby He punishes sin both temporally and eternally belong to the glad tidings of salvation? It certainly does. Once more we stand before the tribunal of God. Our conscience condemns us that we have and do transgress all God's commandments — that we keep none of them; that we are not able to keep any of them. We hang our heads in shame, realizing that we are worthy of God's just judgment as we stand burdened with the guilt of our sin. The voice of Jesus calls to us, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Fleeing to the cross and clinging to the feet of the Savior, we hear the verdict: No condemnation! No condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, since He bore the full burden of God's wrath for the sins of all His people. With the Psalmist we confess ever anew: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."

The Comfort.

Never need the child of God fear that he is being punished for his sin. No matter how great our sin may be or how many our transgressions, or how repeated our wanderings, Christ bore the burden of our guilt and set us free. The rod falling upon us is held by the gracious hand of our heavenly Father, Who is afflicted with us in all our afflictions, and uses His wise chastisements for our sanctification. "For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Hebrews 12 speaks volumes to us.

With us in our afflictions. Punished for us so we may be chastened in love! What a Savior!

EDITORIALS

Dr. Daane's Distortions

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

At the conclusion of his first article on "The Logic of Election" James Daane promised to show in a second article why Reformed theology thinks of election in terms of numbers. That second article appeared in *The Banner* of April 14, 1978. The article is outstanding probably for only one reason, namely, that for a change Daane wrote an entire two pages on the subject of election without so much as mentioning Herman Hoeksema. I would almost begin to think that Daane is slipping. However, on second thought, the reason probably lies in the fact that Herman Hoeksema is so thorough a foe of all individualism in his theology and such a champion of the corporate and organic unity of Christ and His church that even Daane hesitated to attack Hoeksema this time.

For in this second article Daane's big complaint is against the alleged individualism of Reformed theology and of the Canons of Dordrecht. This is supposed to be the big reason why Reformed theology thinks of election in terms of numbers.

However, Dr. Daane's entire argument on this score is full of distortions.

Before I refer to these distortions, I wish to make the point once more that Dr. Daane is coming out of his corner, and in doing so is making plain what I always claimed concerning him and concerning anyone else who does not believe the doctrine of sovereign reprobation, namely, that he does not want and cannot hold on to the doctrine of sovereign election. Time was when men like Berkouwer and Daane — making their appeal incorrectly to the *non eodem modo*, "not in the same manner," of the Conclusion of the Canons — claimed that the doctrine of reprobation found in Canons I, A, 6 and 15 was really foreign to the true spirit of Canons I and its doctrine of sovereign election. They claimed that the statement of the Conclusion was really a corrective to Canons I, A, 6 and 15. Now, however, we see a shift in Daane's thinking. He now attributes the incorrect view of reprobation, which, according to him, the Canons teach, to an incorrect view of election. He

finds individualism both in Reformed theology and in the Canons when it comes to the doctrine of election. This individualism, according to Daane, leads to a logic of number in election. And this logic of number leads to the doctrine of reprobation.

But more than this, Daane is *openly critical* of the Canons of Dordrecht when it comes to the doctrine of election. This is contrary to the Formula of Subscription, of course; but Daane can get away with that in the Christian Reformed Church, just as Harry Boer did. The difference is that Daane is permitted to do this in the official periodical of the Christian Reformed Church, while Boer was confined to a recognized liberal periodical, *The Reformed Journal*. Dr. Daane writes:

What I would want the reader of these lines to recognize is this: creedally and even theologically, we have only a very partial, fragmentary doctrine of individual election, one that is neither set in nor shaped by the whole Biblical doctrine of election. And it is on the basis of this Biblically deprived and impoverished view of election that we, via the logic of numbers, so largely based the doctrine of reprobation.

In a similar vein, he calls the Reformed doctrine of election "individualistic," and "a view of election the Bible does not sustain." Further, he charges that "our individualistic election ignores the chief elements of the Bible's view of election."

Again I say: I am glad about this. I am glad not because Daane denies election; I would much rather see him confess it. But I am glad because Daane is confirming, black on white, what Reformed men have always maintained and what we have frequently emphasized, namely, that the denial of reprobation leads inevitably to the denial of election. James Daane is Exhibit No. 1 in proof of this contention.

Let everyone who is afraid of the Reformed doctrine of reprobation or who is inclined to soft-pedal or to compromise it take note of this, and let him take warning.

And let the Christian Reformed Church, which is confronted by Harry Boer's gravamen against reprobation, take note of this. I believe that the CRC severely compromised both election and reprobation already in 1924 by the Three Points, and that the theological aberrations of men like Boer and Daane are but the logical outgrowth of that denial — helped along, of course, by G. C. Berkouwer. Nevertheless, the Christian Reformed Church is now being asked officially to discard the doctrine of reprobation as taught in the Canons. Let the CRC be warned from Daane's writings that if it discards reprobation, it will also discard the Reformed doctrine of election. What it will have left is a choice between traditional Arminianism or the vagaries of Daane's dabblings, according to which "the clue to election — in an admittedly complex manner — is openness and inclusion."

But what about those distortions which we mentioned?

Distortion Number One

Dr. Daane deliberately confuses the teaching of individual election and individualism, meanwhile never actually telling us what individualism is. This is the foundation of his argument, although he never deals with a single one of the many passages of Scripture which speak of individuals being elect, never makes it plain how it is even logically possible to conceive of individuals except numerically, and never shows what is wrong — either Biblically or logically — about thinking of election in terms of numbers.

Let Daane answer with a Yes or a No this question: did God from eternity choose *some* men? If he answers Yes, then he must concede that election is numerical, and also that God did not choose others. If he answers No, then he is left to choose between a total denial of any personal election or the error of universal election (God chose all men.).

What is individualism?

It is the error which conceives of the members of the human race *strictly as individuals*; both in sin and in grace. With respect to the doctrine of sin, individualism denies that all the members of the human race stand corporately and organically related to our first head and father, Adam; and thus it denies both original guilt and inherited corruption. With respect to the doctrine of salvation, individualism denies that all the members of the elect race, the church, stand corporately and organically related to Christ, their representative and their organic head, and thus must also deny both objective justification in Christ and new life in Christ for all the members of His body.

Now let Daane prove — with facts, not just with empty claims — that Reformed theology or the

Reformed creeds are individualistic in their view of election. I make bold to say: he cannot!

Distortion Number Two

The second distortion is a matter of the history of doctrine.

Anyone at all acquainted with the history of doctrine will know that it is nothing short of preposterous to accuse Reformed theology and our Reformed creeds of individualism. But perhaps Daane has been associated too long with a fundamentalistic seminary such as Fuller.

Who are the theologians who hold to individualism?

They are the Pelagians, their half brothers the Semi-Pelagians, and the Arminians who, as our fathers put it, brought again the Pelagian error out of hell. In fact, the watchword and the fundamental error of Pelagianism is *individualism*. This is the underlying reason why Pelagianism and Arminianism always deny original sin and teach instead that man becomes corrupt only by imitation. This is why Arminianism denied that Christ really died instead of anyone, that He represented anyone, but that He made salvation possible for all men. This is why Arminianism also preaches a gospel for all men, the more the merrier.

Now mind you, the fathers at Dordrecht were fighting Arminianism and its individualistic view!

And Daane calls Reformed theology and the Canons individualistic? That's too big a lie to swallow!

Distortion Number Three

Daane is guilty of incipient dispensationalism.

Why?

Repeatedly he speaks of "the election of the nation of Israel" and the "election of the church" as though they were two distinct things. Now apart from the fact that Daane's whole theory of the election of Israel is errant, he apparently makes separation between Israel and the church. This is a separation which Scripture never makes. In fact, Scripture refers to Israel as "the church in the wilderness." And our creeds emphasize that the church is gathered not just in the new dispensation, but from the beginning to the end of the world. That includes Israel, therefore. But to separate between Israel and the church is characteristically dispensational.

By the way, let Daane apply the non-individualistic, organic idea to the election of Israel, and he will discover that the lines of sovereign election and reprobation cut right across the generations of Israel, that not all is Israel that is of Israel, and that Israel is

God's chosen people only organically, because of the presence of the "remnant according to the election of grace," what Isaiah 6 calls "the tenth." Woops, there's that numerical election again!

Distortion Number Four

Dr. Daane factually distorts our confessions.

Our confessions speak only of individual election and are individualistic?

One wonders whether Dr. Daane troubles himself to read the creeds.

How about Question and Answer 54 of the Heidelberg Catechism: "That the Son of God from the beginning to the end of the world, gathers, defends, and preserves to himself by his Spirit and word, out of the whole human race, *a church chosen to everlasting life*, agreeing in true faith; and that I am and forever shall remain, a living member thereof." (italics added)

How about Canons I, 7, the definitive article on election? There we read: "Election is the unchangeable purpose of God, whereby, before the foundation of the world, he hath out of mere grace, according to the sovereign good pleasure of his own will, chosen . . . a certain number of persons to redemption *in Christ, whom he from eternity appointed the Mediator and Head of the elect*, and the foundation of salvation." (italics added)

How about Canons I, 10, the very article which stresses personal, definite election? It has often been overlooked that this article speaks not only of individuals, but of a whole, a body: ". . . but that he was pleased out of the common mass of sinners to adopt some certain persons *as a peculiar people to himself*. . . ." (italics added)

How about Canons II, 9? It speaks of God's accomplishing His purpose of election "so that the elect in due time *may be gathered together into one*, and that there never may be wanting *a church* composed of believers, the foundation of which is laid in the blood of Christ, which may steadfastly love, and faithfully serve him as their Savior, who as a bridegroom for *his bride*, laid down his life for them on the cross, and which may celebrate his praises here and through all eternity." (italics added)

How about Canons V, 15? It speaks of the church, too, as "the spouse of Christ."

These are just a few of the many indications in our confessions which show that they are not at all individualistic in their view.

Frankly, I cannot understand how anyone gets it in his head to call Reformed theology and our Reformed creeds individualistic in their approach to any doctrine, much less election.

Dr. Daane distorts.

The United Reformed Church

In *The Outlook*, April, 1978, the Rev. John Vander Ploeg writes again about a "United Reformed Church." What I had begun to think was a long forgotten "dream," has now taken on the garb of "an ongoing challenge."

Frankly, I find it difficult to believe that the Reformed Fellowship is sincere about this matter. And I have my reasons for this. In the first place, it is four years ago, May of 1974, that this "dream" was first proposed in *The Outlook*. What has been done since then? There was to be a Congress of Conservatives in 1976. There was to be a preliminary meeting

of interested parties prior to this congress. It was hoped that this congress might give birth to a permanent union of some kind, and that this in turn might give birth to a United Reformed Church. It is fine to write: "To pray for, to pursue, and to propagate the realization of the 'United Reformed Church' should be the aim which we still cherish as a part of our Lord's building program and regard as our ongoing challenge." But concretely, now, who is "pursuing" this thing, and how? It appears to me that this "ongoing challenge" remains at the challenge stage, that no one takes up this occasionally renewed (hardly "ongoing") challenge, that no one appears to

dare take it up, and that the concerned and conservative dissenters in the Christian Reformed Church somehow keep a little interest stirred up and at the same time soothe their consciences by continuing to speak of this dream as an ongoing challenge. Pardon my bluntness, brethren, but that is the impression you are leaving on me and others. In the second place, I remind Rev. Vander Ploeg and the Reformed Fellowship that they had a golden opportunity to sit down and talk in an unofficial conference with Protestant Reformed brethren, and they refused our well-meant invitation. In fact, they refused to sit down at a no-strings-attached preliminary committee meeting and even *talk about talking*. This I reported to our readers in 1974-75. In fact, *The Outlook*, after publishing one of my editorial replies to Rev. Vander Ploeg's "dream," would not even continue to publish the further editorial exchange on the matter. This, too, does not have the ring of sincerity to me.

However, what I wish to emphasize especially in connection with this "challenge" of a "United Reformed Church" is that for our Protestant Reformed Churches this whole idea holds neither challenge nor urgency nor attraction. In fact, for us it would be totally unnecessary.

Why do I write this?

The reason is simple: there already is a "United Reformed Church." Because there is, there is no need of forming one and urging people to form one. In fact, to multiply churches would be wrong.

We are the "United Reformed Church." No, that is not our formal name. We are the Protestant Reformed Churches in America. Nevertheless, we are, in the first place, *Reformed*. We are Reformed according to the confessions, pure and simple. And as Reformed, we are *United*, united on the basis of Scripture and the Reformed creeds. This is exactly what distinguishes us from other denominations of Reformed descent. They are Reformed in name; we are Reformed in fact. Moreover, history proves it! Is it not a striking fact that our denomination is not assailed by the troubles which other Reformed denominations are experiencing today? We do not have conservative and liberal wings. We have no need of organizations of laymen in which dissenters find a shelter. I do not write this to boast, but to testify. For it is indeed a testimony that we are united, and that we are united on the basis of the pure Reformed faith.

From our Protestant Reformed point of view, therefore, to join forces with groups of dissenters from here and there in an effort to form a "United Reformed Church" such as Rev. Vander Ploeg proposes would not only be unnecessary, but it would be wrong. Must I forsake the true church in

order to form another supposedly true church? That would be an act of schism on my part.

But I also wish to point out that from the point of view of those groups of dissenters, such as Reformed Fellowship, the ACRL, and the League of Christian Laymen, this is wrong. Rev. Vander Ploeg likes to characterize it as true ecumenism. But this is not correct. One can hardly speak of *ecumenism* among those who do not constitute the church, but are only non-ecclesiastical organizations of dissenters in their respective denominations. Ecumenism in the true sense involves churches, denominations, of like faith.

Moreover, the entire procedure outlined by Rev. Vander Ploeg in this connection is wrong. He is saying, in effect: 1) In our present denominations we cannot be satisfied because of their errors of doctrine and life. 2) Nowhere else can we find a faithful Reformed denomination which measures up to the marks of the church mentioned in Article 29 of the Belgic Confession, and nowhere else can we fulfill our calling to seek the true church. 3) Hence, let us institute the church anew and cooperate to form a United Reformed Church.

The above reasoning might be correct, *except* for the fact that Premise Number Two is false. It totally ignores the objective fact that the Protestant Reformed Churches in America are, according to the marks, the manifestation of the true church.

That is the situation.

The underlying reason is that Rev. Vander Ploeg simply does not want to face up to the wrong-doings of the Christian Reformed Church in 1924, wrongs for which he and others remain corporately responsible. This is plain, too, from the fact that he and the Reformed Fellowship want by all means to avoid a discussion of these matters and will not face up to them, and will not even confer about a conference.

But if this is the case, then remember this too: God will not bless any efforts to form a United Reformed Church which ignore the path of truth and righteousness. For He is the Holy One!

It may have a fine sound to prate about the "challenge" of forming a dream-church. I prefer to speak of the *sacred calling* to seek and to join ourselves to the true church, according to the marks.

Meanwhile, I am happy to notice, as I visit in our churches, that increasingly there are those brethren and sisters from the Christian Reformed Church who at last are beginning to recognize the fact that they can fulfill this sacred calling by affiliating with us, and who do so especially because, according to their testimony, they find with us the pure preaching of the Word, preaching with the old, familiar, distinctively Reformed ring!

Not A Pandora's Box, But An Evil Root

In the same article in which he writes about a United Reformed Church, Rev. Vander Ploeg takes exception to recent remarks by Rev. Van Baren in our February 15 issue. Rev. Van Baren, you will recall, suggested that it is time that *The Outlook* (and its new managing editor) pay attention to the clear-cut relationship between present CRC trends and 1924. Rev. Vander Ploeg claims to respect our right to reiterate our rejection of common grace "year after year after year." He asks that we respect their conviction that the CRC position on common grace is "Biblical and is not per se the Pandora's box out of which our difficulties have necessarily arisen."

Now Rev. Van Baren may certainly speak for himself on this matter, and perhaps he will write at greater length about it.

I only wish to point out:

1. That we prefer to speak of the errors of 1924 as the *evil root* (not a Pandora's box), out of which present day problems and errors in the Christian Reformed Church have grown. In other words, there is — and this was also Rev. Van Baren's point — a *connection*, a *relationship*, an organic connection, between the two.

2. We have not only made this claim, but we have repeatedly proved it. We have proved it by showing,

black on white, that our leaders prophesied present day developments fifty years ago, and that these prophecies are being fulfilled today. And we have proved it by showing that the CRC itself, both officially and unofficially, has repeatedly appealed to the Three Points of Common Grace in making its present day decisions. Off-hand, let me just mention the Dekker Case, the Film Arts Decisions, and now the stand on dancing, which is based on the Film Arts decision.

3. As to respect for convictions, let me point out that such respect is for me impossible for two closely related reasons. In the first place, those convictions are neither Biblical nor confessional. And, in the second place, Rev. Vander Ploeg and the Reformed Fellowship are not even willing to talk and to confer about these allegedly sincere convictions. In fact, they are not willing even to talk about talking! Now what kind of convictions are those? How sincere must we think such convictions are? As you well know, I do not hide my convictions under a bushel. Nor am I afraid to discuss them with friend or foe, in print or in speech. But when we sought a no-strings-attached joint committee meeting merely to *plan* for a future conference with the brethren of the Reformed Fellowship, they turned us down!

How sincere are your convictions?

Book Club Break-Through!

Here is big news about our R.F.P.A. Book Club!

Up to this time we have been advertising that Book Club members will be entitled to buy all RFPA publications at a 20% discount (plus shipping) if they agree to purchase every *new* book automatically (with the exception of educational manuals and workbooks). We have had only a moderately good response to this offer. To date approximately 225 readers have signed up.

To encourage a greater response, the Publications Committee is making a double new offer. We feel that this should bring an overwhelming response. In fact, you would be very foolish not to take immediate advantage of this offer: you will never be able to get a better deal than this!

In the first place, we will increase our discount offer to a big THIRTY PER CENT if 400 readers sign up. If the total remains below 400, the discount will remain at 20%. If it goes up to 400 or more, the discount goes up to 30%.

In the second place, we will increase our discount offer to a whopping FORTY PER CENT if 1000 readers sign up. Do you realize what that means? This is wholesale price! You will never be able to purchase our books at such a price anywhere else.

What is our motivation?

For one thing, we want our books in your homes; and we will do as much as possible to get them there. For another, we feel that if you belong to our base of loyal supporters, it is only fair that you are also rewarded by a price break. Thirdly, we of the Publications Committee sorely need and desire a permanent and dependable base of support for our publishing projects. The simple economic facts are that without such a base of support, our publishing projects will have to be delayed or cancelled altogether.

What can you do, and what should you do in response to this offer?

1. If you have not signed up as a Book Club

member, do so IMMEDIATELY. If you have lost the card we provided with our circular letter, drop us a post card or letter signifying your desire to sign up and the fact that you agree to membership rules. The rules are simple:

- a. You must be from a *Standard Bearer* home. More than one member of a family *may* sign up. In fact, we encourage our young people to begin building a library of Protestant Reformed literature.
- b. You must agree to purchase every new publication (with the exception of educational manuals and workbooks) at the going discount plus shipping costs, whether the discount turns out finally to be 20%, 30%, or 40%. These books will be sent automatically, and you will be billed for immediate payment.
- c. You may purchase any amount of RFPA books, old or new, at the going discount rate. The only

exception to the thirty or forty per cent discount would be occasionally a book which we wholesale at what is called "short discount." At present we have one Bible manual selling at a short discount (25%).

2. If you have already signed up as a Book Club member, don't worry: if we get 400 members, you will automatically get the higher discount; and if we get 1000 members, you will get it, too. However, you can help us in a very important way. Talk to your family members and to your fellow *Standard Bearer* readers. Urge them to join our RFPA Book Club. Talk it up! This will be to your advantage and to theirs.

Hurry! The cut-off date on this membership drive is July 15.

Write to: RFPA Book Club, P.O. Box 2006, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49501. Be sure to include your name and full address!

TAKING HEED TO THE DOCTRINE

The Living God

Rev. David Engelsma

There is a question which gets much attention today — as it has gotten much attention down through the ages — but which is actually a very foolish question. This question is: Does God exist? Men pose this question, apparently in all seriousness, and then debate it vigorously. Some list many arguments against the existence of God and solemnly conclude that there is no God. Others find reasons in creation, in history, in the opinions of mankind, and in their own personal experiences for the existence of a god and decide that a god does exist — a "Supreme Being," a "Supreme Intelligence," or a "Prime Mover."

But the question itself is a foolish one! A man might as well ask the question, "Do *I* exist?" or, "Does the *world* exist?" (The fact that philosophers *have* asked these questions, seriously, does not make them any less silly.) The fact of God's existence is no question. The Bible does not even concern itself with such a question. It never bothers to argue, much less prove God's existence. The Bible simply begins with the Almighty activity of the living God. The very first words of the Bible, Genesis 1:1, are: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

There is no need for the Bible to begin by debating the proposition, "God exists," because every human

being knows that God exists. He knows this as surely as he knows that he exists and that the world exists. The reason why he knows that God exists is that God Himself reveals His existence to every man. God makes this known through the creation. The Bible teaches this in Romans 1:19, 20. Verse 18 speaks of God's wrath on men "who hold the truth in unrighteousness." Verses 19, 20 go on to say: "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse."

These verses teach that God shows to every man certain things about Himself: His power, His Godhead, His existence. There is a clear revelation of the God Who made the world in the world that He made. Every creature, including man himself, shows God's existence. The result is that every man knows God. This is what verse 21 says: "when they *knew* God, they glorified him not as God." No man is saved by this knowledge, nor is it possible to be saved by it. For there is no Christ and no grace in it. Men hold the truth under in unrighteousness (Romans 1:18) and change the truth of God into a lie (Romans 1:25).

Indeed, God's purpose in showing the truth of Himself to them is that they be without excuse (Romans 1:20). But there is no atheist (a person who believes that there is no God) and no agnostic (a person who believes that it is uncertain whether God exists or not); everyone knows God. Only the fool denies God; "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God" (Psalm 53:1). His trouble is not intellectual (in his head) but spiritual (in his heart — where he hates the God Whom he knows).

The Bible is concerned with a different question, not the question: "Is there a God?"; but the question: "Who is this living God? What is He like?"

Strangely, though, even people who claim to be Christians have a tendency today to be indifferent to this question. For this question concerns doctrine, and many people profess to have no interest in doctrine, least of all in the doctrine of God. They demand that the Church limit her teaching to the subject of man's behavior, particularly to our duty to love our neighbor. "Tell us how to live," they say to the preacher, "and do not bore us with doctrine." It is a plague in the churches today, a sickness unto death, that there is little doctrine, little teaching of doctrine in the preaching and little knowledge of doctrine by the people. Christianity without doctrine is simply not Christianity. "Take heed . . . unto the doctrine" were Paul's parting words to the young minister, Timothy.

The doctrine of God is of primary importance. The main purpose of the Bible is to make known the truth of God. The Bible is not a handbook of solutions to all of men's problems. It is not even, first of all, the book that sets forth the way of salvation for men. First of all, the Bible reveals God. It does this in its witness to Jesus Christ. For Jesus is the brightness of God's glory and the express image of God's person (Hebrews 1:3). And the work that Jesus came to do is the work of revealing God to men, as we read in Matthew 11:27: "neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him."

The doctrine of God is important for our salvation. When Jesus reveals the Father to a person, He saves that person. The true knowledge of God is salvation. John 17:3 says: "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."

We must know God! We must know Who God is and what He is like! The Reformed Church has always been characterized by its emphasis upon God and the doctrine of God. The faith of the Reformed Church is God-centered. The motto that expresses the heart of our faith is this: To God alone be the glory! One of the creeds of the Reformed faith is the

Westminster Shorter Catechism. Its opening question is: "What is the chief end of man?" The answer: "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever."

This all-important knowledge of God is to be found only in Holy Scripture. Even though God reveals His power and divinity in creation, He makes Himself more clearly and fully known to us by His holy and divine Word. The knowledge of God derived from the Bible is a saving knowledge, when the Holy Spirit reveals it in our hearts; "whatsoever man ought to believe, unto salvation, is sufficiently taught therein" (Belgic Confession, Article VII).

What does the Bible teach about God?

God is personal. He is not a mere force or power or idea, but He is a Person Who says, "I." He has a mind and a will. He knows; He plans; He sees and hears and speaks and works. He looks down from heaven and beholds the children of men. He judges every man, not only according to our outward deeds but also according to our secret thoughts and desires. Because He is personal, He can be prayed to by those who fear Him; He hears and answers prayers.

God's Being is spiritual. So, Jesus describes God in John 4: 24: "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." God does not have a body; He is invisible. For this reason, it is wrong to make images of God or to attempt to worship Him by means of images. God forbids this in the second commandment of His law. We must worship Him in spirit and in truth.

Certain perfections characterize God's Being. These are important for our right knowledge of God. God is eternal. Unlike us and our world, God has no beginning and no end. He is not subject to time. Psalm 90:2 speaks of God's eternity: "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God."

God is almighty. He has all authority, i.e., the right to rule His creatures. He has all power, i.e., the actual strength to rule as He pleases. He exercises this infinite power also. He displayed His power when He created this vast universe by His mighty Word. He continues to display this power in upholding and governing this creation. For every creature depends, moment by moment, upon God. We all depend upon Him for our very existence. Acts 17:28 teaches this: "For in Him (God) we live, and move, and have our being." What wickedness, what folly, therefore, for a man to ignore or to blaspheme God! And what ingratitude! The very breath he draws with which to curse God, he has from God.

God, however, depends upon no one and upon

nothing. He is independent. He has His Being of Himself; His is all might. Therefore, He freely makes His own plan, and He sovereignly performs all His good-pleasure in heaven and on earth. God makes this known in His great Name, Jehovah ("I Am That I Am"): "That men may know that thou, whose name alone is Jehovah, art the most high over all the earth." (Psalm 83:18).

God is the Holy One (Isaiah 40:25). In His holiness, He is high and lifted up, far beyond all creatures, in awesome majesty (Isaiah 6:1-4). He is free from every taint of sin and is the awful enemy of sin. He hates sin, and He will certainly consume every sinner among men whose sins are not forgiven by the death of Jesus Christ and whose sins are not washed away by the cleansing power of the Holy Spirit.

Closely related to His holiness is God's righteousness, or justice. All of God's thoughts, plans, words, and works conform to the perfect goodness of His Being. God governs the world and deals with every man, righteously. This justice of God, challenged so often and understood so little, will be displayed for all to see at the Final Judgment. As a righteous God, God requires that men live in a way that harmonizes with God's righteousness. God makes this demand and sets forth this righteous way of life in His law, the Ten Commandments. He also demands that every sin committed against His righteous law be punished with a punishment that fits the seriousness of sin, namely, temporal, and eternal death: "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). There may be no salvation for a man, no life, unless all of his sins are paid for in full.

Men may not like such a God. Indeed, there is no one of us who does love this true God by nature. We prefer a god who is unholy as we are and who does not mind our sins. We like a god who winks at our sins and who will welcome us to heaven, or at least not send us to hell, after a long life of wickedness which is neither repented of nor forgiven. But our likes and dislikes change nothing. This is Who God is and what He is like.

Nor do His love, His grace, and His mercy abolish His holiness and righteousness. These are also perfections of God, marvellous perfections, perfections that make Him adorable, perfections that cause His people to love Him, to serve Him with all their life, to preach Him and to confess Him in the face of all opposition. In Jesus Christ, God has revealed Himself to be a God of love, of grace, and of mercy. He takes a sinful people to heaven, having cleansed them from all their sin; He forgives our sins; He blesses and does good to those who have no worth. But this does not involve the sacrifice of His holiness and righteousness, for He saves His people on the basis of Jesus' death on the cross, where all His hatred for sin was fully revealed and where all His righteousness was satisfied. We can only know His love and mercy by believing in Jesus Christ crucified for our sins. Apart from the cross of Christ, there is only wrath, condemnation, and death.

If this is Who God is — and it is! — God must be worshipped. "Great is Jehovah, and greatly to be praised" (Psalm 145:3) To refuse to worship God and instead to worship some idol is the first and great sin. God sent out the apostles, and now sends forth the apostolic Word, "that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein" (Acts 14:15). The call of God's Word to you and to me is: Worship God! Do so by believing on His Son, Jesus Christ; by praising Him in His Church; and by obeying His law.

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A wonderful perfection of God is His Love. We have a pamphlet entitled, "God's Great Love for the World" — an explanation of John 3:16 — which we want to distribute as widely as possible. We invite you to write for a copy, or as many copies as you can put to use, in care of the Business Manager of The Standard Bearer.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

The Growing Reality of the Antichristian Kingdom

Rev. Mark Hoeksema

The reality of the kingdom of antichrist in the last days is an indisputable fact. The Scriptures, especially the book of Revelation, picture to us the rise, establishment, and inglorious end of this kingdom.

All Reformed Christians, indeed, all evangelical Christians, albeit with differences, acknowledge the truth of Scripture concerning the antichrist. Since to us who live in the last times this is an important subject,

it is worthwhile to examine that kingdom in the light of Scripture, and also attempt to fit present-day events into that Scriptural perspective.

It is impossible to begin to summarize all that the Scriptures teach about the rise and fall of the antichristian kingdom. But a few main lines should be drawn on the basis of God's speech to His church, which we find most clearly in certain parts of the book of Revelation. If we piece together some of the data found in the book of Revelation, then we find that the kingdom of antichrist comes about by way of gradual development. Especially under the figure of the two beasts in Chapter 13 we obtain an understanding of this kingdom. A careful interpretation of this passage shows that there are two aspects to this kingdom. The first is political, so that the antichrist (be he an individual or not — the Scriptures do not tell us) arises from the sea of the nations of this world, and develops such power that the deadly wound of Babel is healed, and he is able to bring into his fold all the nations of the world, so that there is world unity, at least in the outward sense of the word. In order to do this, the antichristian power dominates the lives of men, both actually and spiritually; that is, he is able to control and use the powers of science, education, philosophy, and even religion to accomplish this unity, so that, at least for a time, there is an actual and viable unity in the world.

It is important, moreover, to remember that this world unity shall include those nations which have been historically under the influence of the gospel, and therefore may be called nominally Christian; in fact, it is out of these nations that antichrist shall arise. But his kingdom will also include those nations that Scripture terms Gog and Magog, that is, those nations which have been for the most part removed from the history of the world and outside the pale of Christendom. The achievement of this unity will be an astounding feat, for never has it been a reality in the world since the effort of Babel, which God in His wisdom disrupted by the confusion of languages. Though many attempts have been made throughout the history of the world to bring about a world kingdom, the devil has never been successful in this purpose. But the kingdom of antichrist will achieve total domination, a rule so complete that according to Scripture, it will be impossible to buy or sell without his approval, so that one's very life will be dependent on that kingdom.

Now the Scriptures also picture to us the fall of that kingdom of antichrist under the divine wrath and judgment of God. Of this we read in many places, cf. Revelation 16:10-16, 19:11-21, and 20:7-8. God comforts His people with the assurance that the number of this kingdom is after all the number of

man, 666, and that under His controlling power it can never stand or accomplish the destruction of the church and kingdom of God. While the aspect of the destruction of this kingdom of antichrist is important from this viewpoint of comfort, and while it is important also from the standpoint of understanding that the unity of this Kingdom is never a complete and permanent unity, it must not be allowed to detract from the fact of that unity, which the Scriptures always picture as a reality, and a terrifying one at that.

Consider that there have been repeated attempts by the greatest nations of the world to effect this unity; attempts which have been made over thousands of years of history; and attempts which have always been dismal failures. But the antichrist will succeed. Just imagine: He will take the nations of the world, disparate and diverse as they are, and weld them into a working coalition which for a time he will be able to maintain, until it will become plain that God is using this kingdom to realize His kingdom. Such is the Scriptural reality of the coming of this kingdom.

But if it is so, are there any evidences of its advent? How does it come about? We must be careful in attempting to answer this question to remember that the antichristian kingdom will not come about overnight; we will not wake up some morning to read in the newspaper that antichrist has achieved world domination, and then wonder how it could have happened while we weren't looking. God does not work thus in history, as He has taught those who have eyes to see; rather, the events of history develop and unfold slowly and gradually, and build up toward the climax He has intended in His counsel. While it is also true that there may be some Scriptural warrant for asserting that the events of the last times will move quickly and with increasing rapidity, the history of the last times will not be principally different from the history of the entire New Dispensation out of which it develops. This means that God's people, who know and believe the reality of the antichristian kingdom as He has revealed it in the Bible, can see the development of that kingdom. Though this does not mean that we must suddenly issue forth with a spate of predictions (against which Scripture also warns), it does mean that we should be evaluating present events in the light of what we know to be the truth. When we do so, then it becomes plain that the antichristian kingdom is not only a reality somewhere in the distant future, but is also a growing, approaching, and increasing reality.

For example, we need only point to a few recent events in the history of the world to show this. Why do the actions of one nation have global consequences? Why is the whole world watching to see

what the United States will do about the Panama Canal? Most observers agree that the Canal has little strategic value in our nuclear age, and even its economic value is decreasing with the coming of ships too large to pass through it. Why then all the excitement and debate? Again, why are the superpowers of the world so vitally interested in the Mid-East, so that even now the United Nations has installed a peace-keeping force in Lebanon? And why has the attention of the world been focused upon Africa, particularly the Ethiopian conflict and the Rhodesian and South African problems? What business do the United States and Russia have in interfering (as some see it) in the internal affairs and politics of a third country or continent? And why the recent uproar over some exotic weapon called the neutron bomb, which kills people but creates only limited physical destruction, and which is therefore a very important strategic weapon in Europe?

Though at first glance none of these events seem to have much in common, in reality they do. Marshall McLuhan has observed that we are living today in a "global community." By this he meant, and rightly so, that the nations are so interdependent upon each other politically, militarily, and economically that the world has become like a small community in which everyone depends on everyone else. It is perhaps not possible for a layman to define what precisely constitutes these interrelationships; in fact, it is often doubtful whether the so-called experts understand the world situation. But I would suggest that this is due exactly to the complexity of this interrelationship, so that it is impossible to separate and

define the intricate connections between various nations. Nor is it really necessary to try to explain all the ramifications and implications of this "global community." But this does not mean that Christians must therefore simply ignore world events, confusing though they may be; we must be aware of what is taking place around us, so that we see and recognize the signs of the times.

What conclusion must we then draw from all of this? First, that the events of the world are important to us as Christians, not because we are of this world, but because we are in it. They touch us as Christians, and more specifically, as Christians living in the last times. Second, we must see that even now the kingdom of antichrist is gradually becoming a reality. It is not here yet, and it will not come tomorrow; but the way is being prepared for it, through the increasing interdependence and growing unity of the nations of the world. And finally, we must be aware that this is one of the signs of the times. The events and movements of the world are not merely political or military, or economic, but spiritual as well, for they are motivated by the spirit and power of antichrist, who is even now in the world. And these events are telic, that is, they are means toward an end, the end of the realization of God's kingdom in Christ. Though they seem to militate against Christ's kingdom, and though that is certainly the intention of the powers of evil, the comfort of the Christian as he views the signs of the times is that God is King, and that He uses all things, also the advent of the antichristian kingdom, to serve the purpose of the salvation of His people in the kingdom of His Son.

STRENGTH OF YOUTH

The Two Builders

Rev. Rodney Miersma

"Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:

"And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

"And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:

"And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it."

Matthew 7:24-27

"The Strength of Youth."

Once a month the *Standard Bearer* features an article under this heading. These articles are directed especially towards the youth of the Church of Jesus Christ that they may be strengthened and prepared more fully for their walk as a pilgrim and a stranger here on the earth.

Here in the Sermon on the Mount Christ lays down some basic principles with respect to this strength. One is strong if he is wise; he is wise if he "heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them." On the contrary, one is not strong if he is not wise, but foolish; and he is foolish if he "heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not." Using the illustration of the two builders Christ bears this principle out.

"These sayings of mine" refer in the narrow sense to the Sermon on the Mount and all that Jesus has to say with respect to the righteousness of the kingdom, its subjects, and their pursuit of that kingdom. Moreover, in the wider sense, "these sayings of mine" refer to the whole revelation of God as contained in the infallible, inspired Scriptures.

Now in the church of Jesus Christ in its earthly manifestation there are two kinds of people which react in two different ways to "these sayings." The one does them and is a true member of the church, a child of God; the other does not do them and is a false member, a hypocrite, a child of his father, the devil. Both hear the Word of God, both are members of the church visible, but only one hearkens unto that Word and is wise.

The question that confronts each youthful saint as he consciously sets out on his pilgrim's journey is, "What kind of builder am I?" One can not sit back and do nothing, but one must build, and build he does — not just any kind of structure, but a house. A house is one's home which is the center of his activity and life, the place of his joy where he has fellowship with the members of his family. The house represents a place of shelter and security. This is true also spiritually. So the question is, "How and where shall I build my house?"

From the illustration of Christ we can see that there are two different ways resulting in two different kinds of houses with distinct and different endings. The one builder builds his house on the rock. In other words, he saw to it that his house had a good, solid foundation. Luke tells us that he had to dip deep to reach this bed rock, a task which was very difficult and which required arduous labor. Consequently, the house was not large and grand, but a small, humble abode. On the other hand, the other builder did not concern himself with a good foundation but expended his time and labor in building a fine, grand, palatial home.

The same difference is present when we apply this figure to the spiritual aspect of life. He who hears and does not the sayings is building on spiritual sand. This is a real danger for our covenant youth. For building on sand represents all the attempts of sinful man to obtain salvation for himself. Young people are enamoured by his methods and are led into the ways of autonomous man. Natural man recognizes all the results of sin such as sickness, sorrow, death, wars, famine, crime, etc. In his pride he seeks salvation from these results of sin but not from sin itself. In order to accomplish this salvation he turns to reason, to philosophy, or to science. Now, as I mentioned, the time of youth is a dangerous time in this regard. He is at a stage in his life when he thinks that he knows the answer to every one of life's problems. Father and mother are old-fashioned as they cling to the "foolishness" of Scriptural principles. After all, we live in a different age. That which was relevant years ago no longer applies today. Consequently he turns to his newly found wisdom with the exuberance of youth, being attracted by all the newest ideas and inventions that man has created for his salvation from life's social ills.

Beware, covenant youth, lest you be deceived! One who has this earthly wisdom does not have Christ in his heart, and the Word of God does not serve as his guide. He loves man rather than God, with the result that he is a law unto himself. See how that applies today? One no longer obeys the one standard set down by God, but each person is a law unto himself, having his own standards for that which he does. His entire house is built upon the right of the individual, which is no more than an attempt for happiness and for freedom from the guilt of sin apart from the cross of Christ. This is building on spiritual sand.

Looking from the positive point of view we are all called to build upon the spiritual rock, not only to hear the sayings but to do them. He who builds on sand has not exceeded the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees and will in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven, for the righteousness of the kingdom of heaven is *only* in Christ Jesus. We, young and old alike, must adhere to the Word of God as it is given to us in the Scriptures, for it is perfect and complete, containing the whole will of God and all that is necessary for us to know unto salvation.

To emphasize this point let us look at the Scriptural presentation of the rock upon which we are to build. First of all, this rock is God Himself. He is the Rock of salvation: "He shall cry unto me, Thou art my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation," Psalm 89:26. He is the Rock of strength: "Because thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation, and hast not been mindful of the rock of thy strength," Isaiah 17:10. Secondly, Christ the Word Incarnate is

this rock. As rock He is the sure foundation as described in Isaiah 28:16: "Behold, I lay Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste." This tried stone is the chief corner stone: "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone," Eph. 2:20. Man in his foolishness tries to lay another foundation, his own righteousness, but the apostle Paul in I Cor. 3:11 says that there is no other foundation possible. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Christ Jesus." This is all true because of the very character of this rock: it shall never pass away (Matt. 5:18). Covenant youth, this is the foundation for God's elect, the same rock that is a rock of stumbling for the reprobate.

He who builds on this rock is wise; he who does not is a fool. In Scripture always the wise and the fool are men that are compared with a view to their attitude and relation to reality. A fool does not figure properly with reality either in ordinary life or in spiritual life. He acts as if God is not there or as if he can make his own God, thereby depending on his own righteousness which is self-glorifying. A wise man figures with reality and determines his actions accordingly. Both in ordinary and in spiritual life he has foresight. He sees God as the true Reality, knowing and depending on His righteousness. How can you tell whether you are wise or not? By testing and evaluating your building, that is, your work. This is readily seen once again from the example of these two builders. Their buildings are tested when reality comes. In this case the reality is the storm: the rain, the floods, and the winds. The whole of each structure is put to the test: the rains try the roofs, the great flood waters the foundations, and the winds the walls. The result? The fool's house fell with a great fall (for it was a great house). There was no foundation and the sand was quickly swept away. The opposite is true of the wise man's house. It fell not for it was founded on the rock.

Now let us evaluate our spiritual house. The great storm is judgment. Even at the present time we see all kinds of signs prefiguring the final judgment. In times of war and hopelessness when all the human structure collapses, even the world sees that it can not build human salvation and happiness that is not built on the rock of righteousness. But the child of God, the wise man, who builds upon the rock always has peace and salvation no matter what becomes of him in the world. But the final test is judgement day itself. In that day the ungodly shall perish, shall not stand in judgment nor in the congregation of the righteous. All their work has been based upon temporal man rather than upon the eternal rock. However, the righteous who lived his life out of Christ shall stand firm. We all shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ, and, resting on the perfect work of Christ on the cross, we are justified before God — hence, heirs to His kingdom, partakers of everlasting life!

In all this there is the implied admonition, "Do not build on the sand!" By nature all are foolish and build upon the sand, but by grace we are enabled to build on the rock. By grace we are enlightened that we see reality. This means a life of antithesis in which we constantly remove the sand and refrain from helping the world to build their structure on sand. We stay away from peace that is no peace and steer clear of humanism, human philosophy, and social uplift as a means of salvation. Instead we have the salvation of the world in our hands *through grace*. Salvation which is built on the Rock Jesus Christ. And the outcome will show that the rest are fools and that by the grace of God we are wise.

In this light, young people, go on building. But carry the words of this Scripturally based song in your heart.

"My hope is built on nothing less
than Jesus' blood and righteousness.
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
but wholly lean on Jesus' name.
On Christ, the solid rock, I stand;
all other ground is sinking sand."

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



ALL AROUND US

“Sportianity”

Rev. G. Van Baren

In the April 10, 1978 issue of “The Christian News,” an interesting article appears with the above title and written by Clyde Kaminska. He points out rather dramatically some of the impact and effect of sports in the world and especially upon the Christian. Some of his solutions and conclusions are wrong. But his evaluation is worth considering. He writes:

Has “Sportianity” replaced Christianity in America?

“Sportianity” is a word seemingly coined by *Sports Illustrated*. This magazine printed a series of articles describing the influence of Christianity on athletics and vice-versa. Some claim that “sport has become the religion of America.”

In October 1976 President J.A.O. Preuss wrote about sportsmania in his column in the LUTHERAN WITNESS. He pointed out that, because of growing sports interest, in some congregations evangelism and stewardship drives cannot be scheduled for Sunday afternoons; church boards cannot meet on Monday or Friday evenings; house calls or other activities must not clash with sporting events.

Sunday once was a rather tightly structured, well-defined day of peace; worship in the morning followed by a good dinner and family fellowship and then rest and relaxation with the family.

Now Sunday has changed so much that dinner, for many, is replaced by the takeout Big Mac and family fellowship by the 19-inch Sony. And the journey from the house is often to see a game rather than to visit a church. . . .

In a sense, organized sport also has a “religious” structure. It has a body of beliefs and rules accepted by great masses of people, perhaps best expressed in “what sports have done for me” testimonials.

Coaches and officials perpetuate the sanctity of sports. There is almost a saint structure of departed souls such as Knute Rockne, George Gipp, Babe Ruth, and Vince Lombardi.

There are ruling patriarchs best exemplified today by Johnny Wooden. Superstar athletes have a special charisma with the fans. High councils and conventions debate rules, make legislation, and even hand down punishment.

Yes, there are even FANatics — those true believers who flock to games in which an idolized team is playing.

Sport has shrines — the National Halls of Fame —

and houses of “worship” — the stadia, gyms, pools, and courts.

Sport even has its symbols: the trophies and the game balls, awards, retired jerseys, and the like. Sport offers enough ritual and celebration of human achievement for even the most dedicated follower.

Sports competition seems here to stay and a force with which the church must deal. . . .

And what are some of the solutions?

Adjustments in worship schedules may be made to lessen the temptation to neglect worship. For example, some congregations offer Saturday afternoon or Monday or Wednesday evening services so members of the parish can get in a full 18 holes or be on hand for the kick-off on Sunday. This is not an ideal solution, but an attempt at solving the problem. The church has even placed “missionaries” at race tracks to reach and serve thousands who need to hear the Word. True, sport today is more important in our culture than previously; however, religion has moved to “where the action is.”

But so far sport seems to be having a greater impact upon religion than the other way around, and we need to overcome this effect.

The choice between sport and Christianity is a matter of priorities. The Christian constantly reevaluates the way in which he spends his time and talent, whether in sports or in other matters. We must help people become more aware of the challenges and the stumbling blocks in this area of living. Sport need not — must not — become Sportianity.

Though I would sincerely believe that we, within our churches, do not face such a serious challenge from sports, we are not very slowly moving in that same direction. One hears disturbing reports of time spent before the t.v. on Sunday afternoons watching certain sports activities. Sports have done far more to build up the “school spirit” within our own schools than anything else. The churches find it increasingly difficult to have any night which can be used for spiritual activities. One hears far more discussion of the latest football or baseball game than the Sunday sermon. Complaints are heard sometimes about the length of a sermon — and perhaps by one who is willing to sit for hours on a hard bench watching a football or other game. Perhaps some serious re-evaluation is necessary by us too.

The Gospel Razzmatazz

Christianity Today, April 7, 1978, contains an editorial which comments on some of the activities within the churches which are "full of sound and fury" but "signify nothing."

Evangelicals have never been so numerous; the impact of Christian values on society has seldom been less. Within evangelicalism itself, scarcely ever has there been so much activity, but seldom ever has it amounted to less. Is this, one wonders, a tale signifying nothing, though full of sound and fury?

The current impotence of evangelicalism in the face of our secular culture can be analyzed from many angles, but one aspect that should not be overlooked is the level of spirituality within evangelicalism. It is possible, after all, that God might have got a bit lost in all the razzmatazz. That is a sobering thought. . . .

What these engineers of men and causes actually succeed in doing, however, is dissecting the church's inward and outward lives. They do so believing that if the outward one is managed, packaged, and streamlined properly then the inward one will take care of itself. Consequently, we have come to imagine that the saint and the intellectual are different people, that you can have faith without reflection, action without conscience, preaching without the Word, the Gospel without cost, and worship without God. . . .

Given this kind of vacuum at the center of Christian life, it is never long before God, instead of standing in awesome majesty before the believer, is reconstructed in the believer's image. The very atti-

tudes that should then be challenged and changed are simply accepted as normal and given divine sanction. . . .

We cannot call "God" by shouting "man" in a loud voice, Karl Barth rightly observed. God is not simply the magnification of our own evangelical mentality; he is, in fact, very different from it. The failure to recognize this, to see that God is often being colored by our own cultural norms and expectations, removes from our faith its real cutting edge. A cultural Christ can neither change those who follow him nor the culture of which he is a reflection. P.T. Forsyth observed that "the non-theological Christ is popular, he wins votes; but he is not mighty; he does not win souls; he does not break men into small pieces and create them anew."

The above points out the terrible evil within the churches of failure to follow the command of God's Word as presented by the apostle Paul, "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." (II Cor. 2:2). That policy does not normally gain vast hordes of converts. It does not attract the attention of Madison Avenue. But God has surely promised that through the weak means of preaching, that is, faithful preaching, He will bring His chosen ones to repentance and confession. The cross is regarded as being without power and foolishness by men — but it has ever been the power and wisdom of God. He who understands that well, need not design all kinds of "Razzmatazz" in order to promote the cause of God's kingdom.

Pity the poor criminal?

The *Presbyterian Journal*, April 5, 1978, presents a news item which relates the desire of a certain group to reduce the punishment of criminals — and this, in the name of Christ. It is shocking how that the Word of God and work of Christ are used to "prove" the very things which the Word of God condemns. We will be hearing more of this sort of thing as the end of the age approaches.

A task force report on criminal justice which rejects capital punishment and calls for reducing long-term prison sentences and the elimination of imprisonment "as the principal means to achieve community protection and well-being" will be presented to the 1978 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church US in June.

The report by the Task Force on Criminal Justice, which has been in the making for some three years, also calls for a rehabilitation system instead of a penal system which will not separate offenders "from the

opposite sex or from their families . . . or otherwise deny them the opportunity of human life in community."

Otherwise, the report says, the "system helps create and encourage the very antisocial behavior it is supposed to remedy."

The task force, which asks to be continued with funding guaranteed by the 1977 Women's Birthday Offering, says that imprisonment should be used "only to the extent that and only so long as the denial of freedom is necessary to protect (the criminal) and other people."

It declares that "social defense and restoration of community should be the only concepts to rule the response of society to offender and offenses."

Any system based on vengeance (by which the task force means punishment for the sake of punishment) "is counterproductive as it intensifies antisocial attitudes and further separates the human com-

munity. . . .

The task force bases its "findings" on theological presuppositions which see the "justice" of God as redemptive and forgiving only and identical with His love.

"God's justice is openly biased in favor of those who are weak, vulnerable and helpless," these Presbyterians say at the outset.

In the Old Testament, "the hope for the Messiah" was precisely the hope for the exercise of "God's justice in behalf of the politically and economically and socially weak."

In the New Testament, according to the task force, social and economic concerns were expanded to include "justice for lawbreakers, disturbers of law and order."

On Calvary, God took on Himself His own "annihilating wrath against sin . . . rather than let it fall on those who deserve it." This means "the guilty are forgiven, set free, given new life." Presumably this means all men, as the report denies distinctions. . . .

One can only add again, what terrible conclusions are made when the Word of God found in II Cor. 2:2 is ignored.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

We Shall Overcome

Rev. John A. Heys

Two little unborn members of the human race fought so fiercely in their mother, Rebekah, that they caused her unusually great discomforts. And the fierceness of that struggle came again to manifestation, and demonstrated itself with prophetic symbolism, when the day came for them to be born.

Esau is born first, but Jacob has hold of his heel in a gesture of his struggle to hold Esau back and be the first of the two brothers to be born. That is what that firm grip of his frail little fist on the heel of his brother means. It was not a symbol of affection for his brother. It was not an attempt to let his parents know that he was also there and ready to be born. This was not a time when medical science with x-rays and stethoscope could detect two heart beats, or rather the beating of two hearts in Rebekah, and the bony structure of two infants in her womb. And because it is true that God had told her what no physician could in that day tell her (and He told her even that there were two sons, not a son and daughter, or two daughters) Jacob needed not to inform his parents that they must also receive him and welcome him into the family. There was no need since God had already informed them, and had even told them that the firstborn would be the stronger of the two sons. Although wholly unconscious of what he was doing, Jacob with his little hand took hold of the heel of Esau because the God, Who was entreated of Isaac, was pleased to speak through an action He caused the unborn son to perform. This we want to bear in mind. And we must therefore see this act of

Jacob as an attempt to hold Esau back and to have the mastery over him. He is the weaker one and the younger one; but his prophetic struggle is to have the mastery of which God spoke to his parents before he was born.

This is even accentuated and explained in the name that Isaac and Rebekah gave him. They called him Jacob which means supplanter. This they did because God had called him that before he was born. Rebekah was told that the elder would serve the younger even though he would be the weaker of the two sons. And that means that he would supplant his stronger brother in due time. Esau will be born first, and Esau will be the stronger; but do not write Jacob off as Esau's servant and inferior brother. He had hold on Esau's heel, and he will in God's time supplant him. He will overcome all that which seems to be against him, and in a sense is already against him. His hand on Esau's heel says, "You must also reckon with me. When you rejoice that Esau is born, I am there too; and you cannot receive all of Esau without seeing me, for his heel and my hand are joined in a firm grip! He comes first, but I am not letting go. I have a promise from God, and I expect to get it!" This confirms in the eyes of Isaac and Rebekah that word of God that he will overcome. And so they without hesitation call him Jacob, Supplanter.

Esau receives his name because of his outward appearance. Jacob receives his name because of the

Word of God. Esau receives his name because of what men can and do see. Jacob receives his name because of what God sees, and what the child of God sees by faith. Esau receives his name because of what his parents brought forth. Jacob is named because of what God brought forth. Esau receives his name because he will be mighty in the world and will appear to be such to men. Jacob receives his name because he is mighty in God's eyes and will be glorified by Him before the eyes of the whole world in God's time. Esau is named because of men's judgment upon him. Jacob is named because of God's judgment upon him. Esau is named because of what he will do. Jacob is named because of what God will do for him. And although Isaac and Rebekah cannot see all this, they were led by God to take hold of His Word that he will be served by his older brother, and that his weakness at the moment will not prevent him from overcoming.

Because Jacob is named with a view to what God will do, and not because of what he is as brought forth by Isaac and Rebekah, and because he has been named due to spiritual and not physical considerations, his name is going to be amplified later on in his life. He is still going to remain Jacob, the Supplanter. He is not going to lose that name. But he will be the supplanter because of the truth in his new name, Israel — Prince of God — which he will receive after he has gone through a trial, and after he has learned not to strive to overcome by his physical strength and ingenuity.

He remains Jacob, and after he received the name Israel at Peniel he is often still referred to by God Himself as Jacob, the Supplanter. Surely we are not to call him the Deceiver. We know his history; and deception was that to which he often resorted. But we err when we say that the name Jacob means Deceiver. In itself it means to follow, come after. And though it is true that a deceiver follows, lies in wait for and seizes from behind, the fact is that God had explained to Rebekah that he who followed would supplant, for the elder shall serve the younger. He comes after but will overcome and be elevated above his stronger brother. Besides, even though Jacob resorted to trickery and deceit quite frequently, and this was a besetting sin with him, he is a child of God with faith in God and must not be put in the class with the children of the devil, that deceiver who led mankind into his fallen state of depravity. Christ, do not forget, was in the loins of Jacob. Jacob is a covenant child; and we dare not speak of him, and call him a name that would place him lower than his reprobate brother to whom we do not ascribe deception but despising of the birthright. A deceiver is one whose *whole* life is characterized by deception. This is not so of Jacob. He is mentioned in

Hebrews 11 as one of the giants of faith. Let us not call him by what we see of him but by what God says of him. He is the supplanter, the weaker, younger brother who will overcome and be raised by God's grace far above his brother.

We may not stop there, however. Jacob represents the whole church of God from Adam till the last saint who is reborn before Christ returns. As we said a moment ago, God calls His people by that name of Jacob many times many years after He gave him in addition to the name Jacob the name Israel. And the Israelites themselves are in Malachi 3:6 called the sons of Jacob, not sons of Israel. In both Matthew 1 and Luke 3 the genealogies of Jesus are traced from Abraham through Jacob (not Israel) to Joseph, and from Joseph back through Jacob (not Israel) to Adam and God Himself. In Romans 9:13 it is said, Jacob (not Israel) "have I loved and Esau have I hated." And in Hebrews 11:9 it is with Isaac and Jacob (not Israel) that Abraham is listed as dwelling in tents. That name is not taken away from him. In Christ, who was in his loins, he does supplant and overcome.

He is, however, Supplanter because he is Israel. And after this name his descendants are known. We have that oft-repeated statement in Scripture, "the children of Israel." And that does not simply mean the fleshly descendants of Jacob. They, in the first instance, are the Israelites, the children of Israel. But they as the fleshly seed, they as the nation of Israel did not supplant Esau and his seed. Today they have not supplanted Esau's seed. There were partial victories, and Jacob did receive both the birthright and the birthright blessing. But the whole incident of the struggle before birth and the firm grasp on Esau's heel at birth speak of much more than Jacob's personal victory, or of that of the nation of Israel.

This all has meaning for us in the new dispensation. It is rich in significance for the entire church of God, as we said, from Adam until the day of Christ. They are not all Israel that are of Israel; and there are those who are the true Israel who are not fleshly Israelites, even as Peter was taught by no one less than God Himself when He gave him that vision of the unclean animals let down by a sheet (Acts 10) and was told not to call unclean that which God has cleansed. And now, where are we going to put Cornelius? He was not a fleshly descendant of Jacob. But he surely was a member of the Church of Christ. And before we begin to divide all the believers, and all those to whom salvation is come (See Acts 11:18) into two groups, the Jews in the Kingdom of Heaven and the Gentiles in the Church, let it be noted that according to Acts 2:47 "the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." He added, if you please, to the organization, the entity to which Peter, the Jew, belonged. For it is in connection with the work of

Peter and the other apostles who were Jews, on the day of Pentecost that God, through Luke, speaks of men being added to the *Church*, added thus to that to which Peter and the apostles belonged. The apostles, who were Jews, belonged to the *Church*.

What is more, Stephen on the day of his stoning spoke to the angry Jews that took away his life about Moses "that was in the Church in the wilderness with the angel which spoke to him in the mount Sinai, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us." I have heard men twist the truth here by translating the word church into congregation. They want not to hear the Word of God that very clearly declares "the *church* in the wilderness." One feels and can sense that there is something wrong when one has to change a word in Scripture to maintain a position. The plain facts are that the word church in Acts 7:38 is the same word that the word of God uses in Ephesians 1:22. Or again in Galatians 1:13 Paul speaks of having persecuted the church (the same word) of God. And these were *Jews* that Paul persecuted. He speaks in I Thessalonians 1:1 of the church in Thessalonica. And that is the same word that Stephen uses in Acts 7:38. And in Ephesians 2:11-22 Paul speaks of the middle wall of partition having been broken down and Gentiles and Jews being fellow *citizens* (so the Gentiles do belong to the kingdom) with the saints, and of the household (the

Church) of faith. All are built upon the same foundation and Christ is the chief corner stone of a building, the church, for both Jews and Gentiles. The true *Israelite* today is the believer, whether he be Jew or Gentile. Listen once to Galatians 3:28, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."

That means that the little hand of Jacob holding tightly on to Esau's heel, and the name God gave him to explain that deed, signifies that *we*, believing Jews and Gentiles alike, shall overcome. We are weaker than the world. We are as nothing in the world. The world is first, and afterward and out of it God gathers His church. We are kicked around, tormented, persecuted, and ridiculed. The world holds the earth and its fulness in its hands and threatens to take it all away from us — which it will do in the days of the antichrist. But we shall overcome because "a Star shall arise in Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the borders of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth." Numbers 24:17. In Christ, Who comes out of the loins of Jacob through the virgin Mary, the entire church from Adam onward overcomes all her enemies and inherits the new earth in which righteousness shall dwell.

Book Review

THE NECESSITY OF FAITH, Harry M. Kuitert (translated by John K. Tuinstra); Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., Grand Rapids, Mich.; 159 pages, \$2.95 (paper). (Reviewed by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema)

This is a translation of Kuitert's notorious *Zonder Geloof Vaart Niemand Wel* (Without Faith No One Fares Well). The translator, a Christian Reformed pastor, attempts in a preface to excuse himself for translating a book like this, claiming that "translation entails neither agreement nor disagreement with an author's point of view." I cannot agree: when someone uncritically plays a part in sending a book like this into the world, he is not neutral. The translator also betrays his lack of neutrality in the same preface by speaking of benefits for the reader and of the author's valid criticisms and positive insights.

If you want to be irritated, frustrated, and angered, read this little book, bearing in mind that it comes from the pen of a professor in the Theological Faculty

of the (formerly revered) Free University of Amsterdam. You will not find a Biblical, let alone a specifically Reformed, note in the entire book. You will find errant notions, stated in an abrasive style, too numerous to mention. The following paragraph from the publisher's summary on the back cover will furnish a fairly accurate sample of what I mean: "Christianity's norms embody the promise of God's salvation in a form which is constantly developing, with each branch of the church acting as a distinct expression of Christ's appearance on earth. Revelation continues to occur in worship, in prayer, and in dialogue with others, and its fruits are freedom and joy. As long as God has not spoken the final word, Christians dare not assume that their words concerning him are the last to be uttered."

"How is the gold become dim!" Not recommended, except as a sample of the sort of thing which has long been corrupting the Gereformeerde Kerken in the Netherlands.

TRIUMPH THROUGH TRIALS

Pain

Rev. J. Kortering

Pain!

Reflect on it for a moment.

Remember the burning deep inside, the tears you shed, the groaning. Sometimes you felt like screaming but bit your tongue in silence.

Some of us have experienced a lot more of it than others.

Think of Job for a moment. The catalog of pain for that poor man is indeed long.

Pain of loss: The Sabeans took his oxen which were plowing, and killed his servants and ran off with the asses that were grazing nearby. Fire fell from heaven and burned his sheep and the servants attending them. The Chaldeans attacked his camels and killed the servants caring for them. The terrible wind from heaven destroyed the house and killed his sons and daughters while they were eating and drinking. All this, in one day.

Pain of disease: the terrible boils. He took the potsherd to scrape his sores. He sat amongst the ashes. When his friends lifted up their eyes afar off and knew him not, they lifted up their voice and wept; and they rent every one his mantle, and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven. So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him for they saw that his grief was very great.

Pain of guilt: he wrestled with the cause of such affliction and pain. Was it because of his sins? His wife told him to curse God and die, in order to end it all. His three friends accused him of having greater sin than others, and told him that God was punishing him for them: "Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same," chapter 4:8. Finally Job wails, "Why do you persecute me as God, and are not satisfied with my flesh?" chapter 19:22.

Do you know what Job was speaking about? Have you experienced the pain of loss, of disease, or of guilt? Maybe you have gone through one more than

another, but pain is still pain in whatever form it comes.

How have you handled it?

Let's examine Job's experience and learn from him.

First, he acknowledged that God was the cause of his pain. No, it might seem as if Job could have ascribed all his trouble to the devil; but he didn't. Listen, "Naked come I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD *hath taken away*; blessed be the name of the Lord." Surely, the devil challenged God and God gave Satan power to afflict Job. Yet the Holy Spirit makes us to see with Job that God is behind it all. This is the first step to the victory over pain. We must acknowledge that it comes from God! Say it comes by chance, from the devil, from some hostile force, and you will forever be in distress. Pain is within the will of God and comes from His Fatherly hand.

Secondly, he recognized that God was his strength in the midst of the pain. This came in the way of bitter struggle. Job said, "Oh that I might have my request; and that God would grant me the thing that I long for! Even that it would please God to destroy me," chapter 6:8. Of God he says, "In whose hand is the soul of every living thing and the breath of all mankind," chapter 12:10. James adds the best commentary, "Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy," James 5:11. This is important in order to rise above the pain — not only does God send it, but God demonstrates His mercy and care to us while we suffer.

Thirdly, pain is not God's righteous indignation to punish. Job confessed righteousness in Christ. The heart of the book of Job is in chapter 19:25: "For I know that my Redeemer liveth and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." This is God's answer to guilt. With a living Redeemer, Jesus Christ, we have evidence of our

righteousness in Him. If Christ be not raised we are yet in our sins, but now is Christ risen from the dead and He was raised for our justification. Already in the Old Testament, this was God's message to Job and his answer to his accusers. Did God afflict Job as punishment, a little bit of hell to bring him into line? No, for the Living Redeemer was proof enough for Job that there is forgiveness with God.

Pain serves to strengthen us. God proved to Satan that the faith of Job was not dependent upon ease of

life, riches, nor health. In all these things, Job professed the goodness of God and the care of God for him.

Pain!

You know about it?

It too is a blessing. We learn as never before that Jehovah is very pitiful and tender of mercy.

The God Who teaches us such great truths will surely see us through.

NOTICE!!!

According to the decision of the Synod of 1977, the Council of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan, was appointed the calling church for the 1978 Synod. The Council of Hope Church hereby notifies our churches that the 1978 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America will convene, the Lord willing, on Wednesday, June 7, 1978, at 9 AM in the Hope Protestant Reformed Church. The pre-Synodical service will be held Tuesday

evening, June 6, at 8 PM in Hope Church. Rev. G. Van Baren, President of the 1977 Synod will preach the sermon. Synodical delegates are requested to meet with the Council before the service. Delegates in need of lodging should contact Mr. Jon Huiskens, 3324 Barrett St., Grandville, Michigan 49418.

Jon Huiskens, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult and Martha Societies of the Doon, (Iowa) Protestant Reformed Church wish to express its sincere sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Jim Hoogendoorn, Jr. in the passing of their father, MR. JIM HOOGENDOORN.

"Cast thy burden upon the Lord and He shall sustain thee. He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." (Psalm 55:22).

Rev. M. Kamps, Pres.
Mrs. Rod Bruinsting, Sec'y., Adults Soc'y.
Mrs. E. Van Ginkel, Sec'y., Martha Soc'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies Society of the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church expresses its sincere sympathy to one of our members, Mrs. Jean Holstege, in the loss of her mother, MRS. DENA DIEKEMA, at the age of 92 years.

"The Lord knoweth the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be forever." (Psalm 37:18)

Rev. G. Van Baren, Pres.
Mrs. Hib Kuiper, Sec'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Jr. Mr. and Mrs. Society of the First Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids expresses sincere sympathy to Ron and Kathy Kooienga in the death of their infant daughter, KIMBERLY ANN.

Our prayer is that God will give them abundant peace, knowing that He doeth all things well.

Eric Ophoff, Vice Pres.
Ruth Oosterhouse, Sec'y.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

We take this opportunity to congratulate and rejoice with our beloved parents, PROFESSOR AND MRS. HERMAN HANKO, on the occasion of their 25th wedding anniversary, May 27, 1978. We thank God for the many years of faithful covenant instruction they have given us. May the Father of Lights with Whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning continue to bless them in the years ahead.

Ron and Nancy Hanko
Jennifer
Ryan
Neal and Jeanne Hanko
Ken Hanko
Steve Hanko
Marcia Hanko
Tim Hanko
Sharon Hanko
Karen Hanko

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On May 27, the Lord willing, our parents, MR. AND MRS. ALBERT KARSEMEYER will celebrate their 30th wedding anniversary. We, their children, are thankful to the Lord for their covenant guidance to us and pray that God will continue to bless them in the years to come.

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

Psalm 103:17

Jerry and Pat Schipper
Becky and Jason
Ed and Jeanne Karsemeyer
Greg and Elaine Engelsma
Chad
Alan Karsemeyer

News From Our Churches

Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Isabel, South Dakota, has a trio consisting of Rev. Arie den Hartog, Rev. George Lanting, and Rev. James Slopsema. A congregational meeting was scheduled on April 30 after the afternoon services for the purpose of calling a minister from this trio. Isabel's pastor, Rev. Rodney Miersma, has accepted the call to labor in Pella, Iowa.

Rev. James Slopsema and elder Dewey Engelsma have returned from their trip to Singapore with a positive report as to their contacts there.

Just before Rev. Slopsema left for Singapore, he received a call from Faith Church in Jenison, Michigan, to become their pastor. Upon his request, Faith Church gave Rev. Slopsema permission to delay consideration of his call until after his return. He will then have the customary three weeks to make his decision.

At a special congregational meeting held on March 10, the congregation of Edgerton, Minnesota, decided to build a kitchen in the basement of the church. The consistory brought a plan with an estimated cost of \$2,200 to \$2,700. The project is already under way.

The consistory of our church in South Holland, Illinois, has scheduled a special congregational meeting May 8 for the purpose of considering a proposal that the congregation call a missionary and support him in the amount of \$10,000 per year. This proposal includes that this work be carried out with the advice of the Synodical Mission Committee and under the constitution of the Mission Committee governing the mission work of the churches in common.

The new Southwest Church building is now beginning to look like a building. The floors have been poured and the inside walls are going up. All the brick is on and all the windows are in. The committees are busy picking out colors, carpeting, etc. The Mr. and Mrs. Society is holding various fund raising projects such as a garage sale to raise funds to furnish the nursery in the new church.

The Isabel bulletin carried a note that Mr. Thys Feenstra, a member of our church in Redlands, California, has offered his services to our congregation in Houston, Texas, to assist them in their project

of building an addition to the church parsonage they recently purchased.

The Men's Society of our church in Edgerton sponsored a spring social on March 13 to which the members of the Ladies' Society and all adult members of the congregation were invited for an evening of Bible study, discussion, and fellowship.

Our Michigan area churches sponsored a lecture entitled "The Pleasures of Babylon in Jerusalem, an Analysis of the Entertainment Problem" on Thursday, April 27. Prof. Hermon Hanko spoke to an overflowing house at Hudsonville Church. Many chairs had to be set up in the narthex and the fellowship room to seat the large audience. Cassette tape recordings of this lecture are available. Write the R.F.P.A., PO Box 2006, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49501.

An open house was scheduled on April 29 at the Hudsonville parsonage so that the congregation might see the pastor's new home. Coffee and cookies were to be served. The Hudsonville consistory has decided to schedule communion services on the 2nd Sunday of March, June, September, and December.

The Church Extension Committee of our Loveland Church recently mailed out 600 copies of the pamphlet entitled "The Perspicuity of Scripture" by Rev. Hoeksema. The committee of our Redlands Church mailed 1094 pamphlets on "The Reformed Witness on the Subject of Marriage and Divorce" to homes in the Redlands area.

Apparently many are not aware of the 'new' bulletin clerk of First Church in Grand Rapids. Mrs. Judi Doezeema, 1904 Plymouth Terr. SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506, has served in that capacity since January, 1977. Mr. James Heys, who served as clerk and bulletin clerk in First Church for many years, has been translated to glory and the reward of grace.

A Quiet Thought from the Southeast bulletin: "The trials of life 'come to pass', but they also pass away when God's purpose in sending them has been realized."

K.G.V.