

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

The question will not down: Why does no one — not the Reformed and Presbyterian communities looking on, not those within the C.R.C. opposed to the attacks on limited atonement and reprobation, no one — challenge the legitimacy of the well-meant offer, even though all behold the offer devastating the historic, confessional, Reformed doctrine of sovereign, particular grace?

See: "The Reformed Doctrine
of Reprobation" page 282

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MEDITATION

A Warning From History

Rev. M. Schipper

"Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

I Corinthians 10:11, 12.

"Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples. . . ."

Literally the apostle says: Now all these things as types happened unto them.

The apostle is referring, of course, to the preceding context where briefly he had sketched the history concerning Israel's departure from the house of bondage in Egypt. In this brief sketch the apostle

mentions the historic facts that Israel was under the cloud, that they all passed through the sea, that Israel was baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea, that in the wilderness they ate of the manna and drank of the rock, the spiritual Rock that followed them, which he says was Christ. Moreover, he adds to the historic facts that God was highly displeased with Israel because of their sins and overthrew them in the wilderness; and he enumerates their sins by pointing out their idolatry, fornication, murmuring, and rebellion; in the way of which sins they were destroyed of the destroyer. And this brief sketch is prefaced with the solemn note addressed to the church of Corinth and therefore to us: "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant," that is, ignorant of these historic facts.

In verse six already the apostle declares that these things were our examples. And now in the text he says once more, "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples."

The history to which the apostle refers was not simply a record of natural phenomena, but sacred history — an infallible record of what God did according to His counsel, in the way of His covenant, in which He clearly revealed His virtues, particularly those of His love and His wrath. It was also a record of how that ancient people reacted to this marvelous revelation of God Who made them the recipients of exceeding precious benefits, how they responded to these benefits by turning their faces away from Jehovah their Saviour, and what God did to Israel because of their sins.

The apostle also stresses the point that this history was typical history. What the apostle is saying is that the things that happened were types, shadows, patterns of a greater reality which would be realized in the church of the new dispensation. It is in that context that he informs us that these things are written for our warning, upon whom the ends of the ages are come.

There may be exceptions to the rule, but it is generally true that history is not written for the generation that makes history. So it is here, for the apostle says very definitely that these things which happened to them were written for us who stand at the end of the ages. It is written for our warning. Thus it certainly behooves us to reflect on it, to learn from it, and especially to guard against the pitfalls into which Israel fell.

Indeed, what we have here is a warning from history!

The history to which the apostle refers, and which he briefly sketches in the context, is, of course, infallibly recorded in Holy Scriptures, particularly in the books of Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

But references to that history one finds repeatedly also in the Prophets and especially in the Psalms. It seems, when one reads the entire Old Testament, that the generations of Israel were constantly reminded of that history, especially when those generations walked in the sins of their fathers. In one word, it seems that God would never forget to remind the children of Israel of His miraculous deliverance of them in Egypt, and what they did with that salvation. This He does also now to the New Testament church through the apostle, who was adept in the knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures.

Marvelous typical deliverance from the bondage of sin and death!

That it was a typical deliverance cannot mean that it was not real. Always the type belongs to the reality as the shadow is related to the object that casts it.

Indeed, Israel's deliverance from the bondage in Egypt was a wonder of grace. When Egypt had made full its cup of iniquity and was therefore ready for its destruction, God fulfilled His covenant promise made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the promise namely that after four hundred years He would bring His people to the promised land, a land flowing with milk and honey. And just as wonderful is the historic fact that the nations dwelling in Canaan had made themselves also ripe for judgment in order to make room for the Israel of God.

Moreover, the wonder becomes even greater. For God prepared for them a cloud, the symbol of His presence, to protect them by day and by night, and to guide them in the way. He opened for them a way of escape through the midst of the sea; and when Pharaoh, who had hardened his heart, determined to bring Israel back into bondage, pursued after them into the sea, he and his army were drowned. So Israel is symbolically delivered from the bondage of sin and death, when they were baptized into Moses in the cloud and the sea. They ate of the spiritual meat and drank of the spiritual drink which was Christ when they ate the heavenly manna and drank of the water which flowed to them from the rock. Thus briefly the apostle summarizes the history of Israel's deliverance. Of this the church of the new day must not be ignorant.

The history, however, does not stop here. It goes on to record what Israel did, how Israel responded to this manifestation of Jehovah's salvation. Did Israel out of gratitude serve in faithfulness the God Who had so wondrously delivered them? The opposite was true. They made an idol before which they danced in hellish glee. Did Israel walk in holiness which might be expected of those who had been lately cleansed? O, no, to the contrary, they gave themselves over to fornication and uncleanness. Did Israel fear the Lord? No, they tempted Him and were destroyed of

serpents. They became a murmuring, rebellious, lusting lot. Of this the church of the present must also be not ignorant.

Even so the history is not complete. What God did to this rebellious people also belongs to this history, concerning which the church of the new day must also be enlightened. With many, not all of them, God was highly displeased, and He destroyed them. Their carcasses fell upon the sands of the wilderness. They never entered into the promised land. In one word, they never went to heaven.

It is all these things which happened unto them by way of example, and which were written for our admonition, for our warning.

Old Testament history therefore is not merely a record of the past. It is the Word of God speaking to the church of today. Besides emphasizing the truth of the unity of the Scriptures, it also teaches us by implication that the church is also one. The premillennialist or dispensationalist can certainly find no ground for his conception in this Word of God. Though the old and new dispensation can clearly be distinguished, they may never be separated. The church is one. Organically the church develops from the beginning of history to the end. One church God is gathering out of all dispensations, nations, and peoples, from the believers and their seed. When that seed produces a majority of reprobates, as was the case in the history we now consider, then they do precisely what Israel did in the wilderness. All of this makes that history to be important to us, and this is why God has seen to it that this history is written for us.

Also implied in the fact that this is typical history is the truth that the church of today is the fulfillment of the type in every sense of that word. This truth becomes emphatic when you consider that the apostle adds, "upon whom the ends of the world (ages) are come." We must not therefore look for another church in time — we are it. We are the reality which was foreshadowed in Israel. And this implies, too, that what God provided for Israel in its redemption He provides for us in the highest sense of the word. As Israel we too are under the cloud that guides and protects us as we sojourn in the wilderness of this present time — the cloud that casts darkness and confusion over our enemies. As Israel, we too passed through the sea which in Israel's case separated Israel from Egypt, as our fathers so beautifully express it in our Form for Baptism, the sea which destroyed Pharaoh and his host, and which for us destroyed the devil and his consorts. Through the water of the sea of baptism, we are cleansed by the blood of Christ. As Israel, we eat and drink Christ, the heavenly Bread and the living Water. What heavenly and glorious provision God has made for us!

And the judgment which befell Israel in the way of their sins also comes upon us in our generations when we turn from Jehovah. Make no mistake about it, God destroyed reprobate, unbelieving Israel in the way of their sin. This is precisely what He will do to our generations should they continue in sin. So God speaks to us in this history which was written for our admonition, for our warning.

What is the warning then?

Certainly there is no room for complacency. Not because we have Abraham for our father, nor because we are born in the generation of believers, do we have a guarantee that we go to heaven. It is not the fact that we were baptized, nor that we partook of the Lord's Supper that gives us the assurance of our salvation. Nor is it true that because we belong to the purest manifestation of the church of Christ in the world, or because we feel heirs to the purest preaching of the doctrines of the Holy Scriptures that we can boast that we are the particular objects of God's favor. Wonderful as these facts are, if we make light of them and boastfully ride on these truths without living out of them, it were better that we were never born. If we go lost with them, our condemnation can only be made the heavier.

Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall!

What does the word of warning say?

It admonishes us and our seed to love the Lord our God with all our heart and mind and soul and strength. It calls us to serve Him with a life of complete dedication, with a life and walk of sanctification without which no man shall see God. It teaches us to flee from carnal lusts, from physical and spiritual fornication, from the manufacture of idols, from murmuring and rebellion; and to flee to the cross and find there in Christ's atoning blood our refuge. It teaches us to repent of our sins, to pray for forgiveness, for the assurance of justification, and for the grace of perseverance.

He who stands at the pinnacle of complacency will surely fall!

But he who heeds what is written and responds in faith to the admonition, shall enter without fail into the Canaan of eternal bliss!

O, indeed, God's promises are never failing. He will save His people unto the uttermost; but let them walk no more in folly!

Joshua entered into the promised land. And here is what he said: "Choose you this day whom ye will serve . . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

They that walk in such faith shall by the grace of God inherit the land!

EDITORIAL

A Church in Crisis

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

By the term “crisis” in this connection, I mean not merely a crucial point, a turning point, in general. But I am using the term in the sense of one of its root meanings according to its Greek derivation, that of “judgment.” When I speak, therefore, of “a church in crisis,” I refer to a church standing in judgment, before the bar of justice, on trial.

Secondly, I refer not to a civil court and to some judicial procedure, a criminal trial or civil lawsuit, before one of the courts of our land, before a civil magistrate. But I refer to the bar of the Judge of heaven and earth, the only righteous Lord, Who has revealed Himself in His Word.

In the third place, I refer specifically to the fact that the Christian Reformed Church is on trial before the bar of divine justice. That denomination is on trial before the bar of divine justice in connection with the fact that it is confronted by the Boer Gravamen against the doctrine of reprobation as taught in Articles 6 and 15 of the First Head of Doctrine of the Canons of Dordrecht.

In the fourth place, the question in that trial is: what think ye of the Reformed faith, the truth of the Scriptures? Do ye love it and confess it? Or do ye hate it and deny it? More specifically, what think ye of the very *heart* of the Reformed faith, the truth of divine predestination? Do ye love and confess it, or do ye hate and deny it? Still more specifically, what think ye of that aspect of the truth of divine predestination which has always been especially attacked and hated by others, the truth of sovereign reprobation? And even more specifically, what think ye of that truth of sovereign reprobation in the light of the fact that *you* as a denomination have given much reason in the past for men to believe that you also hate and deny it?

Let me explain.

In the first place, at the Synod of 1980 the Christian Reformed Church will reach the climactic moment of a trial before the bar of the Judge of heaven and earth. In a sense, of course, it is possible to say that the Canons will be on trial before that Synod, or even that they are at present on trial before the churches to whom the Boer Gravamen has been referred for study and reaction. In a sense, too, it may be said that Dr. Harry Boer and his views are on trial — although he was really tried and exonerated a couple of years ago in his home classis. Nevertheless, Synod of 1980 will apparently have to pass judgment and either approve or disapprove of Boer’s thesis. Perhaps in a sense it may be said that the Synod and the officebearers of the Christian Reformed Church will be on trial before the constituency of the Christian Reformed denomination, who are involved and who will be watching to see what stand the Synod takes. Possibly it may also be maintained that the Christian Reformed Church will be on trial before the rest of the ecclesiastical world, and specifically in the mind of the rest of the Reformed community, and possibly even more specifically before its fellow churches in the Reformed Ecumenical Synod. There will certainly be those who will be watching concernedly what direction the CRC follows with regard to this crucial issue.

But in the deeper sense of the word the Christian Reformed Church is and will be on trial before the bar of divine justice! Always, of course, it is true in general that churches in their ecclesiastical assemblies are called to make their decisions *coram Deo*, before the face of God, and that they must give account before Him of all the decisions which are made. Always it is true, too, that as surely as our God is the

sovereign Lord of history, He always by His providential government brings a church and ecclesiastical assembly to face certain questions and decisions in the course of its history. But this is obviously and specifically the case in this instance. It is so, first of all, because for anyone who knows the history and who can read history, it is plain to see that for more than fifty years the Lord our God has been leading the Christian Reformed denomination step by step and inexorably up to this point. It is true, secondly, because of the very nature of this matter. It is a matter of the *creed*. There is no more basic, no deeper, no more crucial issue for a church than that. You might say it concerns the very constitution of such a church. It concerns what such a church *believes*. It concerns the truth of God over against the lie, and it does so not merely indirectly and by implication, but directly. Thirdly, it is true because in the matter of a gravamen, and particularly the Boer Gravamen, the church will apparently be compelled to furnish a plain Yes or No answer. To some of these matters we will return in another connection.

In the second place, while the specific confessional doctrine which is the issue in this trial is that of sovereign reprobation, as it is specifically taught in Articles 6 and 15 of Canons I, let no one labor under any illusions as to what the fundamental issue really is. It is not the issue of one unpopular doctrine in isolation, as though the rest of the Canons and the rest of the Reformed faith will be left unaffected and outside of the scope of this trial. It is not the issue of merely two articles which could be excised from the Canons while leaving the Canons otherwise whole and sound. It is necessary to emphasize this. For there are those who would like to deceive people into thinking that it is possible to hold to the Reformed doctrine of sovereign election while denying the Reformed doctrine of sovereign reprobation. This is the philosophy of James Daane, for example, who tries to maintain that the logic of election is not the logic of numbers — something which no one, including himself, can possibly understand. But notice the following: 1) The heading of Canons I is "Of Divine Predestination." If it were "Of Divine Election," one might perhaps argue that reprobation could be excised from the First Head without affecting its main contents. But this is not possible: divine predestination includes both election and reprobation. 2) Consider the matter technically and as far as the very language of the articles of Canons I is concerned. It is safe to say that in addition to Articles 6 and 15 there are at least six more articles in Canons I, A and B which either would not have been written at all or would not have been written the way they were if it had not been for Dordrecht's adherence to sovereign reprobation as set forth in Articles 6 and

15. 3) Do not overlook the fact that Articles 6 and 15 themselves do consider reprobation as a separate decree from that of election, but as part and parcel of the one decree of which election is also an aspect. This is the reason why these articles speak of God's "decree" in the singular, rather than of God's *decrees* in the plural. 4) It is safe to say from a historical point of view that the Canons would never have been written and would have never been necessary if the Reformed had not insisted on the doctrine of sovereign reprobation. It was the doctrine of reprobation more than any other which the Arminians hated and against which they always launched a frontal attack. This was true throughout the history of the Arminian controversy, and it was true at the Synod itself, as the record plainly shows. Men like Dr. Boer are in bad company when they hate and attack the Reformed doctrine of reprobation. 5) Remember that the doctrine of predestination, including both election and reprobation, is the key to the entire Canons of Dordrecht. It is this doctrine which pulsates through the entire body of the Canons. 6) More than any other doctrine in our creeds, it is that very doctrine of predestination (including both election and reprobation) which is a characteristically Reformed doctrine. It is, therefore, no minor doctrine which is at stake in this trial. But our Reformed confession as it comes into focus in its most characteristically Reformed doctrine is at issue.

Sovereign reprobation as taught in the Canons, or not?

Sovereign predestination as taught in the Canons, or not?

Reformed according to the confessions, or not?

The truth of Scripture, or not?

Those are really the questions by which the Christian Reformed Church is and will be confronted of God, the Judge, in connection with the Boer Gravamen.

There is, of course, a history connected with this trial. No one is brought to trial, after all, without an indictment and without an alleged crime. That history goes back more than fifty years, to the Synod of 1924. At that Synod the Christian Reformed Church began to teach officially that God is gracious to all men in His common grace and also that God desires to save all men to whom the gospel is proclaimed. We — our leaders and our churches — said: that is principally a denial of sovereign predestination, specifically of sovereign reprobation. How can God be gracious to and desire the salvation of those whom He has sovereignly appointed unto damnation? Those were the days of Berkhof, Heyns, Keegstra, Zwier, H. J. Kuiper, and also the days of Hoeksema, Danhof, and Ophoff. What was the answer

of the Christian Reformed Church to that alleged crime of denying the doctrine of sovereign predestination? They said: we adhere to the Reformed confessions and the doctrine of predestination, but we maintain a double-track theology. You see, the denial of reprobation was *implicit* in the Three Points, but not *explicit*.

Then some winds of change began to blow in the CRC. The 1960s came. Prof. Harold Dekker went farther. Not only did he teach that Christ died for all men. Do not forget that his main thesis was that God loved all men, and that, too, redemptively. Dekker did not frontally attack the Canons themselves, however. In fact, he claimed to be in accord with the Canons — believe it, or not! In the course of the discussion and debate about Dekker's thesis, 1924 and the First Point of Common Grace repeatedly came into discussion. But more and more there were those who emphasized that there is but one love or grace of God, and that the one love of God was universal and saving. Reprobation came under discussion also. I remember distinctly that in connection with the Dekker Case, Dr. Henry Stob wrote openly that God hates no man. A blatant denial of reprobation, just as blatant as Harry Boer's. But still there was no frontal attack on the creed. The issues were there — all the issues of today. But the CRC was able to avoid the

issue by making a totally non-doctrinal, non-confessional, non-Scriptural declaration which was not worthy of an ecclesiastical assembly: Dekker is ambiguous and abstract in his teachings!

More has taken place in recent years. Dr. Boer himself denied reprobation, but was never found guilty. Dr. James Daane openly denies reprobation in his *The Freedom of God*, but no one takes him to task ecclesiastically.

Now, however, God, through Harry Boer's Gravamen, is placing the Christian Reformed Church foursquare before the question: Do you believe with all your heart the doctrine of sovereign reprobation, or not? Do you believe and confess the doctrine of sovereign predestination, or not? Do you maintain that the Reformed creeds are the expression of the truth of Scripture, or not? Are you Reformed, or not?

The Christian Reformed Church has accepted Boer's Gravamen as properly before it. The CRC has agreed to answer the Boer Gravamen in the light of Scripture.

Although recent CRC synods have been adept at sidestepping knotty questions and difficult cases, it is difficult to see how this question can be avoided.

What will the answer be — *coram Deo*?

MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE

Letter to Timothy

March 15, 1979

Dear Timothy,

We will, with this letter, begin correspondence on another subject, the subject of what is sometimes called "Christian Counselling" but what is perhaps better called simply "Pastoral Labor."

I have wanted to write to you for some time about this subject, but have been somewhat hesitant to enter an area which is so difficult and filled with so many problems. Nevertheless, you have repeatedly urged me to write to you about this, and so, with a

great deal of hesitation, I shall attempt to do it.

I said that I prefer the term "pastoral work" to "christian counselling" because of the emphasis which the former term places upon the minister himself as a pastor of the sheep entrusted to him by Christ. The Scriptures never speak of "counselling," and the term has, according to my dictionary, the connotation of, "to give advice, advise." This is not, after all, what a pastor does. He does not come to the sheep to give them some advice when they need it. He

comes as a pastor who has been appointed by Christ to care, in Christ's name, for the sheep who belong to Christ.

The point is quite important. I do not like to quibble about words, but it seems to me that the point here is worth making. When the pastor assumes that title, he is taking a term which is eminently Scriptural. In John 21:16 Jesus says to Peter, "Feed my sheep." The word Jesus uses here really means something like, "shepherdize, do the work of a shepherd." The same word is used by Paul in Acts 20:28 where he admonishes the elders of Ephesus, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." In his admonition to elders in the Church, Peter uses the same word: "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof." This is therefore the expression which Scripture uses. "Counselling" is an idea foreign to the Scriptures.

And it is no wonder that this is so because, after all, the pastor who is called to "shepherdize" the flock of Christ is not called to come to the sheep with some advice, no matter how good that advice may be. He is called to bring the Word of God to God's people. But God's Word is never "advice." It is God's Word. It is authoritative. And for that reason it always comes as a *command*. It must be obeyed. And the issues of obedience or disobedience are issues of life and death. To obey is to live; to disobey is to die. The pastor therefore must never say, "I think it best if you do this." Or, "Perhaps the wisest course of action is to do this." Or even, "This is the way which, in my experience, has proved to be most helpful." He must always say, "Thus saith the Lord." "And, because the Lord says so, obey!"

So there is a point here which is important enough that it ought to determine our terminology. Terminology is, after all, important. If we use wrong terminology, we so easily slip into patterns of thinking which are in keeping with the terminology which we use. And especially in this area, that would be disastrous. So, we shall not talk about "counseling"; we will eradicate this word from our vocabulary.

By writing on this subject I have no intention of repeating what you learned in Polemics class in Seminary. Rather, I hope that this effort will enable you to put some of the principles learned in Seminary into actual practice in your work in the congregation. There is no question about it that this is an extremely important part of your work and the work of any pastor.

In a way, this has only become true in the last few decades. It was not so many years ago that the

pastoral demands which were placed on a minister were relatively few. The pastor went to see his sheep when they were sick in the hospital or at home. He visited them when they were bereaved. He called on them when discipline was required. But there were in those days few problems which occupied his attention.

There are probably several reasons why this part of the work of pastors has increased. One reason is that, for good or for bad, our modern day has placed a great amount of emphasis on psychology and has brought psychological problems to the foreground. One need only read a few issues of the *Readers Digest*, e.g., to become aware of how preoccupied people are today with psychological problems of every sort. One recent issue has articles on, "To Increase the Enjoyment of Sex in Marriage," "Get Yourself on a Good Footing," and "Clues to Living Longer, Staying Younger." The most recent issue of this widely read magazine has articles on, "How to Stand Up for Yourself: I. Coping With Shyness; II. Pulling Your Own Strings," "Pitfalls of 'Romantic' Love" and "Put Some New in Your Year." The books which pour from the presses by the hundreds not only deal with every aspect of life, but also become, in some instances, best sellers. They range all the way from "The Power of Positive Thinking" to "Transcendental Meditation" and "I'm Ok, You're Ok." It is not surprising that, when so much emphasis is placed upon psychology and life's problems, many people who never knew they had problems now begin to think they do.

It is also true that in our modern scientific and technological age life is very fast paced and far more complex than it has ever been. And this kind of hectic life, with no time for meditation, prayer, Scripture study, quiet reflection, is a life conducive to creating all kinds of problems in people's lives. This is sad, and it simply remains a fact that there are no solutions to many problems in life without a radical change in the way we live.

But I suppose that it is also true that there were problems in the past which people faced, but they tended to struggle along with them because they did not recognize them as problems or because they were unaware of the fact that help could be had.

Whatever the reasons may be, however, the fact is that in our day heavy demands are made on the pastor, and he often finds himself in difficult situations where his pastoral wisdom is taxed to the utmost. There are times when he is at a loss as to the best way to handle a situation and he experiences a great lack in his education and experience. There is, as you so well know, little time in the Seminary to be busy with the practical aspects of pastoral labors, and his work, especially when first in the ministry, is a

kind of trial and error work.

I recall so well the days of my own early ministry when I was confronted with problems of many different kinds. Because I always had an interest in psychology, I found that the pressures of modern day approaches to problems had left a mark on me. I often worked hard to try to make modern psychology fit pastoral situations in the congregation. The fact is that it seldom worked. And there was always the feeling deep down that this was not proper and really had nothing to do with my calling as a minister of the Word. If we can analyze such work from our present perspective we can easily see that one, perhaps subconsciously, adopted a position which held that the Word of God was so narrow that it did not fit the whole of life. There was an area of life, so we thought, which was more susceptible to psychological techniques than to the Word of God. This was a serious mistake. It is well that we are rid of it.

The one who has done a lot to get rid of these ideas is Jay Adams, for some time professor of Practical Theology in Westminster Theological Seminary. We owe him a debt because he did much to put pastoral work back in the hands of the pastors. He was the one who pointed us to the fact that no pastor ought easily to abdicate his position and allow psychologists to do work that pastors ought to be doing. And he pointed out the total pertinency of the Word of God for every part of life.

Nevertheless, there were several lacks in his work. For one thing, his approach, while generally sound, was not based upon a genuine Christian and Scriptural psychology. At the time I reviewed his book, "Competent to Counsel" for a Ministers' Conference, I wrote him about this, and he responded that he intended to work in this field. But, so far as I know, this has not yet been done. I am not saying that he does not have a psychology, but it is not explicit in his writings.

We must also remember that his work is in a different ecclesiastical tradition and situation than ours. While, of course, this does not make his work wrong, nevertheless his work does not always fit the

situation in which you find yourself, and our pastors in general find themselves. In his work, to use but one example, there is insufficient emphasis placed upon the *preventive* pastoral work of the minister. Perhaps it is not altogether clear what I have in mind, but I refer to the fact that in our ecclesiastical tradition a great deal of emphasis is placed upon such things as family visitation in which the minister and/or the elders visit the homes of the people to learn their needs, discuss with them their problems, and bring the Word of God to them in their own family life. This has the benefit of giving the pastor and the elders opportunity to learn of potential problems, to admonish God's people concerning particular dangers, and to work with them in connection with problems which have not yet become serious. We must not underestimate the value of this work.

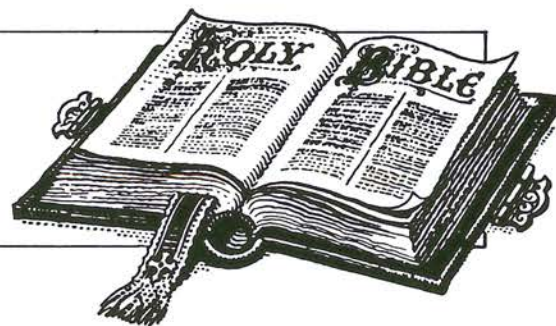
Furthermore, Jay Adams has a broader conception of the ministry of the Word than we do. To point to one example, he speaks of the clinic which has been formed in Philadelphia to put his principles into practice as an arm of evangelism. Now I am not saying that it is necessarily wrong to form such a clinic; there may be much in its favor. But its precise relation to the Church and its role in relation to the pastoral ministry ought to be spelled out more clearly.

Finally, I have the feeling that his approach to the problems of life is sometimes too simple. He does not always seem to be sufficiently impressed with the tremendous complexity of life and its problems and seems to offer solutions to problems which, in actual fact, are no solutions at all. He seems not to appreciate fully what Jeremiah writes in chapter 17:9: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"

Well, it is for these reasons that we shall venture into this field. I hope that worthwhile discussions will come of it and that we may together grow in grace and in the wisdom to do the work to which God has called us.

Fraternally in Christ,
H. Hanko

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GUEST ARTICLE

Ye Are My Witnesses

Rev. Wayne Bekkering

Do you witness? Are you a witness? These are questions that are often asked in many churches in our day. Oftentimes these questions are asked from a wrong point of view. They are asked from the point of view that the decision to witness or not to witness depends on man. Whether or not a man witnesses is not the question. All men witness of the life that is in them. They are either witnesses of God or of the devil. All men have not the ability to witness of God because all have not the works of God's grace wrought in their hearts. Only the elect are God's witnesses. The Bible makes that truth very clear. The whole of Isaiah 43 beautifully demonstrates this truth, but especially verses 7, 10 and 21: "Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me that was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise. Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him."

The people of God have been wonderfully and specially made. Every man is the creature of God's hand, but the elect are precious in His sight. Them has God loved above all the people of the earth. The elect are created for God's glory and formed to show forth His praise.

What a wonderful work has God performed in us! What a marvelous gift of grace is God's salvation! What a privilege is now ours that we have the ability to serve the living God! But remember that we are not saved to ourselves nor for ourselves but unto God's praise and glory.

Isaiah 43:10 teaches us that God's witnesses are chosen so that they may know God. This is emphasized in verse 11: "I, even I, am the Lord: and beside me there is no savior." God wants living and thankful witnesses who know Him as God. Eternal life is exactly to know God as the only true God. God works His grace in us in such a way that we taste and see that the Lord is good. With that saving knowledge of God in our hearts we have the ability to show forth God's praise. The sad fact is, however, that even though we have the ability to glorify God, oftentimes we do not. Many times, as God's people, we are poor and unfaithful witnesses of God. When we walk contrary to God's perfect will we show ourselves as unfaithful witnesses.

To know about God is not all that is required to be a faithful witness. One may know the doctrines of the church taught in the catechism classes, one may know many passages from the Scriptures, one may know the orthodox confessions of the church, one may be able to talk about these truths rather capably, but if this knowledge and confession is not sealed with a life of obedience and sanctification then one is not a faithful witness. One who is orthodox in his confession but worldly in his walk is odious both to God and man. Such an one God spews out of His mouth, and man spurns as a hypocrite. James says that to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin.

We must not deceive ourselves into thinking that if we are able to say the right thing at the right time then we are faithful witnesses of God.

Now you understand, of course, that we do not minimize the necessity of the knowledge of God's

truth. God teaches in Isaiah 43:10 that we are His witnesses so that we may know Him. The root of the word "witness" in the Hebrew means to repeat or to say again and again. God has called us to know Him and to show forth His glory both in word and deed.

Not only must we know God but we must also believe Him. We are God's witnesses chosen unto faith so that we can both know and believe that He is God, the only Savior. Believing, then, is the only possibility of being a faithful witness of God.

Believing is not a mere intellectual assent to the truth of God but it is a living bond whereby we live out of God and through God and unto God by His grace to us in His Son Jesus Christ. To be faithful witnesses we must manifest a living faith in all our life.

How do we manifest faith? Must we confess faith before men? Yes, we must confess faith but we must also seal that confession with the works of faith. Faith without works is dead. "But," one objects, "I believe that there is one God." James answers, "thou doest well: the devils also believe and tremble."

We manifest faith in its fruits — a life of love and obedience to God. Do you love the Lord thy God and thy neighbor as thyself? "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar." (I John 4:20) "But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth." (I John 3:17 and 18) A faithful witness must go beyond words.

What about you: can men see God's work in you? This question is directed to all of us — young and old alike. "Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right." (Proverbs 20:11) Children, "ye are my witnesses," says God. You are God's witnesses at home, on the bus, on the playground, and in everything you do. Are you faithful witnesses?

Young people, God says to you, "Ye are my witnesses." Do you walk in the way of the truth that you recite in catechism class? Are you faithful witnesses at the basketball game and when you go out for fun with other young people?

Parents, in a special way God says to you, "Ye are my witnesses." You are witnesses first of all to your children. Parents, do you warn your children of worldliness in theater attendance? Are you faithful witnesses yourselves in your use of the television? Parents, do you warn your children about the sin of the misuse of drinking and drugs? Are you faithful witnesses of God in that you yourselves are not

dependent on drink and drugs? Parents do you teach your children to be proper stewards of God's money and time and abilities? Are you faithful witnesses in your use of God's gifts? Parents, do you teach your children the proper attitude of respect to the God-ordained authorities in the home, school, church, and state? Are you faithful witnesses yourselves in being subject unto the higher powers ordained of God?

Oh, what an awesome responsibility is ours as God's witnesses, and yet what a blessed calling. The glorious eternal God chose us, yea formed us to be vessels of His praise. He Who is light makes us to be reflectors of that glorious light. God has willed that we should dwell with Him in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. From the depths of sin and death hath God drawn us to the heights of heavenly glory.

God says, "Ye are my witnesses," and our response can only be, "Lord, help us to be faithful witnesses." We know that it is not easy. We are so weak that we cannot stand for one moment. By nature we are ashamed of God. Think of that! The creature ashamed of the Creator. Our natural inclination is always to deny God rather than to be faithful witnesses. Here is the battle of faith for God's people. We have new hearts and the principle desire to serve God, and yet we are hindered by our three-fold enemy, the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh. As we struggle to let our light shine as God's witnesses, the world hates that light because their deeds are evil and they seek to extinguish the light. Jesus tells us that we shall be hated of all men for His name's sake. Jesus is the Faithful Witness, and the world killed Him.

All this may not make us fearful and downcast but fill us with the confidence that we are walking in God's way of grace. "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake." (Phil. 1:29) "Yea and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (II Tim. 3:12) The apostles after they were beaten rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for Christ's sake, for they knew that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed in us.

With war and persecution on every side the child of God walks in confidence and peace with God. That peace that God gives us as we walk as faithful witnesses is a rich gift. That peace far surpasses all understanding. The world cannot understand how the Christian stands so firm; and even the Christian himself cannot understand it.

Even though to be a faithful witness may also mean to be a martyr, yet the saint does not draw back because God Himself promises, "be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Inflation

Rev. James Slopsema

There runs to and fro across the earth a black horse. Upon this horse there sits a rider holding in his hand a pair of balances. And as this mighty steed and rider make their drive through the earth there booms a voice, "A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the wine and the oil."

This horse and his rider are of course the black horse of Revelation 6 that issues forth with this opening of the third seal. Properly understood the drive of this horse represents the work of the exalted Christ throughout the ages to create a rich minority and a poor majority. Down through the ages the wealth of society has found its way into the hands of a few rich, while the masses have had to struggle from day to day simply to maintain their existence. The story of the common man has been one of economic hardship. He earns a penny a day which is just enough to meet his daily needs — a measure of wheat or three measures of barley. He struggles to survive; while the rich bathe in luxury.

This in turn causes social problems. For the poor of this world covet the wealth of the few and seek to lay their hands on that wealth so as to raise their own standard of living. The rich, however, are not willing to share their wealth. Consequently, problems arise. This age-old contrast between the greedy poor and the protective rich has been the source of countless strikes and boycotts across our land. It has been the source of many crimes committed. It also helps to account for many of the riots and revolutions and even wars that fill the pages of history. And it is all the result of the black horse that makes his drive through the earth under the control of Christ.

Neither is this without its purpose.

Normally we view the drive of the black horse as being the means whereby Christ prevents the premature culmination of the antichristian kingdom. And certainly this is correct. For so long as Christ maintains the contrast between the rich and the poor, man's dream of a universal kingdom of peace and prosperity for all can never be realized. Through the drive of the black horse Christ does not allow the Antichrist to come until the time appointed.

Nevertheless, it is true that the black horse also serves to pave the way for the Antichrist. For at Christ's appointed time there will arise on the scene of history an individual possessing the ability to make all men rich. Whether it be through intellectual acumen, or the art of persuasion, or the advancements of technology he will have the solution to man's poverty. He will hold the key to riches for all and peace on earth. And so he will be heralded as the savior of mankind before whom all shall willingly bow. The black horse, therefore, not only prevents the premature rise of Antichrist; strikingly he also paves the way for Antichrist.

It is into this framework of things that the rising inflation in our land certainly fits.

The January 15, 1979 issue of *Time* magazine carries an article entitled "Inflation: Who Is Hurt Worst?" This article informs us of that which has become a reality for all of us. Since 1967 the cost of living in the United States has doubled; it costs twice as much to live now as it did a mere 11 years ago. Thus, for example, in 1967 a pound of hamburger cost 59¢ (remember that!); whereas today that average price is \$1.49. A loaf of bread has gone from 35¢ to 73¢. Gasoline has jumped from 39¢ to 77¢ a gallon. Similarly, the cost of a hospital room has

increased 150%, housing 69%, dental work 200%, automobiles 86%. And these are only a few of the items mentioned. Neither does there seem to be any end in sight. Writes *Time* magazine, "The last decade has brought the most damaging price surge in the nation's history, and the elusive goal of relative stability remains far away."

On the other hand, it is true that wages have also increased considerably during this time of inflation. But in this connection there are two things to consider. First of all, *Time* magazine points out that not everyone's wages have kept pace with the rapid rate of inflation. Some have. Members of the powerful unions, for example, like the steel and auto workers enjoy "escalator clauses" in their contracts that automatically boost paychecks as inflation rises. Military personnel have also been able to keep ahead of inflation as the government seeks to recruit and keep people in the all-volunteer service. Social Security recipients have received a three-fold increase in the benefits over the last 11 years. Yet this is only one half of the story. For every wage earner who is able to stay ahead of the rapid rate of inflation there are others who are falling behind. Although they make more than they did in 1967, their buying power is less.

In the second place, *Time* magazine also informs us that the steepest rises in prices have come in life's necessities: food, clothing, shelter, and transportation. This means that the lower the family income, the harder inflation hits. It is not the rich that suffer as much as it is the middle and lower income families who must spend the bulk of their earnings for the basics. This present trend of inflation, therefore, is not narrowing the gap between the rich and poor. Such would be the case were inflation to affect primarily the luxury items, leaving the basics of life untouched. But when the necessities of life are hardest hit, as they are now, then inflation widens the gap between the rich and the poor. Certainly we see here the effect of the black horse.

And this is causing its problems. Before the acceleration of inflation in the 60's, our society anticipated a great surge forward financially and economically. The standard of living was supposed to rise to unprecedented heights. And although one can hardly say that our land totters on the brink of poverty, nevertheless the inflation of the past decade has made the dreams of the 60's seem like a taunting fantasy. According to *Time* magazine, Americans everywhere share a deep sense of being threatened. The financial squeeze has caused frustration and resentment. There is even concern that many will eventually question the whole free enterprise system as we have it, if inflation is not checked in the near future.

Consequently, inflation has become the number one concern of public officials today. For politicians to ignore the inflation issue is to commit political suicide. Society is demanding a solution. Americans will not tolerate a lower standard of living. Neither are they satisfied to maintain the *status quo*. The desire of America is to surge forward to new heights of prosperity. And it appears that society is willing to follow anyone who will make this dream come true. As one Chicago steel worker is quoted as saying: "You really want to revolt, but what can you do? I keep waiting for a miracle — for some guy who isn't born yet — and when he comes we'll follow him like he was John the Baptist."

The picture is quite clear. We live in a society that is concerned chiefly with material prosperity. Wealth, luxury, a life of ease have been made god over all. And society is willing to sacrifice almost anything to retain this god. For the sake of this god, mothers are willing to put the well-being of their families in jeopardy as they go off to work. Others are willing to forego the privilege of bearing children. The sacrifices that have been made for this idol of earthly prosperity is astounding. But for all these efforts, the American dream is still as elusive as ever. If it's not one thing, it's another. Of late, that which makes America's dream still a dream and not a reality is galloping inflation. And this all very clearly serves to pave the way for the coming of the Antichrist. For should there arise in the near future a leader that could solve the problems of inflation, and so bring unheralded prosperity to man, it is safe to say that our country and also the whole world would "follow him like he was John the Baptist." Only he would not be John the Baptist; he would be the forerunner of Antichrist, if not the Beast himself.

Let us, therefore, beware.

We are perhaps as hard hit by inflation as anyone else. Historically the church has never been rich in this world's goods. So also is it today. Most of us are either in the middle or lower income bracket, the range hardest hit by today's inflation. Neither do I think that many of us have "escalator clauses" in our wage agreements as do the powerful labor unions so that we are able to keep ahead of inflation. Besides, we have our schools and churches to support. Inflation is no respecter of persons. Undoubtedly many of us have found that school tuition and the church budget have sky-rocketed; and this is in spite of every effort on the part of the school and church to keep costs down. Yes, I believe that inflation has taken its toll especially among the members of the church.

But then we must be aware that we do not get caught up in the spirit of our age. There is within us all a terrible inclination to seek the things here below

rather than the things that are above, to be earthly-minded rather than heavenly-minded. So easily we forget about heavenly things and concern ourselves only with the earthly. How many mothers are not tempted to seek employment simply to stay on top? How many young couples are not tempted to put off bearing children simply to get ahead financially? Yet if this is our mentality, what will we do when the Antichrist does come and offers us unheralded prosperity? Being blinded by our evil lust

for earthly treasures, will we not indeed "follow him like he was John the Baptist"?

Let us, therefore, see the work of Christ in history, even as He uses the present trend of inflation to make all things ready for the end. And let us by the grace of God seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness that when the evil day of the Antichrist does come we may be able to stand and so receive the crown of life.

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of Galatians

Rev. G. Lubbers

PAUL'S PASSIONATE APPEAL THAT THE GALATIANS CONTINUE TO RUN BEAUTIFULLY (Galatians 5:7-12) continued

The Galatians must not ever be duped into thinking that they can play with the fire of erroneous doctrine, which denies the Cross, and not be seared and charred in the righteous judgment of God. God will not permit any strange fire on the altar of His worship. Let it not be forgotten that a "little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." This proverb is employed by Paul also in I Corinthians 5:6. Here the "leaven" refers to the principle of sin in the congregation, the sin of adultery. If this would be permitted to go unchallenged and uncensored in the congregation, the congregation would think that they could break every commandment with impunity. For the law is one. (James 2:10, 11, 12) Here Paul uses the proverb not merely to indicate that it takes just a few false ministers to corrupt the gospel truth, but he means that the principle of law, the "do this and thou shalt live" as a rule for justification, is perhaps viewed as a small departure. The matter of circumcision may not yet encompass the entire spectrum of doctrine in a clearly articulated form, but as surely as day follows night, this principle will work through the entire structure of the Gospel-truth, and we will have lost

our liberty in Christ completely and forever! Just as the teaching of the truth of the Gospel of justification by faith leads to the keeping of the commandments of the Lord from true faith and fervent love, so the principle of law can only stifle all spontaneity of godliness completely. Strange as it may seem, legalism in all its forms has in it the principle of atinism. Only where there is an earnest appeal to the tender mercies in Christ Jesus, is there a strong motif for the non-conformity to the world and the transformation in the renewal of the mind, so that we approve what is the good, the acceptable, and perfect will of God. Here the soul glories in the "*logikee latreian*" (reasonable service) in Christ Jesus. Here we see the leaven of the fear of God, the logical, the *spiritual* logic of godliness which proceeds from thankfulness!

Let the impact of this passionate appeal of Paul sink deep into our legally-inclined, sinful hearts!

Stand, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, as the children of Sarah, the free-woman, Jerusalem above.

It is because of this little leaven that we should be doubly careful with any ecclesiastical pronouncements concerning the walk of godliness, that, even in our nomenclature, it be clearly stated that we are walking foursquare in the liberty in Christ, and that

we do not allow any legalistic leaven to seep through and spoil the whole lump of doctrine and life!

Let us run well, and let none persuade us with a persuasion which is not of the Lord!

PAUL'S STRONG AND ABIDING CONFIDENCE IN THE LORD CONCERNING THE CHURCH (Galatians 5:10)

The gates of hell will not prevail against the church! (Matt. 16:18) That is the anchor which holds in every situation. The Lord knows them that are His. (II Tim. 2:19) This is the will of Him that sent me, that of all which He hath given me, none should be lost, but that I should raise them up again in the last day, says Jesus to the unbelieving Jews of his day. (John 6:39, 40)

When Paul writes the seemingly contradictory statement here that he is ever confident concerning the Galatians that they will not be otherwise minded, that they will not depart from the truth of the Gospel of justification by faith, we must bear in mind that he is not really contradicting himself. Yes, he wrote in Chapter 4:11, "I fear for you, lest I have toiled in vain." That was when he looked at the actual situation from the viewpoint of the reports; however, even then he never really despaired of *God's work in them*. That places the entire situation on the higher ground of God's unchangeable faithfulness to His own dear, redeemed children.

Only thus can be understood Paul's strong and emphatic assertion of his confidence in the Galatian churches that they shall not be moved from the hope of the Gospel at all. They have been moved momentarily by these blowing winds of error and deception (Eph. 4:14) but they shall basically stand in their liberty in Christ Jesus. They shall be none otherwise minded. In their deepest mind, their "*phreen*," they shall all stand unitedly, as fellow-athletes in the truth of the Gospel. (Phil. 1:27) Their anchor holds sure and steadfast in the temple, within the veil. (Heb. 6:19, 20) Paul says here, according to the Greek perfect tense (*pepoitha*) that up to the present moment he has really held this persuasion in his heart concerning these Galatian churches. Yes, they had been troubled, but not in such a degree that their basic conviction concerning the liberty in Christ had been lost. For this is not mere human boasting in man, an attempt to bolster up some fagging spirits in a lost cause, but it is a sure conviction "in the Lord," Who gave His life a ransom for our sins. And so these Galatians, who are free-born sons in the Lord, cannot be brought to another mind in regard to any point (*ouden*) of the Gospel message. It all stands in their mind like the rock of Gibraltar. What a glorious confidence in the battle with all error in the church.

Beware, O gates of hell which would prevail greatly. (*katischousin*) (Matt. 16:18) Paul wields the key-power of Christ in the preaching, which opens and no one closes. (Rev. 1:18, 19; 3:7, 8) No one can pluck the sheep out of the hand of the Father, nor out of the hand of the good Shepherd, Who laid down His life and took it again. (John 10:27-30)

THE JUDGMENT UPON THOSE WHO DISTURB THE SAINTS (Galatians 5:10b)

We should observe that in the Greek text Paul speaks emphatically of *the* judgment. (*to krima*) This is not merely *a* judgment of God, such as comes to the church in the just pedagogical dealings with His people whom He loves (Heb. 12:5-11), but Paul is speaking of the final and irrevocable judgment which falls upon those who wilfully and knowingly reject the Gospel, who count the blood of Christ an impure thing, and who do despite unto the Spirit of grace, and trample underfoot the Son of God afresh. It is the vengeance of God Who says: Vengeance is mine, I will recompense, and Who also says: the Lord shall judge His people. (Deut. 32:35; Psalm 135:14. Cf. Hebrews 10:26-31) It is because of this judgment that we read in the Bible "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Heb. 10:31) And, again we read, "our God is a consuming fire." (Heb. 12:29)

That Paul did not fall into this terrible judgment but received mercy, even though he had persecuted the church of God beyond measure, was because he had done it ignorantly in unbelief. (I Tim. 1:13) This same Paul had pronounced the curse upon anyone who preached a Gospel differently from what he had preached. Yea, what these false teachers were preaching was not "*another* Gospel," but it was merely an attempt to subvert the faith. Upon all such, be they Paul himself or even an angel from heaven, Paul pronounced "*anathema*." (Gal. 1:8, 9) Here Paul has such a one who disturbs the church in mind. It really makes no difference who he is. Paul writes "*whosoever* he be." There is no respect of persons with God in His just judgment. (Rom. 2:11; Eph. 6:9; Col. 3:25; James 2:1) Such a one will bear the judgment, which God has in store for such disturbers of His people, who are the apple of His eye. God has a special place for the false prophets, for those who love and make a lie. (Rev. 22:15) Moses had already warned Israel against "*adding to*" or "*taking away from*" the words of the Lord spoken by him from the mouth of the Lord. (Deut. 4:2) And Jesus reiterates these words of Moses to John, the Apostle, on the island of Patmos. (Rev. 22:18, 19)

For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ!

THE MOST INCREDIBLE SLANDER OF PAUL'S PREACHING REFUTED (Galatians 5:11, 12)

It was told to the congregation and others that Paul himself was still preaching that one had to be circumcised first to become a believer in Jesus Christ and be saved!

Incredible? Yes, that this was affirmed! But Paul must have known the things whereof he here speaks to the Galatians.

They did not merely affirm that upon one occasion Paul had had Timothy circumcised "because of the Jews who were in those parts: for they all know that his father was a Greek." (Acts 16:1-3) What these calumniators wilfully overlooked was that, when it was a question of whether the "truth of the Gospel" shall stand, Paul does not give place to them, "no, not for an hour." He refuses to yield to the pressures that Titus, the Greek, be circumcised. He does not yield an iota to those who came "to spy out of our liberty" in Christ Jesus. (Gal. 2:1-4) Heedless of the facts, these false teachers circulate the fable that Paul was still "preaching" (*eti kurusoo*) circumcision as a way of salvation! To what great lengths will not the enemies of the Gospel go to propagate their lie, as being the way of salvation!

What motivates these calumniators?

They are enemies of the Cross of Christ!

They misinterpret Paul's becoming a Jew to the Jews and a Gentile to the Gentiles; these miserable protagonists of the salvation by works dog the steps of Paul everywhere to seek to undermine his apostolic influence. Even when Paul shewed them in Jerusalem that he was not adverse to keeping a "Jewish vow" they well-nigh killed him; he was saved and protected by the soldiers of the Roman emperor stationed there. (Acts 21:17-26) But the victory course of the Gospel cannot be stopped by all the gates of hell which would prevail. The offence of the Cross will not be taken away!

Paul speaks of "the offence of the Cross." (*to skandalon tou staurou*) We do well to take notice of this "offence" of the Cross a bit in depth. The term "offence" here is really, in the Greek, "stumbling-block." When taken in connection with the Cross of Christ it refers to that truth of the Gospel which preaches that salvation is wholly without any meritorious works of man. It is all of grace, that no man should boast save in the Lord. Now if Paul preached "circumcision" as a way of salvation it would mean that we had not, through law, died unto law at all, that we are still under the curse of the law, that a bloody sacrifice must still be brought, and that Christ is not the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

IN HIS FEAR

True Godly Fear

Rev. Arie den Hartog

We have seen that God is a God to be feared because of who and what He is. He is the absolutely Sovereign, Almighty God, infinite in greatness and majesty, and perfect in holiness. Men have done much in their vain imagination to change the glory of God into a lie. With their idolatrous concepts of God they have made a god who need not be feared. If we truly know who and what God is as He has revealed

Himself in the scriptures, if we know Him in a true, living and spiritual way we will surely tremble and fear in His presence. In fact there can be no other reaction possible for the sincere child of God when he stands in the presence of God than the reaction of holy reverential fear and trembling. In our present article we shall examine two other elements of godly fear.

God is to be feared because He is the everywhere-present and all-knowing God. Godly fear is born out of a profound, conscious, all-pervasive sense of the presence of God. The Sovereign, Almighty, infinitely great and majestic God, the perfectly Holy One, is very near unto every one of us. He is near us as the living God of heaven and earth. He is at once infinitely transcendent and exalted above His creation, dwelling in the highest heavenly majesty, and at the same time everywhere present in all of His creation. He is so great that He is the Lord of heaven and earth, having made them and all that they contain. His being fills the heavens and the earth and is so near us that in Him we live and move and have our being. Such a God is indeed to be feared. A god who is relegated to some place in the distant space need not be feared. A god who is merely the product of abstract theological and dogmatic reflection need not be feared. The living present God is the fearful God. The godly man is that man who is profoundly conscious of the presence of God. He is one who knows that God is everywhere with him, on every side, ever watching over him, ever with him.

How wonderfully conscious of the presence of the Lord was the Psalmist, particularly as he wrote Psalm 139:7-12: "Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me. If I say surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee, but the night shineth as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to thee." The Psalmist in Psalm 97 speaks of the fearfulness of the presence of the Lord. "The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of the isles be glad thereof. Clouds and darkness are round about Him; righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne. A fire goeth before Him, and burneth up His enemies round about. His lightnings enlightened the world; the earth saw, and trembled. The hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth." Psalm 97:1-5. This truth is both wonderful and fearful. Wonderful it is because that the Lord is present with His people means that He is present with them in all of His wonderful goodness and blessedness. He is present with them in His infinite love, wonderful grace, and forgiving mercy. He is present with them to protect them and keep them under the shadow of His wings in safety. Therefore God's people are truly blessed above all people. Therefore they are kept in perfect safety and none can harm them. But how fearful is this truth also. The Lord is near us in all that we do. He is near us as the Holy

God in all of our awful sinful life. We live that life in the light of His holy majesty. And all our sins are an offense to His infinite majesty. He is sore displeased at them. The God Who loves us and Whom we love is grievously offended because of our sins.

The foolish man thinks that He can flee from the presence of the Lord. The ungodly man is terrified when the Lord reveals His presence through mighty signs and judgment. The godly man lives His life in the presence of the Lord and therefore fears with great fear. He passes the time of his sojourn in fear. He works out his salvation with fear and trembling.

In contemplating this aspect of the fear of God we surely must confess that we have but a small beginning of this true godly fear. How often a whole day and even more goes by when not a thought of God goes through our minds! If we would total up all the times of our life when we were conscious of the Lord's presence, how small would that total be! How different we often would live if we were conscious of the presence of the Lord! How differently we live even in the sight of men than we live when we are alone! How much more would our life be different if we were more conscious of the Lord's continual presence with us!

Immediately related to the fact that the Lord is everywhere present is the fact that He is the all-knowing God. There is nothing that is hid from Him. There are no secrets that can be concealed from His all-seeing and all-knowing presence. Again we can turn to Psalm 139 for a beautiful expression of this truth. "O Lord, Thou hast searched me and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising; Thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassed my path and my lying down and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, Thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid Thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it." Psalm 139:1-6. How wonderful is this knowledge of God and at the same time how fearful when we really consider this truth! It is wonderful that the Lord knows us altogether for then He knows all our sorrows, our trials and our afflictions. He knows our sins and weaknesses, He knows the burdens we bear. And therefore He can and does have tender loving compassion upon us. But how fearful is the thought also that God knows us completely, even every thought that goes through our minds and every word that we speak. How fearful that He knows this as the holy and the perfectly just God!

How vain and foolish are the wicked in their boasting and in their sin! They say the Lord does not see, the Lord does not consider and therefore He cannot judge. "In a moment shall they die, and the

people shall be troubled at midnight, and pass away; and the mighty shall be taken away without hand. For His eyes are upon the ways of man, and He seeth all his goings. There is no darkness nor shadow of death where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves." Job 34:21-22.

But what about us who call ourselves godly and god-fearing, do we know this? How many are the secret sins that we seek to hide from the sight of men! Do we know that in the light of His countenance all those sins are known? Are we conscious of the fact that "all things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do"? Hebrews 4:13. Do you tremble at the thought of this? Surely you ought to. It is only the fool who does not fear with exceeding great fear at the thought of this.

The second element of godly fear that we would like to consider is this. Godly fear means that one is fully conscious of the awesome calling and obligation which he has before God. Godly fear means that we understand what it means that God has made us for Himself and for His own glory. It means that we understand what the Lord requires of us in His holy law, that we love Him with all our heart and soul and strength and mind. Godly fear means that we know the meaning of the awesome requirement "be ye holy even as I am holy." Godly fear means that we know that God has redeemed us from sin and death for one purpose only and that is to glorify and praise Him forever.

One of the chief reasons for the fact that there is so little true fear of God among so many who call themselves Christians is their low conception of all of this. The law of God is no longer strictly preached. It is reduced to a few simple outward precepts. Men think that they can very easily be finished with keeping the law. There is no understanding of the profound spiritual requirement of the law. Men know little of what it means to love God perfectly with

heart, soul, and mind. There is no sense of the wonder of the holiness of God and what that holiness implies for those who would stand in His presence. How little thought is given to the height, depth, and breadth of the law of God. How little consideration there is of the absolute perfection that holiness requires. How men live for themselves and in the lust of the flesh and the pride of life. How little consideration of the fact that all our life must be lived for and unto God alone.

To fear God is to know God as the God Who loves righteousness and hates iniquity. To fear God is to know Him as the perfectly holy God Who is a consuming fire to the workers of iniquity. The God-fearing man knows that God is sore-displeased with all of His sins, because those sins are an offense against His infinite holy majesty. The god-fearing man, when he considers the perfect law of God and the meaning of God's requirement, "be ye holy even as I am holy," trembles with exceeding great fear, for he knows that he cannot possibly fulfill those requirements. He knows that he is prone by nature to do the opposite. He knows that even as a child of God he has only a very small beginning of obedience and holiness.

The god-fearing man is the one who knows what it means to fall on his face in the presence of the holy majesty of God because of the awfulness of his sins. The god-fearing man is the one who is continually pleading for mercy because he knows that if it were not for the mercy of God he would surely be consumed in His awful holy presence. The god-fearing man is one who understands that he cannot even begin to keep the law of God and His holy requirements unless he receives continually of the grace of God and of His Holy Spirit.

How much do we know this kind of godly fear and how much is it in evidence among us? May God give us His grace to be so god-fearing.

TAKING HEED TO THE DOCTRINE

The Reformed Doctrine of Reprobation

Rev. David Engelsma

"THE WELL-MEANT OFFER OF THE GOSPEL"

The development of doctrine in the Christian

Reformed Church over the past fifty years affords a text-book illustration of the certain overthrow of the

Reformed doctrine of double predestination by the teaching of a "well-meant offer of the gospel." In 1924, the C.R.C. adopted the doctrine of a well-meant offer of grace in the preaching of the gospel. For years, her theologians defended themselves against the charge that a grace of God for all men in the gospel militated against double predestination by asserting that double predestination and the well-meant offer, although apparently contradictory, were paradoxical truths. Rejection of the offer as a contradiction of double predestination, they decried as "logic" and "rationalism." The C.R.C. intended to hold both predestination and the well-meant offer in paradoxical tension.

R. B. Kuiper was representative. Having described the offer as expressing God's "desir(ing) the salvation of every sinner reached by the gospel," he notes that "it has been argued that (the) doctrine (of reprobation) rules out the universal and sincere offer of the gospel. If God decreed from eternity that some men would perish everlastingly, it is said to be inconceivable that he would in time sincerely invite all without distinction to everlasting life." Kuiper declares that "the all-important fact is that the Word of God teaches unmistakably both divine reprobation and the universality as well as the sincerity of the gospel offer." To the charge that the two doctrines contradict each other, he replies: "We may as well admit, in fact, it must be admitted, that these teachings cannot be reconciled with each other by human reason. As far as human logic is concerned, they rule one another out. However, the acceptance of either to the exclusion of the other stands condemned as rationalism. Not human reason, but God's infallible Word, is the norm of truth. That Word contains many paradoxes. The classical example is that of divine sovereignty and human responsibility. The two teachings now under consideration also constitute a striking paradox. To destroy a Scriptural paradox by rejecting one of its elements is to place human logic above the divine Word" (*God-Centered Evangelism*, Chapters 2 and 3).

The "striking paradox" was severely shaken in the 1960's. In a series of articles in *The Reformed Journal*, Harold Dekker, professor at Calvin Seminary, argued for a universal redemptive love of God and a universal atonement of Christ. He based these teachings on the doctrine of the well-meant offer, already adopted by the C.R.C. In the original article of December, 1962, "God So Loved — All Men!," Dekker wrote: "The universal love of God is also revealed in His invitation of the gospel, sincerely extended to all without reservation or limitation." He asked: "... is the salvation which the atonement provides *available* to all men? Indeed it is. Otherwise the well-meant offer of the gospel is a farce, for it then offers sincerely to all men what cannot be

sincerely said to be available to all."

In a later article, "Redemptive Love and the Gospel Offer" (January, 1964), he wrote: "This article intends to set forth the universal factors inherent in the well-meant offer of the gospel. It carries one main thrust: *that the love of God expressed in the gospel and its universal invitation is truly a redemptive love and that the presentation of the gospel must express this principle.*"

Dekker's response to his Christian Reformed critics, committed to a man to the "paradox" of a well-meant offer side-by-side with double predestination, was to hoist them with their own petard:

Why are my critics unwilling to recognize a paradox between a universal atonement and a limited redemption when this is so plainly taught in the Bible? Why are they unwilling to recognize a paradox of a redemptive love which does not always redeem when this is so clearly the presentation of Scripture? Do they suppose that such paradoxes as these are any greater or any more difficult to accept than the paradox which they affirm of a God who sincerely desires the salvation of all men and yet does not save them all? (*The Reformed Journal*, September, 1964).

The outcome of the controversy was the approval of the doctrines of universal redemptive love and universal atonement by the Synod of 1967. Synod refused to adopt the recommendations that would have condemned the doctrines taught by Dekker, contenting itself with an admonition of Dekker "for the ambiguous and abstract way in which he has expressed himself in his writing on the love of God and the atonement."

Whatever remains of the "paradox" is presently being dissolved in the C.R.C. The acid is the gravamen of Harry Boer against the doctrine of reprobation in the Canons of Dordt. In 1975, Boer addressed a letter to the Synod. The letter was first published as an open letter in the April, 1975 issue of *The Reformed Journal*. Boer denied that the letter was a gravamen against the doctrine of reprobation. He presented it as "a request for information: what is 'the express testimony of sacred Scripture' that teaches the doctrine confessed" in the Canons, I, 6 and I, 15? Nevertheless, the letter was obviously an attack on the doctrine of reprobation as found in the Canons. The letter charged that the doctrine of reprobation set forth in the Canons is a basic cause of the C.R.C.'s losing their birthright, namely, the truth of salvation by grace alone. It accused reprobation of making it impossible to preach on election in the C.R.C. Like a "diseased appendix," reprobation plays a destructive role in the body of the C.R.C.

In a significant section of the letter, Boer called attention to the amazing silence regarding reprobation, when the Church was debating and judging Harold Dekker's teaching of universal redemptive love

and universal atonement. Boer noted, pointedly, that Dekker grounded his teaching in "the universal well-meant offer of the gospel, a teaching strongly held in the C.R.C." By implication, Boer argued that the doctrines of the offer and universal atonement, accepted by the C.R.C., have overthrown the doctrine of reprobation already, and that the theologians are well aware of it! Because it clearly points out the line that runs from the well-meant offer to the denial of reprobation, via universal atonement, this part of Boer's letter deserves to be quoted in full.

The public situation has an official aspect which makes that situation even more ominous. The ambiguous manner in which the doctrine of reprobation is held in the Christian Reformed Church stood forth starkly during the so-called "Love of God" controversy, 1963-1967, though I am not aware that public note has ever been taken of this. In that controversy Professor Harold Dekker, teacher of missions at Calvin Theological Seminary, was called to account before the highest judiciary of the Church for having written publicly that God loves all men redemptively. He did so in terms of the universal well-meant offer of the gospel, a teaching strongly held in the Christian Reformed Church, and of Christ's atonement which in Reformed doctrine is sufficient to atone for the sins of all men. The theme of his argument was signaled by the title of his main article in the *Reformed Journal*, December 1962, "God So Loved . . . All Men!"

Beyond question, Professor Dekker raised issues of profound theological import in the Reformed tradition. It is no part of the purpose of this address to enter upon them. There is, however, one aspect of the theological confrontation which Professor Dekker's articles elicited that has been wholly overlooked although it is of the most crucial significance. The doctrine of reprobation played no role of any kind whatever in the debate that was carried on for four-and-one-half years. The synodical study committee (specifically mandated to study the *credal* as well as the scriptural aspects of issues arising), the numerous overtures to the Synod of 1967, and most notably the decisive and fully documented action of that Synod never raised the relevance of the doctrine of reprobation. Nowhere and by no one was it made a constitutive element either in study or in adjudication. How could this happen? What could in such a debate as ensued conceivably be of more basic and determinative significance than God's eternal decree? Out of it the whole redemptive work of Christ flows. Would the decree of reprobation not have bearing on the problem of limited atonement which was discussed at such great length? Or on the universal well-meant offer of the gospel? How was it possible to belabor Professor Dekker with all the ponderous charges of departure from the teachings of the Reformed Confessions that were leveled at him, especially, *nota bene*, the Canons of Dort, without involving the doctrine of reprobation and that at the

deepest and most determinative levels? This was not done. That it was not done is the "impossible possibility" of the whole "Love of God" disputation: impossible because inconceivable; possible because it happened.

It is hardly warranted to have so low an opinion of Christian Reformed theological competence as to suppose that the theological community at large, the several members of the synodical study committee, and the constituency of the Synod of 1967 were man for man unaware of the inescapable correlation between reprobation and the "God So Loved . . . All Men" thesis of Professor Dekker. But all were silent on the subject. The informed and concerned observer of the scene can hardly fail to conclude that the Christian Reformed Church is not only silent on reprobation, but that there is an unspoken consensus to be so and to remain so.

The 1975 Synod of the C.R.C. received Boer's letter, declaring "that Dr. Boer has raised a legitimate concern to which the church should address herself." In 1977, Boer submitted to the Synod "a gravamen against the Reformed doctrine of reprobation as taught notably in the Canons of Dort I/6 and I/15." According to Article 75 of the "1977 Acts of Synod" of the C.R.C. (the cover of which, in supreme irony, is a photo depicting the Synod of Dordt!), the decision of Synod concerning the gravamen was the appointment of "a committee to receive the reactions of individuals, consistories, and classes, to study the gravamen in the light of Scripture, and to advise the Synod of 1980 as to the cogency of the gravamen and how it should further be dealt with by synod." Can anyone stand in doubt as to the outcome?

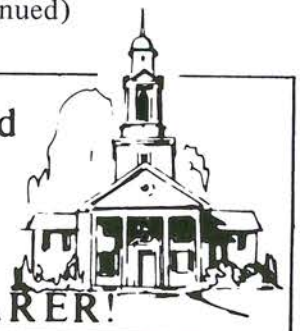
In fifty years, the doctrine of a well-meant offer has overthrown the Reformed doctrines of limited atonement and double predestination in the C.R.C.; and it has done this in an open, public, official way.

The question will not down: Why does no one — not the Reformed and Presbyterian communities looking on, not those within the C.R.C. opposed to the attacks on limited atonement and reprobation, no one — challenge the legitimacy of the well-meant offer, even though all behold the offer devastating the historic, confessional, Reformed doctrine of sovereign, particular grace?

(to be continued)

Know the standard
and follow it.

Read the
STANDARD BEARER!



THE VOICE OF OUR FATHERS

The Comfort of the Last Judgement

Prof. Robert D. Decker

"Finally we believe, according to the Word of God, when the time appointed by the Lord (which is unknown to all creatures) is come, and the number of the elect complete, that our Lord Jesus Christ will come from heaven, corporally and visibly, as he ascended, with great glory and majesty to declare himself judge of the quick and the dead; burning this old world with fire and flame, to cleanse it. And then all men will personally appear before this great judge, both men and women and children, that have been from the beginning of the world to the end thereof, being summoned by the voice of the archangel, and by the sound of the trumpet of God. For all the dead shall be raised out of the earth, and their souls joined and united with their proper bodies, in which they formerly lived. As for those who shall then be living, they shall not die as the others, but be changed in the twinkling of an eye, and from corruptible become incorruptible. Then the books (that is to say the consciences) shall be opened, and the dead judged according to what they shall have done in this world, whether it be good or evil. Nay, all men shall give an account of every idle word which they have spoken, which the world only counts amusement and jest: and then the secrets and hypocrisy of men shall be disclosed and laid open before all. And therefore the consideration of this judgment is justly terrible and dreadful to the wicked and ungodly, but most desirable and comfortable to the righteous and elect: because then their full deliverance shall be perfected, and there they shall receive the fruits of their labors and trouble which they have borne. Their innocence shall be known to all, and they shall see the terrible vengeance which God shall execute on the wicked, who most cruelly persecuted, oppressed and tormented them in this world; and who shall be convicted by the testimony of their own consciences, and being immortal, shall be tormented in that everlasting fire, which is prepared for the devil and his angels. But on the contrary, the faithful and elect shall be crowned with glory and honor; and the Son of God will confess their names before God his father, and his elect angels; all tears shall be wiped from their eyes; and their cause which is now condemned by many judges and magistrates, as heretical and impious, will then be known to be the cause of the Son of God. And for a gracious reward, the Lord will cause them to possess such a glory as never entered into the heart of man to conceive. Therefore we expect that great day with a most ardent desire to the end that we may fully enjoy the promises of God in Christ Jesus Our Lord. AMEN.

'Even so come, Lord Jesus.' Rev. 22:20"

The Belgic Confession, Article XXXVII

It is striking, from the perspective of the contemporary scene, that the *Confession* devotes just one article to the all-important subject of the last things. On account of all that is being said and written on this subject these days, and also on account of all of the erroneous views expressed, if the *Confession* were written today more attention might

be given this aspect of the truth. However, the more one ponders this last article of our *Confession* the more one is impressed with the fact that this is both an adequate and eloquent expression of the truth as it concerns the last judgment. Every aspect of this doctrine is covered, and the article is strictly Biblical

in what it says. In fact the article is one of the most beautiful of the entire *Confession*. This is due, no doubt, in large part to the fact that it was written during a time of severe persecution.

The article speaks first of all concerning the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. There are several elements mentioned in this connection. The time of Christ's return is appointed of the Father and known of the Father, but remains unknown to the creature. Jesus spoke of that to His disciples when He said: "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels in heaven, but my Father only." (Matthew 24:36) Because no man knows the day or the hour when the Son of Man returns, our Lord exhorted the disciples and us: "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come." (Matthew 24:42) What we do know is that when the number of the elect is complete and the entire church has been born and gathered out of the nations, Christ will come. He will come, moreover, visibly and corporally, just as He ascended and was received out of the sight of His disciples. This is exactly what the angels told the wondering disciples when Jesus had ascended: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." (Acts 1:11) The Apostle Paul comforts the Thessalonian Christians with this same truth when he writes: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first." (I Thessalonians 4:16) Still more, that coming of Christ will be one of great glory and majesty. His first coming was in humiliation and poverty, for He came to lay down His life at the cross for the sins of His people. His return will be in glory. Having entered our death and atoned for our sins, Christ will come as the exalted Lord of lords and King of kings. Of this Jesus spoke not long before the cross: "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." (Matthew 24:30) Finally the Scriptures teach and we confess that Jesus will come as Judge. Of this too Jesus spoke plainly: "When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. . . ." (Matthew 25:31-46) Thus the inspired Apostle charges Timothy: ". . . before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom." (II Timothy 4:1) Near the end of his life the same apostle makes the beautiful confession: "Henceforth there is laid up for

me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them that love his appearing." (II Timothy 4:8)

This return in power and great glory of the Lord Jesus is the object of the hope of God's people in this world. As the redeemed of the Lord whose citizenship is in heaven they walk as strangers and pilgrims in the earth. They seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and love not the world; neither the things that are in the world. They live in expectation of the coming of their Lord and Savior. In that hope they shall not be ashamed!

The *Confession* goes on to speak of the judgment. The return of Christ is accompanied by the destruction of the present creation. This old world is going to burn with fire and flame in order to be cleansed. Nowhere in the Scriptures is this spoken of with greater clarity than in II Peter 3:10-13: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." At His coming there shall also be the resurrection of the bodies of all who died. At this moment the souls of men shall be joined and united with their proper bodies. For the people of God this will be a change to glory. The Scripture declares: "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body: . . ." (I Corinthians 15:42-44) Those who are living at that time will also be changed. This change will be effected not through death. It will take place in a moment, "in the twinkling of an eye." It will be a change from corruption to incorruption, from mortality to immortality. (Cf. I Corinthians 15:51-54)

Speaking of the judgment itself the *Confession* states that all men shall be judged according to their works, "according to what they have done in the world, whether it be good or evil. Nay, all men shall give an account of every idle word they have spoken, which the world only counts amusement and jest: and then the secrets and hypocrisy of men shall be disclosed and laid open before all." Concerning this Jesus said: "Marvel not at this: for the hour is

coming, in the which they that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." (John 5:28, 29) Rather strikingly in this connection the *Confession* speaks of men's consciences as books that shall be opened. Evidently the meaning is that all men shall be judged in their consciences. All men shall be subjectively convinced in their own consciences of the absolute justice of God's judgment. The righteous shall be judged as they stand in Jesus Christ. Their cause, for which they were mocked and scorned on the earth, shall be revealed as the cause of Christ. In the judgment they shall be perfectly vindicated. Glory is their portion. Therefore they look forward in hope to that judgment.

Finally the article speaks of the rewards and punishments. The wicked in harmony with their base godlessness shall be burned in everlasting fire in the sight of the righteous and the angels. Their judgment shall be most dreadful and terrible. The inspired Apostle speaks of this to the persecuted in Thessalonica: "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his

power." (II Thessalonians 1:7-9) The reward of the righteous shall be exceedingly glorious. They shall be crowned with glory and honor. Christ will confess their names before His Father. All tears shall be wiped from their eyes. Their cause shall be made known as the cause of the Son of God and they shall possess glory such as never entered into the heart of many to conceive. (cf. I Corinthians 2:9) They, therefore, look forward with eager anticipation to the day of judgment, for in that day they shall enjoy the fulfillment of all the promises of God. Then they shall enter into the joy of their Lord. John the Apostle saw all this in vision: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away." (Revelation 21:1-4)

Powerfully the *Confession* concludes with the prayer which is in the hearts and on the lips of all those who live in hope of that glory: "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." (Revelation 22:20)

NOTICE!!!

The Student Aid Committee wishes to announce that students who aspire to the ministry in the Protestant Reformed Churches in America and who are in need of financial assistance to attend our Seminary should contact either Mr. T. Englesma, 2333 Clyde Park, S.W., Grand Rapids, MI 49509, Phone 616-245-4706 or Mr. G. Pipe, 1463 Ardmore, S.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49507, Phone 616-245-6145.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On Friday, March 30, 1979 our parents, ADRIAN J. LENTING and JACOBA LENTING hope to celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary. We, their children and grandchildren, are thankful to our covenant God who has given us God-fearing parents, and a home where we may know the fear of the Lord.

Our prayer is that God may bless them with His grace in the way that lies ahead, and that in all their experiences they may enjoy that perfect peace which is only found in the cross of Christ.

Their grateful children:

Henry & JoHanna Lenting
Adrian & Trudy Lenting
Len & Betty Lenting
Jack & Joyce Lenting
Bill & Anita Lenting
Corrie
Bob
Jim
and 17 grandchildren

South Holland, IL

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On March 22, 1979, the Lord willing, our parents, MR. AND MRS. HENRY HELMHOLDT will celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary. We, their children, are grateful that we have had them and that they have had each other for these many years. May the Lord continue to bless them.

Mr. and Mrs. Ted Helmholdt
Mr. and Mrs. John W. Post
Mr. and Mrs. Robert Alspaugh

Grand Rapids, MI

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On March 6, 1979 our parents, MR. AND MRS. JUSTIN KORTERING celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary.

As their grateful children, we rejoice with them in the many blessings our Heavenly Father has showered upon us through them. Accompanying these blessings have been some ways difficult for the flesh, but they have made us experience the love of one another and of God's people.

We commend them to God's abiding care and further rejoice in the sure promises of everlasting life.

Lafern Kortering
Jess Kortering
Mr. Ken Schuitema
Rev. and Mrs. J. Kortering
Mr. and Mrs. E. Kortering
and 12 grandchildren

Holland, MI

News From Our Churches

Another postcard with a rather spectacular view (this one of Mt. Cook) has arrived from New Zealand. The sender, of course, is Rev. John Heys. The postcard was not sent just to share a view of the New Zealand mountains, of course, but to inform *Standard Bearer* readers of his new address. The new address is: Rev. & Mrs. John A. Heys, 515 Barrington, Christchurch 2, New Zealand. It seems that the owner of the "flat" in which the Rev. and Mrs. Heys were living returned from his trip around the world and wanted his home back. Hence the need for new quarters. Rev. Heys is a "minister on loan" from our churches to the congregation of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Christchurch. Rev. Heys also mentioned that he had just returned from a 300 mile trip to the north. He had preached in Nelson, New Zealand, the previous Sunday.

Rev. Meindert Joostens and his family were scheduled to leave on Thursday, March 1, to labor in Bradenton, Florida, for three weeks. During the absence of their pastor, First Church expects to receive pulpit supply from the seminary.

The dedication program for the new sanctuary and organ of our Faith Church in Jenison, Michigan, was scheduled for Wednesday evening, February 28.

The Mr. and Mrs. Society of Faith Church scheduled a special meeting of their society on January 31. They invited Rev. Ronald Van Overloop to show his slides on New Zealand and talk about his work there. Rev. Van Overloop preceded Rev. Heys as "minister on loan" in Christchurch.

Faith Church recently made a change in their order of worship. This change was made known to the congregation in the bulletin as follows: "At its last meeting, the Consistory adopted a recommendation to begin our worship service with a moment of united silent prayer. The Consistory believes this would be an improvement in our service since it serves to unite the saints together in this prayer. Also, it will include the children of the congregation in the prayer and it will eliminate the interruption of those praying as others are entering the pew rows. The use of the united silent prayer will begin on the first Sunday in January with the following order observed: 1) an-

nouncement by our Pastor of the prayer, 2) united silent prayer, 3) organist to conclude the prayer by playing "Hear Our Prayer, O Lord," 4) doxology (congregation standing), 5) benediction. In preparation for the united silent prayer, the parents are asked to teach their children how they should properly participate in this prayer. Faith has now joined a number of our churches which have adopted the use of the united silent prayer before the service.

Rev. Lubbers began preaching on Sunday, January 7, to a group in Charlotte, Michigan. Rev. Lubbers led a morning service, followed immediately by a catechism class, to four families (16 individuals) meeting in the Seventh Day Adventist Church. Rev. Woudenberg, pastor of our church in Kalamazoo, Michigan, is presently teaching a midweek Bible class there.

The 1979 Protestant Reformed Young People's Convention will be held on July 23-27 at Pine Summit, a Christian camp in the mountains near Redlands, California. The Young People's Society of our church in Redlands is sponsoring the convention this year. The convention theme will be "Redeeming The Time," based on Ephesians 5:16.

The Men's Society of our church in Loveland, Colorado, has established a library in the church basement. The contents of the library are available to all the members of the congregation. The material includes "good sound Reformed literature and cassette recordings of sermons and lectures." In their letter to the Loveland congregation announcing the new library, the Men's Society stated, "It is our desire that you use our library material as we strive to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." The library idea appears to be a very worthwhile service to the church and could be copied with profit by other of our churches.

Martin Luther is quoted in the Redlands bulletin as follows:

"I have tried to keep things in my hand and lost them all, but what I have given into God's hands I still possess."

K.G.V.