

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Everybody's doing it doesn't make it right. We are not concerned with the question, Is it popular? but with the question, Is it right? But it is often surmised that if wrong gets to be prevailing, then it must be right. Evil and wrong are in this world in epidemic proportions. But an epidemic of small pox, for example, does not make the disease desirable or socially acceptable, but rather all the more dreadful! Men, in the natural sense, see these things readily enough. Why are they unable to see them as they apply spiritually?

See "God's With Us! Fear Not!" — Page 188

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THE STANDARD BEARER

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MEDITATION

Saved Through the Gospel

Rev. C. Hanko

Ques. 19. Whence knowest thou this?

Ans. From the holy gospel, which God himself first revealed in Paradise; and afterwards published by the patriarchs and prophets, and represented by the sacrifices and other ceremonies of the law; and lastly has fulfilled it by his only begotten Son.

Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 4.

“Whence knowest thou this?”

Our Catechism confronts us with a most serious question. How do I know that God has eternally prepared a Mediator Who is capable of delivering the lost sinner from sin and death and of giving him

eternal life? How do I know that this is my Savior, Who is made of God for me personally wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, yea, a full redemption? On what sure foundation do I base my faith? From what source do I draw this knowledge of faith?

My answer is, along with the church of all ages, "From the holy gospel!"

We cannot help but be impressed by the repeated reference to the holy Scriptures throughout our Book of Instruction. Already in Lord's Day 2 the Law of God is mentioned as the source of the knowledge of our misery. Here the gospel is referred to as the source of the knowledge of our deliverance. In Lord's Day 25 the Word of God is said to be the chief means of grace. In Lord's Day 31 it is called the chief key of the kingdom of heaven. In Lord's Days 34 to 44 the Word of God is set before us as the law of liberty, our sure guide for a walk in thankfulness. We can appreciate this strong emphasis on the Scriptures and admire our Confession for it.

The holy gospel is for us the glad tidings of salvation. It is God's Self-revelation in His only Begotten Son, the eternal Word, Jesus Christ. It is God's own speech to us as the God of our salvation in Christ. In every sense of the word the holy Scripture is GOD'S Word.

Its Divine Origin.

The Word of God is of divine origin. It is divinely planned, revealed, inspired, given its canonicity, and preserved. We do well to think about this a bit more in detail.

It is divinely planned. God conceived of the Scriptures, determined and planned them from eternity. Just as an artist conceives of a painting in all its detail and beauty before his brush touches the canvas, so God eternally planned the books of the Bible as His Self-revelation to us. It is not a mere coincidence that there are sixty-six books, written over a period of some fifteen hundred years. It did not just happen that among the writers were herdsmen, fishermen, learned men, poets, musicians, each serving in his own capacity. It can hardly escape us that there were no women among them. God determined, for example, a Moses, who survived in spite of the death sentence of Pharaoh upon all the Hebrew baby boys, who spent forty years in the palace of the king to be instructed in all the knowledge of the Egyptians, who spent another forty years seemingly wasting away his life as he tended sheep in Midian, and who spent the last forty years of his life delivering Israel from the bondage of Egypt and leading them through the wilderness to the border of Canaan. It was during these last forty years that Moses was ready to be used by God to write the first five books of the Bible. God wanted David as a shepherd boy, as a fugitive from Saul, and later as a theocratic king to become the sweet singer of Israel, and thus to compose his part of the Scriptures. God ordained Jeremiah for his work before he was born. (Jer. 1:6). God determined all the other writers with their various gifts and talents and background to

contribute this part to the holy Writ.

It is divinely revealed. In the answer before us our Catechism speaks rather extensively of this revelation of God in the Scriptures. God revealed Himself first in paradise to Adam and Eve by speaking to them as a Friend with a friend. Even after their willful disobedience and their fall God sought them out and showed them His planned salvation for them and for their spiritual seed in the promised Savior. Afterwards God spoke to the patriarchs, sometimes by direct speech, sometimes in visions and dreams, or through that amazing Angel of Jehovah, Who is the Old Testament manifestation of the Christ. God added to this a revelation in types and shadows. He caused Israel to live in a picture world, where Israel was taught by pictures as a child is taught in kindergarten. The priests, the kings, the sacrifices, the tabernacle, later the temple, the feast days, the new moons and sabbaths, the city of Jerusalem founded on mount Sion, the land of Canaan, the clothing Israel wore, the land they owned, the seed they sowed, and the harvest they gathered, all spoke to them of the heavenly blessings God was preparing for them through the sufferings and death of the promised Savior, and the glory that would follow. In the fulness of time God sent His Son into the world, the Word became flesh and dwelled among us. We saw Him, we heard Him, we touched Him. Now He is gone into glory, yet He still speaks to us through His apostles who penned His revelation in the New Testament Scriptures. The writer to the Hebrews expresses it this way, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things." (Heb. 1:1, 2).

It is divinely inspired. "All Scripture is given by the inspiration of God." (II Tim. 3:16). Moses did not write some folk-lore or timeworn tradition when he wrote about creation, the fall, the flood, and the lives of the patriarchs, as some would maintain. Peter contradicted this foolish notion already in his second epistle, where he writes that "no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation." The various writers of the Bible did not give their version of the events of which they wrote, but "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." (II Peter 1:20, 21). Jesus Himself maintained the inspiration of Scripture, its inerrancy and authority, by ending all argument with the simple statement, "It is written," or "The Scriptures cannot be broken." The holy writers, ordained and called of God for this work, wrote in their own time and style, fully conscious of what they were writing, yet also deeply conscious of the fact that they were writing the inbreathed Word of God as the Holy Spirit moved them to write.

It is divinely canonical. We can marvel that the sixty-six books written by many authors over a broad span of time do form a perfect unity. As many pieces of a jigsaw puzzle form a complete picture, so the books of the Old and New Testaments present us with a complete revelation of the God of our salvation in Jesus Christ. God carries us from paradise to Paradise through every phase of His mighty work as He gathers, defends, and preserves His church in an evil world, unto the culmination of His salvation in the great Day of the Lord. This is possible only because under the guidance of the Holy Spirit the church preserved the various manuscripts, sorted them out from the uninspired writings, copied and recopied the manuscripts with ardent care, and brought them as a complete collection into one Book, which is our Bible. Let no man try to add or to detract from God's Book! (Rev. 22:18, 19).

Finally, it is divinely preserved. Throughout the ages God has jealously preserved the sacred writings which He had prepared for us. He did this over against the desperate attempts of the powers of darkness to destroy them. Deceptive writings and pseudo-gospels appeared. Mockers mocked with their vile mockings. Heretics defiantly attacked the Scriptures. Men who presume to be wiser than God consider the findings of the scientists of greater authority than God's own revelation. Many translations appear on the market, there is even a paraphrasing of the Bible in common, often vulgar language, by which man's philosophies are introduced into the sacred record. But the hammers lie broken and useless, while the anvil still stands and will stand until our Lord returns.

Its Divine Contents.

The Bible is God's autobiography, in which He tells of Himself as the eternal, unchangeable, holy, righteous, sovereign God of all love and grace, the ever adorable and blessed One Who is to be feared. In those holy pages God reveals the secrets of His heart, His eternal thoughts, plans, and purposes with His people in Christ. God tells us of His own covenant life that He lives eternally and perfectly within Himself, and assures us that He establishes His covenant with Christ, and thus with us in Christ, that we may share His life and blessedness forever. He declares, I, Jehovah, am and forever will be your God. He informs us of His mighty works of salvation through the cross, as He delivers the heirs of salvation from sin and death into the glorious liberty of the sons of God, unto the day when He will unite all things in Christ, that we may dwell and bathe in His dazzling glory forever. God always speaks as the sovereign God Who must be feared. Blessed is every one who keeps His commandments, and accursed is every one who does not abide in all that is written in the Book of the Law to do it.

God's Word is the gospel of His promise to His chosen ones. This promise is always centered in Christ, in Whom all fulness dwells as exalted Lord in heaven. The Old Testament speaks in every page of the promised Savior Who was still to come. By direct speech, by visions and dreams, by the testimony of the prophets, by types and shadows, yes, by every conceivable means God tells of the coming Savior, of His atoning death on the cross, and the glory that follows. God did not give those Old Testament writings, which make up such a large part of our Bible, merely for the benefit of the Jews of the old dispensation; the message of the promise is as important to us today as it was for the church of the shadows. The New Testament speaks of the fulfillment of that promise. Christ has come in the weakness of sinful flesh, the perfect Mediator Who in one person is very God and real, righteous man. As the Lamb of God for sinners slain He brought the perfect sacrifice as a ransom for His people. He saved from death and merited life for us. God put His divine seal upon that accomplished work by raising Christ from the dead and exalting Him to heavenly glory, where we now see Jesus crowned with glory and honor, higher than the angels, preparing to come again in fulfillment of all that is written of Him, even to the very last sentence of the last book of the Bible, the Book of Revelation.

Its Divine Power.

The Word of God is a savor of life unto life, and of death unto death. It is foolishness to those perishing, but it is the power of God unto salvation to all who believe.

The carnal Jews of the old dispensation chose idols in preference to the living God. They killed the prophets and stoned those who were sent to them. The Greeks were no better. Their worldly wisdom caused them to sneer at the preaching of Christ's cross and resurrection. The most civilized of men and the pagan of the jungles, the university professor and the shop worker, the man in authority and the derelict of skid row all agree that the Scriptures are so much nonsense, preaching is a deadly bore. They reject the Word to their own condemnation.

Are you and am I any better? Can we boast of superior intellect or willingness to bow before that Word? Amazing grace has given us a place among the elect for whom Christ died. Amazing grace has drawn us out of death into life, humbled us in shame and contrition for our sins, and made our hearts receptive through faith to receive the glad tidings of salvation. Amazing grace teaches us to say: "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth!"

Glory be to His blessed Name.

EDITORIAL

The Clarion and the Covenant

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

The *Clarion* is "The Canadian Reformed Magazine." For those of our readers who may be unacquainted with the church situation in Canada, the Canadian Reformed Churches are the Canadian form of the so-called Liberated Churches (Reformed Churches maintaining Article 31 of the Church Order) in the Netherlands. Sometimes they are identified as the Schilder group. (I do not like such a name, even as I do not like our denomination to be called the Hoeksema group.) After the Liberation in the Netherlands, which was precipitated by the unjust discipline of Dr. K. Schilder and many others by the General Synod of the Gereformeerde Kerken in 1942, ff., our Protestant Reformed Churches had considerable contact with Dr. Schilder and with the Liberated Churches of the Netherlands; and for a while there was official contact between the two denominations aimed at discussing the possibility of a sister-church relationship. As far as Canada is concerned, there was a large influx of Dutch immigrants to that country following World War II. For a time immigrants from the Liberated Churches were advised to make contact with our Protestant Reformed Churches; and there were even two PR congregations organized (in Hamilton and in Chatham, Ontario). All of this came to an end, however, with the adoption of the Declaration of Principles by our churches, as well as with the controversy which swept our churches and came to a climax in 1953 in connection with these matters. Since that time the Liberated immigrants in Canada have gone their own ecclesiastical way and have established their own denomination, known as the Canadian Reformed Churches. Also the Liberated Churches in the Netherlands have shunned us since that time, and there has been no further contact. I refer, of course, to official contact; the unofficial contact of exchange of the *Standard Bearer*

for the *Clarion* and *De Reformatie* has continued for many years.

It is probably an over-simplification to say this, but for the sake of brevity in furnishing this background information I will say it nevertheless. At issue between our churches was — and is — the truth concerning the covenant, and especially the truth of the covenant with reference to the children of believers and, in connection therewith, the significance of baptism. Briefly put, the Liberated hold to what we sometimes call the Heynsian view of the covenant, which involves a general, conditional promise to all the children of believers, to all baptized infants.

Parenthetically, let me remark for the benefit of some of our Australian friends who are concerned about this question, the very fact that the Liberated disagree with us so strongly on this matter and accuse us of "building a whole dogmatic system on the point of election" should also be an indication that we do not teach anything like what is sometimes called "automatic grace." You see, we hold to neither a general promise for all that are baptized nor pre-supposed regeneration, but insist (with Scripture and our confessions) that the lines of election and reprobation cut right across the generations of believers. I do hope to write on this matter sometime in connection with that question of "automatic grace," but that will have to wait for a more convenient season.

Now back to the subject at hand.

Clarion (Nov. 4, 1978) devoted almost three pages in its "Press Review" (by Rev. J. Geertsema) to criticize what I wrote on various occasions over the past three years in our "Question Box" on the subject of covenant-breaking and covenant-breakers. My re-

sponse was delayed because there were other subjects which needed attention in these columns.

It came as a bit of a surprise to find this critique in *Clarion*. Since the events of the early 1950s the Liberated brethren have not shown much inclination to discuss these matters with us, either in Canada or in the Netherlands. After the De Wolf group departed from us in '53, all discussion was broken off; and the article now under discussion is one of the few, if not the first, to make any further reference to this subject. For my part, I welcome discussion of this important truth any time. Personally, I would even welcome official discussions between our churches. However, such discussion would have to be far more basic than that offered by Mr. Geertsema; and it would have to follow a different method and evince a different tone. For one thing, in the articles quoted I was not discussing the truth of the covenant in general, but merely answering a reader's questions about the specific subject of covenant-breaking. In the course of that discussion I assumed a certain knowledge of related truths on the part of my readers; and in more than one instance I made only brief, passing reference to various important facets of the truth. If Geertsema wishes to have discussion (or debate) on the entire subject of the covenant, fine! But then let us have in-depth discussion, not critique on the basis of some passing references. For another thing, I do not like to have words put in my mouth and to be misrepresented. When brother Geertsema does that — as he does in his article — then he is not really criticizing me and my views, but fighting a straw man; and that, of course, is both dishonest and futile.

Hence, by all means let us have *open* and *thorough* discussion.

Nevertheless, I will reflect on and respond to some of the points made in *Clarion*'s "Press Review."

Background

Near the end of his article, Rev. Geertsema writes as follows:

I also cannot understand that the struggle of the liberation in The Netherlands, and all the articles and books of Prof. K. Schilder and others from that time, did not convince the Protestant Reformed people that they are wrong with their idea of a covenant with only the elect, and that they are not less wrong with their unscriptural idea of a real covenant besides a "covenant sphere" for those children who belong to believing parents, but are not elected. . . .

There is a reference to history here, specifically to the struggle of the Liberation in the Netherlands and to the related writings of Dr. K. Schilder and others. Geertsema expresses amazement that these things did not convince us of the wrongness of our views.

Now I wish to assure the writer that we are well acquainted with that history and the writings. Many of those writings were dealt with in the pages of the *Standard Bearer* after the Liberation. A bit later, especially in connection with our Declaration of Principles, there was no little polemical exchange between *De Reformatie* and the *Standard Bearer*. But it was precisely many of those writings which convinced us of the wrongness of the Liberated ideas about the covenant and the promise, and which led eventually to our adoption of the Declaration of Principles in an effort to insure that our Protestant Reformed Churches would not be invaded by the heresy of a general, conditional promise. Personally, I can recall many of the events of those years; and though I was not yet in the ministry at the beginning of that history, I lived very close to the events of that time; and in the later history involving these matters I played an active part.

But let me recall some of the earlier events.

First of all, it should be remembered that ever since 1939 (the time of his first visit to this country) our churches and our leaders had a goodly measure of respect, friendship, and sympathy for Dr. Schilder. And I believe that as a result of the contacts in 1939, Dr. Schilder had gained in respect and friendship for us, and also in sympathy for our views and position and struggle over against the Christian Reformed Church in the matter of the Three Points of Common Grace. During World War II, of course, we largely lost contact, though I recall that we made efforts through government channels to inquire concerning his welfare prior to United States entry into the war.

As soon as communications were re-established following the national liberation of the Netherlands, we began to hear about the schism in the Netherlands. We heard of the decisions of the Synod of Sneek-Utrecht concerning the various doctrinal differences prevalent in the Netherlands already in the 1930s; and we were, of course, especially interested in their decisions about common grace and about the burning issue of the covenant. We heard about the hierarchical actions of the General Synod in suspending such esteemed men as Dr. Schilder and Dr. S. Greijdanus and many others. We heard about the Act of Liberation and the fact that the Liberated movement was growing by leaps and bounds. And, very frankly, our Protestant Reformed sympathies were with the Liberated, not only because of our friendship toward Schilder, but even more because of the unjust and hierarchical actions of the Synod in their high-handed and wholesale expelling of officebearers. Remember, too, that we knew something about hierarchy by experience from our own history of 1924!

But we were intensely inquisitive about one mat-

ter: what were the views of the Liberated theologians about the covenant and baptism over against the position of the synodicals.

Well do I remember when we began to get reliable information. When the first numbers of *De Reformatie* reached us after the war, we were simply flabbergasted. I well remember that the late Rev. Vos visited my father with one of those early numbers completely blue-pencilled, marking those sections which made it plain that the Liberated churches were addicted to what is known among us as the Heynsian view of the covenant, the view of a general, conditional promise of God for all children of believers. The only element of Heyns's view which we did not discover in *De Reformatie* at that time was the element of a sufficient grace to all children of believers either to accept or reject the objective right to the blessings of salvation bestowed upon them in the promise, an element specifically spelled out in Prof. Heyns's *Catechetics*.

You must remember that Heyns's view was and is anathema to us of the Protestant Reformed Churches. It was so long before your Liberation. Herman Hoeksema disagreed with it already as a theological student under Heyns's instruction. Remember, too, that it was principally Heyns's view which was adopted in the doctrine of the well-meant offer of salvation in 1924 – a matter intimately connected with the whole position of our churches.

Further, you must remember that from 1945 forward (and you can read of it in the *Standard Bearer*, Volume 22) we made it abundantly plain by public and private writing that we stood diametrically opposed to this Heynsian view and that there was no room for it in our Protestant Reformed Churches. Incidentally, Prof. Heyns was even quoted at length and with approval by the Rev. R. H. Bremmer in *De Reformatie* at that time (Vol. 20, No. 51).

It was under these circumstances that we nevertheless gave Dr. Schilder a sympathetic hearing in 1947-48. He preached and lectured. We held two lengthy conferences with him. We questioned him, and he answered in his typical Schilderian manner. And while at least some of us were convinced that he personally was and intended to be Reformed, we were not at all convinced that the Liberated view of the covenant was not Arminianism applied to the covenant.

Things developed, both here and in the Netherlands. To make a long story short, the result was the present situation in which the Liberated and the Protestant Reformed continue in sharp disagreement and in separate church existence.

But I want to emphasize that we are well acquainted with the Liberated position and writings. It

is not that we are ignorant. Nor is it that Schilder and others did not make their position clear. We know the Liberated ideas of the covenant and the promise, and we want nothing of them. We hold them to be contrary to Scripture and the confessions. And if we are to discuss these things thoroughly – and I suggest that this be done with equal space in *Clarion* and *Standard Bearer* – then it must be on the basis of Scripture and the confessions, too. Perhaps *Clarion* could begin by demonstrating that Heyns's view, or Prof. Veenhof's view as spelled out concerning the general promise in his *Appel*, is consistent with our Baptism Form.

Misrepresentations

A discussion of these matters, however, cannot be fruitful as long as misrepresentations and "straw men" are presented, as is done by Geertsema in his "Press Review."

There are several such misrepresentations.

In the first place, Rev. Geertsema writes: "The Protestant Reformed view of the covenant is, according to what Prof. Hoeksema writes, God's covenant with the elect."

Now I will not hide the fact that we want to hear the heart-beat of election in all the structure of the truth, including especially the truth of the covenant. I am not ashamed of this. Nor am I afraid of the bogey-man presented later in Geertsema's article when he writes: "In my opinion this is wrong (i.e., with our view): a whole theology or dogmatic system is built up on the point of election, and everything is pressed into the framework of this election." That kind of charge is sheer nonsense. But to write that "the Protestant Reformed view of the covenant is . . . God's covenant with the elect" is not only gross over-simplification, but it is serious *misrepresentation*. What is the covenant? What is its nature? Is it a means to an end, a way to a goal, as so many theologians present it? Or is it the end itself, and, as Bavinck once put it, "the very essence of all religion." You see, when you merely say "covenant with the elect," you have not yet said anything about the nature of that covenant itself. And the latter subject is important, also for the question of covenant-breaking.

In the second place, Geertsema suggests that I did not answer the question concerning covenant-breaking. Writes he:

Now a difficulty arises for me: the Bible speaks about breaking the covenant. This breaking of the covenant can only be done by those who are placed in the covenant relation with God. Can we then break an eternal covenant?

However, two things should be noted in this

connection: 1) I do not concede and I did not write that the covenant can be broken only by those who are placed in the covenant relation with God. This is Geertsema's assumption, not my position. 2) The whole thrust of my articles on this subject was explicitly that we cannot break the eternal covenant in the sense of severing the covenant relationship. An eternal covenant can be violated, sinned against, transgressed against; but it is in its very nature as an *eternal* covenant that its bond of friendship cannot be broken.

In the third place, Geertsema devotes two or three paragraphs to suggesting that I deny the unity of the covenant, separate between the old covenant and the new, and even find two covenants in the old dispensation, viz., a national covenant with Israel plus a covenant with the elect. He further suggests that I admit that the national covenant could be broken — again in the sense of not merely transgressing against it but in the sense of severing its bond. Again, however, Geertsema sucks this out of his thumb, not out of my articles. I repeat: if there was anything plain in all three articles, it was my insistence that the covenant cannot be broken in the sense that the relationship can be severed, and that, too, precisely because it is God's eternal covenant.

Meanwhile, the Rev. Geertsema should seriously

confront and answer the question: how can an *eternal* covenant (as the Baptism Form speaks of it) or an *everlasting* covenant (as Scripture repeatedly speaks of it) be broken?

Finally, it is a gross misrepresentation to suggest as Geertsema does that the implication of our presentation of the covenant is that God says to some children in baptism (i.e., to the reprobate children): "To you I give nothing. For you your baptism is a fake baptism, an empty form." I assure the brother that he can find nothing of the kind in our Protestant Reformed writings on this subject. This presentation is his, not ours. And it is an illegitimate conclusion on his part from our view. I also insist, however, that any view which teaches that baptism seals a general, conditional promise to all that are baptized is contrary to Scripture and the creeds and is just as guilty of holding forth to believing parents a vain hope as is the view of presupposed regeneration.

The Lord willing, I will devote a separate article to the subject of my conception of a historic sphere of the covenant, to which Rev. Geertsema takes such strong exception. In conclusion, I must express wonderment at the things which Geertsema writes. I do not understand how he can write them if he has seriously read and studied the voluminous Protestant Reformed writings on the subject under discussion.

THE STRENGTH OF YOUTH

A Sure Foundation

Rev. Rodney Miersma

We have reached that point in time when we once more see the passing of the Old Year and the ushering in of the New Year. Tradition dictates that this is the time for revelry and merrymaking. This is when one "turns a new leaf" in order that he may now live much better, having set aside all his bad habits. The world does this, of course, apart from the fear of the Lord. The believing child of God does not make all kinds of foolish New Year's resolutions which he knows he is not going to keep anyway. No, the child of God lives each day of his life putting off the old

man of sin and putting on the new man which has been renewed in Christ Jesus.

Young people, this is very important that we remember our God especially at the turn of the calendar year. What do you see when you look back over the past year? Do you not shudder a bit? The year gone by reads like a very dirty book. Now certainly we do not condone such reading in our every day life. But that is what our life looks like when we view it in the light of God's Word. How

terrible! All our evil thoughts, desires, words, and actions are before us and we are mortified at the sight. And apart from God we would do as the wicked, flee terrified to the hills crying with a loud voice; "Fall on us." We are so ashamed of our actions at home with respect to our parents and brothers and sisters, and of our attitude in school, and church, or at work.

Now it must not be condemned that you feel this way, that is, sorrowful for past transgressions. No, this certainly is our calling and one of the three things that we must know in order to live and to die happily. But what do we do now? As mentioned we certainly do not cry unto the hills to fall on us. Certainly not! The knowledge of our misery is only one part of a three-fold knowledge to live and die happily. We also have the knowledge of our redemption in Jesus Christ our Lord. In Him is our all. By faith we do not bury our heads in the sand, but fix our eyes upon the Lord "which hope we have as an anchor of the soul," Hebrews 6:19. We flee not to the hills but unto the Lord Who "is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower," Psalm 18:2. We can do this because we have the certain knowledge and assured confidence that "the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity," II Timothy 2:19.

Let us pause a few moments at this point in holy writ and see what strength and encouragement it can give to us as the return of Jesus Christ upon the clouds of heaven advances one year closer. Paul is well aware of the many struggles that each child of God must endure. He had suffered many hardships himself. Even at the writing of this epistle he was in prison. Timothy was now in Paul's place preaching in Ephesus. As a young minister he was facing many difficulties in the way of opposition from false teachers. But Paul gives Timothy and us, yea, the whole church of all ages encouragement to keep up the good fight of faith because the church of God stands, and it stands sure. This must be our incentive to be steady and faithful as we face the New Year.

Young people, do you realize what Paul is saying here? Remember, you are the body of Christ; you are the temple of the living God, the house in which God dwells forever. It is this house, you, that stands sure. I know that Paul here does not say house; he says, foundation. However, you do not have a foundation without a house. Furthermore, he speaks of a great house in the next verse. This is neither a new or a strange figure in the Scriptures. The figure refers to the temple of the Old Dispensation in which God dwelt in the Most Holy Place. There Israel saw the

blood of atonement that opened the way for them to approach God. There they saw sacrifice for their sins after which they poured out their souls in thanksgiving and praise unto God. The blessedness of this was that in this way they experienced fellowship with God.

That temple, now realized in the gathering of the saints from all nations, tongues, and tribes, called the church, has a foundation. And it is because of this sure foundation that we can face the New Year in confidence. The foundation is none other than the Word Incarnate, Jesus Christ and His righteousness. As the Son of God He is the revelation of the Father, the Father having appointed Him to be the first-born of all creatures, the first-begotten from the dead. He is the Head of the church, the Word, Who alone can reveal the Father to us.

That Word of God is recorded for us in the Scriptures. The Old Testament prophets were filled by the Spirit of Christ. Christ spoke of Himself and of His coming, of His redemptive work, whereby He makes all things new. That Word became flesh and revealed the mysteries of the kingdom. All that He prophesied He accomplished and He went to sit at God's right hand from where He spoke through the apostles. We still have that solid foundation because Christ still works through that same Word. He made that Word the chief means whereby He gathers, defends, and preserves His church. Think of it! He is the Shepherd Who knows His sheep and calls them by name and leads them to glory.

That is the foundation upon which we stand. And the text has something very assuring for us as we contemplate our stand for another year. The assurance is three-fold: 1) It is *God's* foundation, 2) it *stands*, 3) it stands *sure*. In other words, we can stand fearlessly upon this foundation because, in the first place, it is God's. God wrote that Word, moving men by His Spirit so that always it was Christ speaking through them. The devil tries hard today to undermine that truth by saying that the Scriptures are the product of God *and* man, or that they are no more than fables. But therein lies insecurity. Therein lies a feeble grasping for a renewed life based on New Year's resolutions and the work of self. Whatever is built on that shall surely fall. But God's foundation speaks of God and therefore it *stands*. That Word is just as sure and firm as God Himself. Times may change, but God never does, nor does His Word.

Therefore, it stands *sure*. Whatever false winds of doctrine may blow, however fiercely the devil shoots his darts at us, the foundation shall not be moved. What is so assuring in all this is that whatever is true of the foundation is also true of the house. This is true because when Satan attacks Scripture, the

foundation, he does so with the express purpose of destroying the church, you and me and all the other saints. But if the foundation is sure then we who are the house will not be swept away by the storms because we are firmly grounded upon the rock, Jesus Christ.

I direct this to you especially, young people. I know that we all need this Word. But it is the very nature of youth to want to strike out on his own. In youthful exuberance one seemingly has the answers to all of life's problems. And so often we are not patient enough to wait upon the Lord and let Him show us the way. Then we become like Jacob who sinfully tried to obtain the birthright and its accompanying blessing in his own way, a sinful way. We must wait upon the Lord and stand upon His foundation.

How then are we to be sure that we stand on that sure foundation? The text provides us the answer, "The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." This is God's seal, His sign of surety, His mark of genuineness. The seal here has two sides. Both sides say something different, but somehow we realize that the two sides belong together. On the one side we see the objective promise of God's Word to us, and on the other side is the subjective experience of that promise in our lives. How do we know that we stand sure? Because "the Lord knoweth them that are his." That, youthful children of God, points to nothing less than the sovereign election of God. Our God does not and did not choose His own out of a mass of people because of some redeeming virtue in them. But He chooses them, wills them, forms them, each according to His purpose for them in His house. These were given to Christ, His only begotten Son, Who in turn died for them on the accursed tree. Hear

John in chapter 6:37, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

What a comfort! What encouragement! We are engraven in the palms of God's hands and no forces of darkness can ever snatch us out. This Word simply throbs with the love of God for us, eternal love, unchanging faithfulness, which keeps us forever founded on the firm foundation of the Word.

This brings us to the other side of the seal, "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." This is the blessed fruit of election, the carrying out of God's promise in us. Here we see the evidence of what God promised us on the other side of the seal. The work of God in our hearts causes us to name the name of Christ, that is, to confess that Jesus is Christ, the Son of the living God. This means that we confess Him as the anointed of God, the promised Messiah, our only Savior. Further, it means that we have the Spirit in our hearts. Thus, in God's house we stand as prophets, priests, and kings, vessels of honor which gladly serve to praise God Who dwells in that house.

That Word upon which we stand works in us and calls us to depart from iniquity. By the power of God's Word and the working of His Spirit we love God's law. In all that we do we seek to be pleasing to God and to our neighbor. We mentioned in the beginning of this article that there were three things necessary for us to know that we may live and die happily; here is the third, living a life of gratitude unto God.

This is how we seek the New Year, seeking the glory of God and the welfare of His church. It is only in this way that we manifest that we are on a firm foundation, the Word of God itself.

IN HIS FEAR

The Terror of the Lord

Rev. Arie Den Hartog

We began in our last article to discuss the important scriptural theme of the FEAR OF GOD. We showed how prevalent this theme is in the scriptures.

We called attention to the fact that almost all true sense of the fear of God is gone from the modern Christianity we see around us. We emphasized that

this is in no small measure due to the many current heretical notions of who and what God is. The God of modern day Christendom is not a God to be feared.

In discussions of what it means to fear God it has often been stated, and that rightly so, that scripture knows of two kinds of fear of God. There is the fear of terror and dread and the fear of holy reverence and awe. The one kind of fear of God causes man to flee from the presence of God with terror. It will make men in the last day cry unto the mountains to fall on them and to the hills to cover them from the wrath of God. The fear of awe and reverence draws men to God in the love of God. The fear of reverence and awe causes a man to desire ever more to be near unto God. That God fearing man earnestly longs to know ever more of His glorious majesty, perfect holiness, and blessedness. That fear causes him to desire earnestly to be pleasing unto God. It moves men to come to God in deep humility, acknowledging in great sorrow all their sins before Him and pleading for His mercy. It causes him by grace to strive against all sin and flee from it. The fear of reverence and awe causes men to bow in humble adoration and worship of God. The fear of terror is the fear that characterizes the ungodly man, the impenitent sinner who is filled with hatred against God. That man is altogether devoid of the fear of reverence and awe before God. The latter fear is characteristic only of the child of God; it is the fruit of grace in his life; it is the result of the fact that the love of God has been shed abroad in his heart.

In our present article we shall concentrate on the fear of God that is best described as the terror or dread of God. It is the terror and dread of the natural man as he is made consciously aware that God is the holy and righteous Judge of heaven and earth. It is the horror of the man who comes to understand that God is a terrible judge, that He is the discernor of the thoughts and intents of man's heart and that He will righteously judge all of the thoughts and desires, the idle words and wicked deeds of man. It is the awful horror of the man who knows how terrible the consequences of his sin before the holy majesty of God are. He knows that the righteous and holy God will in perfect justice finally place him in the place of everlasting damnation, the place of weeping and gnashing of teeth, the place where the worm dies not and the fire is not quenched, the place of outer darkness, complete separation from God. That terror is the cause of terrible anguish in men. Job speaks of this in Job 15:20-24: "The wicked man travaileth with pain all his days, and the number of years is hidden to the oppressor. A dreadful sound is in his ears; in prosperity the destroyer shall come upon him. He believeth not that he shall return out of darkness,

and he is waited for of the sword. He wandereth abroad for bread, saying, Where is it? he knoweth that the day of darkness is ready at his hand. Trouble and anguish shall make him afraid; they shall prevail against him, as a king ready to the battle."

God Himself will have men to know that terror and dread. He reveals His wrath from heaven against all the unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness. He reveals His terrible judgments continually in the earth. He does not leave man without a testimony of that terror in their hearts and souls. He writes the work of the law in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another. Try as men will they cannot blot out the consciousness of that terror. By all sorts of means men try to blot it out. They make themselves busy with the things of this world. They occupy themselves in the revellings of sin and wickedness. But again and again that terror comes back to them.

God is indeed a terrifying God to the sinner. It was Adam and Eve who first came to know that, immediately after they had fallen into sin. Once they had known the blessedness of fellowship and covenant communion with God. They had greatly rejoiced at the voice of God in the garden as God came to walk and talk with them. In what is perhaps the most pathetic passage of all of the scriptures we are told what fear took hold on them after they had sinned. When they heard God now walking in the garden they hid themselves because they were afraid. They became terrified of the righteous and holy God because they knew how awful their sin was in His presence.

Ever since the fall men have been terrified by the presence of God. And surely for the ungodly sinner God is a terrifying God. How many witnesses of that do we have in scripture! Think of the terrible judgment of the flood whereby the Lord destroyed the entire world. Consider the awful judgment of fire and brimstone on the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Consider how the Lord in severe judgment first sent ten terrible plagues on Egypt and then drowned Pharaoh and all his hosts in the Red Sea. Think of the revelation of God to Israel on Mount Sinai at the time of the giving of the law. There were thunderings and lightnings and the mountain shook and there was a thick cloud upon the mountain and the Lord spoke in a voice of a loud trumpet. The children of Israel became so terrified that they begged Moses that the Lord no longer speak with them directly but that He speak only to Moses. Think of the awful judgments of the Lord upon Israel in the wilderness. Think of the terrible judgment of the Lord upon Uzzah who touched the holy ark of the Lord. Think of the judgments of Nadab and Abihu. How often the

prophets spoke of the terror of the Lord. "Therefore He hath poured upon him the fury of His anger, and the strength of battle; and it hath set him on fire round about, yet he knew not; and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart." Isaiah 42:25 "I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me; for I will tread them in my anger and trample them in my fury." Isaiah 63:3 The Psalmist speaks of the anger of the Lord in Psalm 90:11: "Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear so is thy wrath."

The New Testament speaks the same language. The writer of Hebrews writes, "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins but a certain fearful looking for judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses; of how much greater punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again the Lord shall judge the people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Hebrews 10:26-31

How awful it is that we hear today so many false prophets and heretics who are denying that God is a terrible God. The notion that God is a God of just and holy wrath against the sinner is heard very little in our day. Many would even seek to deny this by making a caricature of such a God. Just recently I heard a minister deny this by saying that God does not constantly go ranting and raving about heaven because of the sin of mankind. The vast majority of modern day preaching speaks about a God who loves all men and a God who is graciously disposed to all men. What an awful deception such preachers are propagating. How this kind of preaching causes men to think that God is pleased with them in spite of their continued impenitent wickedness. All the while the Lord is angry with the wicked every day and His curse is continually in the house of the wicked. Yet modern day preachers would lead men to believe that all is well, there is no need for fleeing from sin, there is no need for repentance because the Lord loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life. The scriptural teaching of hell is made the object of mockery and jest. More and more churches are teaching the heresy that scripture does not speak of an eternal hell, that such is completely out of harmony with a loving God. A Presbyterian minister in our area said recently, "One thing I know for certain, that God will surely not place any of His creatures in hell."

The terror of the Lord must be declared in every place, by the preaching of the Word and by the testimony of the saints. It must be declared to all men, both to God's people and to the ungodly. The ungodly must know the terror of the Lord that in the day of judgment they may be left without excuse. They must not be told the lie that God loves all men and is gracious to all men. They must be told that the holy and righteous God cannot and does not love the sinner, for that would be a denial of His very being as the Holy God. They must be told that the anger of the Lord is upon the wicked.

Scripture speaks in many places also of the terror of the Lord to God's people. It has often been said that God's people do not fear God with a fear of terror and dread. This is surely the teaching of the scriptures. The blessed gospel to the saints of God, to those who believe His word and repent from their sins and turn unto Him with all their heart is fear not. The love of God that is shed abroad in the hearts of the saints drives out fear. Yet this must not be misunderstood in the sense that the teaching of the terror of the Lord is not to be declared among the saints. Already in the garden of Eden there was a threat added to the command of obedience for Adam and Eve. They may not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for in the day that they would eat thereof they would surely die. Moses in his masterful discourse in the book of Deuteronomy told Israel over and over again to fear God and keep His commandments and serve Him and they would be blessed in the land of promise. But to this he added over and over that if they would at all forget the Lord their God His anger would be kindled against them and He would destroy them as He had destroyed the heathen nations before them. The Psalmist speaks of the terror of the Lord in verse 11 of Psalm 90 saying: "Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear so is thy wrath." Because of this in the following verse he prays, "So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." In connection with speaking of the cutting off of Israel the apostle Paul warns, "Be not highminded, but fear; For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee." Romans 11:20-21. Paul speaks of the terror of the Lord in connection with the urgency of the preaching of the gospel. "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men," II Corinthians 5:11. The passage from Hebrews 10 quoted above is a very severe warning against those who would apostatize from the faith. Though the love of God has expelled terror from our hearts it is only the faithful and obedient child of God who is free from that terror. The terror of the Lord is used to keep us from disobedience and apostasy.

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of Galatians

Rev. G. Lubbers

CHRIST HAS MADE US TRULY FREE FROM SIN AND GUILT (Gal. 5:1)

Paul now comes to the great “therefore.” Stand fast *therefore*, says he. In the light of all that the law teaches concerning the two sons of Abraham, one a bond-son and the other a freeborn son, we must identify ourselves as being sons of Sarah, of Jerusalem above. We are not under law, under sin any more. We are now free with a freedom wherewith Christ has liberated us. And since we are not sons of the bondwoman, Hagar, but of the freewoman, Sarah, we are born from above by the Spirit and we are indeed freeborn, and ever remain in God’s church.

Here is the great precept of the Gospel of liberty. Here is the unique freedom from sin, guilt, and corruption. Christ has become for us wisdom of God, righteousness, sanctification, and complete redemption. We must not try to stand in any brand of liberty. Those who do not stand in this liberty, holding fast to it by faith, clinging to the Gospel-teaching, must needs become legalists or antinomists. The former have a “yoke of bondage,” the latter are men of sinful license, who use their liberty as an occasion for the flesh to revel. In this “stand fast” we do not have a legal demand of law, but we have the fundamental precept which flows from salvation in Christ itself. It is our “reasonable service” in Christ. (Rom. 12:1) This is the very logic of grace which cries out, “God forbid.” (Rom. 6:1, 15) It is the impossibility to once more place oneself under the principle of law as well as to walk in sin that grace may abound. Justification and sanctification are *both* ours in the blood of Christ, His death and resurrection. Both Christ’s righteousness and holiness are ours in the satisfaction of Christ. Our liberty is that we are

free from both the *guilt* and the *corruption* of sin. (Heid. Cat., Questions 60, 61, and 64)

However, the apostle is here interested in the “yoke of bondage” of the law, which would rob us of our justification by grace through faith. And that is an intolerable yoke. That yoke was Egypt’s bondage for Israel of old. From this cruel bondage God delivered Israel, under the blood of the Passover lamb in the night of nights when Israel went forth triumphantly, marching out of Egypt. And then comes the great “precept of the Gospel” to Israel in the words of the Covenant, “I have delivered you, I am your God, the LORD.” Now walk at liberty and have no other God but serve only your great Covenant God and deliverer. (Exodus 20:1; Deut. 5:6) Yes, yes, here we have the great precept of the Gospel in the Old Testament! And it is read each Sunday morning in our public worship service. It does not put us under a “yoke of bondage” once more at all, but it is the royal law of liberty for erstwhile captive slaves, you and me. Hallelujah, Amen! And the ten commandments say, “Stand, therefore, in the liberty whereby Christ has made you free.” Never, never forget that I have delivered you in the blood of the Lamb, slain from the foundations of the earth. My little lambs in Egypt were but a type of the Lamb of God which carried away the sin of the world.

People of God, let no one bewitch you with enticing words!

The giving of the law is connected with Calvary’s fulfilment of the law.

Yes, *precepts* of the Gospel! And these are the precepts of the Gospel by which God works grace through the Holy Spirit. And let no man, not even an angel from heaven, separate this preaching of the

precepts of the Gospel from the operation of the Holy Spirit, be it then to damnation or to salvation. We must not tempt God in the church. (Canons of Dort, III, IV, 17) In these precepts, connected with the preaching of the Gospel, we hear that great ambassadorial cry: be ye reconciled to God. Let us heed it!

There are two parts to this precept here in Galatians 5:1. They are two sides of the same coin. On the one hand we must stand in our liberty. That is on the foreground. Really, when we stand in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free with all our heart, mind, soul and strength, then we will be free, and are fleeing all yoke of legal bondage. We then cling to the Cross of Christ, where through law we died unto law, that we might live unto God. (Rom. 7:6; Gal. 2:17-19) And so we do not become entangled once more under a yoke of bondage, and tempt God. (Acts 15:10, 11)

Once more we must not become "entangled" with the yoke of bondage. We must not go back to zealously keeping days, months, times, and years from a mere law-principle. We are not sons of Hagar, Sinai, but we are born from above and are free. We keep the sabbath from the principle of being free to serve the Lord on His feastday, set aside for us. Yes, yes, that is God's *precept* of the Gospel. It cannot be ignored with impunity. (Heb. 10:25-31) It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Such is the lot of all who count the blood of Christ a common thing, and do despite unto the Spirit of grace. But heeding the precepts of the Gospel leads to freedom, is freedom, is holding fast our freedom in Christ, and never, never becomes a "yoke of bondage," for it is the light burden and the easy yoke of Christ. (Matt. 11:28-30) It is the commandment of Christ which is not grievous. (1 John 5:3) Thus we never get entangled in the yoke of bondage, but stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free!

CHRIST PROFITS NOTHING TO THOSE WHO DESIRE TO BE UNDER LAW: CIRCUMCISED. (Galatians 5:2-4)

Paul makes a very solemn declaration here which amounts to an ultimatum. Writes he, "Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing." (Gal. 5:2) There are three things in this strong sentence which call for our attention. In the first place, that he begins by saying "behold." The term in Greek in the New Testament is "*ide*." It is used at the beginning of sentences as an utterance of one who wishes that something should not be neglected by another. (Matt. 26:65) It is used by Caiaphas in his judgment hall when he would condemn Jesus for what he called "blasphemy." And it is employed by the Pharisees when they called Jesus'

attention to the purported sabbath-breaking of his disciples: their plucking ears of corn on the Sabbath when they were hungry. (Mark 2:24) Paul would have the Galatian readers take particular notice of what he here is saying. It must sink deep down into their hearts. Secondly, notice that Paul says, "I, Paul, say unto you." I, Paul, the called apostle of Jesus Christ not by men, but by God himself, (Gal. 1:1) separated unto the Gospel from my mother's womb, (Gal. 1:15; Rom. 1:1; Acts 9:15), I say unto you, Do not take this lightly, brethren! Thirdly, notice this statement is one which partakes of an ultimatum; there is finality in it. Anyone who is circumcised, after he has become a believer, by such an act of circumcision comes to stand in the legal status before the throne of God, the judge of heaven and earth, as not being in Christ's atoning work on the Cross! He is not righteous before God and an heir of everlasting life. Christ profits such a man in nothing. All the merits of Christ and the benefits of Christ for such a man are zero. Paul does not merely say: Christ shall *not* profit him. Not at all. He says Christ shall profit you *in nothing*. The Greek term is "*ouden*." In Romans 8:1 we read that there is condemnation in reference to nothing (*ouden*) to those who are in Christ Jesus. Paul lists the catalogue of this "*ouden*" in Rom. 8:31-39. All things work together for good to those who love God, the called according to His purpose of election. But here all that is attributed to the believers are denied to those who "are circumcised." They are totally under law!

Paul enlarges upon this in verse 3 of Gal. 5. He repeats this more strongly and with great clarity and emphasis. He repeats with great protestation. He becomes the witness in the witness chair in God's court. He solemnly affirms here something to every man, who becomes circumcised: they are totally under the law, and under the whole law of Moses with all the impact of, "do this and thou shall live", and "cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do it." For circumcision is the Old Testament bloody sign which said that the true sacrifice had not yet been brought, and that the righteousness which is ours by faith had not yet been realized! It said, in effect, that Christ had not yet died. This was indeed accounting the blood of Christ a common thing, a treading under foot the Son of God, and doing despite unto the Spirit of grace. And such have no profit in Christ, yea, they are in the legal status of being servants and not sons, who have the Spirit crying in their hearts: Abba, Father. This brings these Galatians and all who desire to be under law up short. It should stop them in their tracks!

Yes, the whole law these circumcised are debtors to do. We, who are in Christ and have the Spirit, are not debtors unto the flesh to serve the flesh. But

such, who would be circumcised and return under law, are indeed debtors to serve the flesh. They are not free, but they are in spiritual bondage. The law cannot make alive, and the law cannot give the power to do the law. These did not die to law through law to live unto God. Such are fallen from Christ, from grace, who would be justified by law. They have wholly come to stand as those for whom Christ is of "none effect." There is not *any* power of grace and of the Holy Spirit to save them, neither is there any atonement for such!

Well may the Galatians and we distant ourselves from this law-righteousness in all its forms. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees. (I Cor. 5:6; Matt. 16:6, 11; Matt. 23:3, 13)

OUR ONLY HOPE AND EXPECTATION OF RIGHTEOUS (Galatians 4:5, 6)

Paul draws here a very strong and marked contrast in these verses between the true believers and those

who have no hope in Christ.

Writes he very emphatically, "for we expect the hope of righteousness out of faith"! What a beautiful, concise statement of our position in grace! In the first place, Paul here puts himself in the class of the entire body of Christ, the totality of all believers, who belong to Christ, and who are, therefore, the real Israel of God, the spiritual children of Abraham. This is a glorious confession of faith. It is the key-note of the confessions of the church, "We confess with the mouth. . . ." And in this confession we are saved. Furthermore, he speaks of the earnest expectation of the church. The term in the Greek is "*ap-ek-dech-ometha*." It means to assiduously and patiently wait for the final salvation and final justification in the day of Christ. Thus it is employed in Romans 8:23 where Paul speaks of the church's waiting for the final, public adoption of sons, when all creation shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption to the glorious liberty of the children of God.

BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

I Corinthians

God is Faithful (2)

Rev. J. Kortering

4. Sexual sins condemned and instruction given regarding marriage, (6:12-7:40). In this section Paul deals with two basic issues.

First, the fact that fornication is not a matter of Christian liberty (6:12-20). Christian liberty is expressed as, "all things are lawful to me, but all things are not convenient," or helpful, (6:12). Sins are not lawful. They are condemned by God. Nor are they

helpful, but always impair. Fornication is a *sin*, not a matter of Christian liberty. Eating food is a matter of Christian discretion. It satisfies a physical need. But sex is not the same; our bodies belong to Christ (vs. 15). He redeemed them (vs. 20). Through the resurrection of Christ, our bodies belong to Him eternally (vs. 14). Fornication violates the exclusive union we have with Christ; it is a spiritual act of adultery (vs.

15-17). Hence it is a sin against the body which is the temple of the Holy Spirit (vs. 18).

Secondly, there are times when it is better to be single (unmarried) than married (7:1-40). We must remember that Paul was writing during a time of distress, persecution (vs. 26). He does not belittle marriage in general. Consider that Paul specifically states, in I Tim. 4:3, that "forbidding to marry" is a sign of *apostasy*; and in Eph. 5:22-33 he tells us that marriage is a reflection of Christ and His marriage to the church. Paul also instructs those who have not the "gift of continence," who have the desire for sexual expression, that they should marry (vs. 7-9), and also married people must not look upon sexual relation as something bad, but that which must be considered as part of marriage, so much so that he warns husbands and wives not to abstain from sexual relations for a long period lest they be tempted to sin, (vs. 3-6). Divorce is wrong and a married person should not seek the spiritual advantages of being not married by leaving his spouse (vs. 11). Also regarding unequal marriages, in which one is a believer and the other an unbeliever, brought about by the conversion of only one spouse after their marriage, he writes that if the unbeliever is willing to live with the believer, then the believer should accept this (the marriage is sanctified by one being a believer and perhaps the believer may be the means to save the unbeliever). If the unbeliever departs, let him depart (vs. 12-17). Incidentally, this same principle applies to circumcision and servants, (vs. 18-24). He goes on to advise virgins (both male and female persons who are unmarried) that they should not marry, not because it is wrong, but because there are two advantages in remaining unmarried. First, they will have less suffering during the time of tribulation (it is a fact that during persecution a husband and wife and parents carry more of a load when they see their loved ones suffer) and Paul would spare them this, (vs. 25-31). In addition, unmarried people have more time and effort to devote to the service of spiritual things than married, (vs. 32-35). Hence parents too must not forbid the marriage of their children, but must counsel them concerning the responsibilities of marriage and *to marry in the Lord*, (vs. 36-40).

During this discourse, Paul refers to the lack of commandment and he gives his opinion, (vs. 6, 12, 17, 25, 40). By commandment he refers to the Old Testament Scripture. He cannot quote from it; there is no reference. His opinions are spiritually guided and inspired so that they are indeed the Word of God, binding upon the churches, vs. 17.

5. The problem of eating food offered to idols (chapters 8-10). According to Acts 15:29 the Council at Jerusalem decided that the Gentile converts should abstain from meat offered to idols. The Corinthian

situation was different and so he sets forth two principles. First, there is no sin in the food itself, (vs. 1-7). Second, we may not give offense (vs. 8-13). A strong Christian knows that idols are vanity; but if a weak Christian thinks there might be something to an idol, he would be tempted to sin and worship the idol, hence be offended. We must be careful that we do not lead another into sin and thus give offense.

Paul illustrates this principle from his own life. There are times in a Christian's life when he will deny himself something for the sake of weaker brethren. Paul did this in connection with taking money from the churches. As an apostle, he was entitled to financial support (9:1-18). The churches were obligated to support him, even should he be married, as was the case with Peter, vs. 5. The ox that ground corn in Israel ate freely and was not muzzled, (vs. 8-10). Yet, he did not take money for his preaching. Rather he engaged in tent-making as a means to support himself in order that no one in Corinth could accuse him of preaching for money, (vs. 15-18). In his ministry he accommodated Jews and Gentiles in many ways, in order that he might gain the more, (vs. 19-23). In this way a Christian gains the prize of the high calling, (vs. 24-27). This says something to ministers and members of the church concerning a willingness to deny ourselves legitimate things for the sake of the gospel of Christ. The history of Israel in the wilderness is proof for the *need* of self-denial (10:1-8). They were well taken care of, yet they yielded to idolatry, fornication, and tempting Christ.

There is another reason why they should not eat meat offered to idols. They themselves might sin. The Corinthians faced this temptation. If they saw nothing wrong with it, they might want to attend the public feasts in the city. If they did this, it would be an act of idol worship, because such a one identified himself spiritually with the feast, (10:9-22). It is a different matter if one buys food in the market and eats such food at home, (vs. 10-27), provided that no one makes a big deal about it. If someone says, I bought this in the market and it was offered to idols, he obviously is tempting, and one should not eat of it, (vs. 28, 29). This might lead him to justify idolatry.

6. The problem of women appearing in church without a veil (11:1-16). The veil upon a woman's head was a symbol of sexual modesty and willing submission to her husband. This was not only true in the church of Paul's day, it was part of eastern culture everywhere. Paul proceeds to show that by wearing the veil, believing women would express their agreement with these two qualities. God established that the responsible head of the woman is the husband, and the wife must submit herself to him, (vs. 4). And a woman without a veil acts as a shorn

woman, one marked as a whore (vs. 5, 6). Both must accept their God-given place which was determined already in creation (vs. 7-9). This is especially true in public worship when the angels are present (vs. 10). As head, man is not independent of the woman, nor by submission is a woman slave to a man, but both need each other and assist each other (vs. 11, 12). Even the natural growth of the hair indicates that God wants a woman covered, while a man loses hair and becomes bald, (vs. 13-15). This is a spiritual matter at heart and therefore he adds that anyone who wants to argue over this point for the sake of argument must not be entertained (vs. 16). We must learn from this that outward conduct both in dress and appearance reflects what we are inside. As Christians we must not project ourselves as ungodly, but as children of God.

7. The problem of corrupting the celebration of the Lord's Supper (11:17-34). The church of Corinth connected the Lord's Supper with eating a meal. This influence may have come from two sources: the heathen were accustomed to eating a meal with their sacrifices; and the Christian churches were celebrating love feasts in which they provided a meal for the poor and distressed, (see Acts 2:42, 46). Now the Corinthians decided to have this meal in the church; and sometime during or after the meal they added the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. This explains the corruptions mentioned here and the stern warning that by so doing they were worse off (vs. 17-19). At these feasts some were neglected and went hungry while others drank too much and became drunk (vs. 20, 21). This practice took away from the Lord's Supper its purpose, namely to look to Christ for spiritual food and not to come to the supper for natural food or even alcoholic drink (vs. 22). Paul reminds them of the original purpose as instituted by Christ (vs. 23-25), which requires of them confession of sin and self-examination (vs. 26-29). Mutual discipline is important because God will judge those who corrupt it (vs. 29-33). Social eating and Christian hospitality must be practiced at home, and the sacrament of the Lord's Supper reserved for the church service (vs. 34).

8. The problem of speaking in tongues and the orderly conducting of the church services (12:1-14:40). Speaking in tongues was one of the many special signs given to the New Testament church by the Holy Spirit to show His presence. By speaking in tongues a person spoke in a foreign language with which he was not acquainted. Joel prophesied this would take place, (Joel 2:28), and Christ mentioned it, (Mark 16:17, 18). In the Corinthian church it became part of their worship service. This led to many abuses, all of which can be

reduced to this one thing, that they made too much of it.

Quite naturally, when the whole church is excited about speaking in tongues, some will speak out of human emotions and not of true spiritual enlightenment. Paul warns them that they should know the difference, since they were converted from idolatry, and all spiritual activity should acknowledge that Christ is Lord (12:1-3). The purpose of speaking in tongues should be profit, edification (vs. 4-7). Speaking in tongues is only one of many gifts which the Spirit gave the church. Paul mentions wisdom (to enable one to lay hold of the gospel), knowledge (set forth the revealed truth), faith (ability to triumph by its power), healing (restore health to the sick), miracles (a broader term including raising the dead), prophecy (receiving revelation from God and speaking it forth), discerning the spirits (able to see difference between truth and error), speaking in tongues and interpreting them (foreign languages and to convey the truth of the gospel while others could translate this), verses 8-10. One thing is clear, these gifts are of the Lord alone (vs. 11).

To understand the place of spiritual gifts in the church, Paul now draws a comparison between the human body and the church. He enumerates these points: first, as the body is a living organism, so also is the church, (vs. 12-13); second, as there are many organs yet one body, so there are many members yet one church, (vs. 14); third, as all the members of the body are not alike, so also in the church, (vs. 19); fourth, as all members of the body need each other or they cannot function, so also in the church, (vs. 15, 16); fifth, as God has determined the place of each member of the body, so He also does this in the church, (vs. 18); finally, as even the least esteemed member of the body is important, so in the church, (vs. 20-23). From these points of comparison, Paul draws out the following principles that apply to the situation in Corinth and so for us as well. First, whether a member has special gifts or not must not interfere with the harmony of the church, because God tempers the whole church by giving to the member that lacks, a special gift, (vs. 24); second, all the members must care for each other to prevent division, (vs. 25); and thirdly, there is a mutual joy and sorrow reflected in the triumphs and defeats of the membership, (vs. 26). The conclusion to all of this is that God gives offices and gifts to the members of the church not for their personal exaltation, but for the well-being of all the members. It is good to seek the best gifts for the sake of the entire church, (vs. 28-31).

— to be continued —

MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE

Letter to Timothy

January 15, 1979

Dear Timothy,

You will recall, if I may for a moment review our discussion, that we were talking about this whole question of whether Scripture permits women to hold the office of deacon. In an earlier letter we showed that Scripture nowhere speaks of deaconesses. Because this was somewhat of an argument from silence, we went on to show that Scripture expressly forbids women to hold office in the Church. We briefly examined two key passages, I Cor. 14:34, 35, and I Timothy 2:11, 12, to show that women are enjoined by Scripture to keep silence in the Church. But then, in order to answer the argument that this includes deaconesses, we began a discussion of the nature of the office of deacon to show that it is true of this office as well as of the offices of elder and minister that deacons exercise authority in the Church and that they also are called to bring the Word of God. We argued, first of all, that this was true on the basis of the two passages where the office of deacon is spoken of in Scripture: Acts 6:1-7 and I Timothy 3:8-13. And we argued secondly, from the nature of the office itself. Christ is the only Officebearer in His Church Who provides for all the needs of His people. He does this through the special offices in the Church because through these special offices He exercises authority over His people; but this authority is always the authority of His Word.

We must pursue this whole question a bit further.

When in the last letter I wrote to you that the office of deacon is an office in which deacons both exercise authority and bring the Word of God, I did not mean to say that these are two distinct functions of the office. You must not conclude from these remarks that the calling of deacons to bring God's

Word to His people is distinct from the calling to exercise authority over God's people. This surely is not the case.

While it is true that the authority which any officebearer possesses in the Church is an authority by virtue of his office to which Christ has called him, nevertheless, this authority is always and only the authority of the Word of Christ which the officebearer brings. Only Christ's Word ever has authority within the Church. And the officebearers exercise authority only when they come with the Word of Christ.

And so this leads us to the third remark we must make in connection with the right of men only to hold the office of deacon. It is not proper to distinguish between the office of deacon on the one hand and the offices of minister and elder on the other hand on the implicit or explicit grounds that deacons do not exercise authority, and that, therefore, as long as women remain deacons only, they may hold this office for they are not in violation of the Scriptural injunctions found in I Cor. 14:34, 35 and I Tim. 2:11, 12. Or, to put it a little differently, if women are given the right to hold the office of deacon, they are given the right to "speak in the Church," a right which Scripture expressly forbids.

And this brings us to the fourth point which needs to be made.

It has always been maintained in Reformed Church polity that there is what can only be called a certain overlapping of the offices. While it certainly is true that each officebearer is called by Christ to bring the Word of Christ according to the nature of his own office whether minister, elder, or deacon, it is also true that because the authority of each office is the

authority of the Word of Christ, these offices necessarily overlap somewhat in the actual life of the Church. There are many instances of that. For one thing, even our Church Order provides for some such overlapping. In Article 16 the work of discipline is assigned to both ministers and elders: "The office of the ministry is to continue in prayer . . . and, finally, with the elders, to exercise church discipline and to see to it that everything is done decently and in good order." More particularly, however, Article 37 reads: "Whenever the number of elders is small, the deacons may be added to the consistory by local regulation; this shall invariably be the rule where the number is less than three." Concerning this matter Van Dellen and Monsma have some interesting remarks to make in their *Church Order Commentary*. They write:

"First of all then, the three offices of the N.T. Church are derived from Christ's threefold office and correspond to these. . . . Each office has its distinct task, though the offices are more or less inter-related and they have their unity in Christ.

"Whenever necessary these three types of office-bearers may work together in governing the Churches and in caring for the poor. Elders then act as assistant Deacons and Deacons as assistant Elders. Thus it must be done in very small congregations, numbering less than three Elders.

"This special arrangement of full cooperation of all the offices is altogether permissible in view of the essential unity of the office in Christ. . . .

"From the foregoing it will be clear that when the Deacons are part of the Consistory they should be considered to be full-fledged Consistory members. They have a voice and vote in all matters which pertain to the government of the Church, even as the Elders under these circumstances have a voice and vote in all matters regarding the Church's work of mercy. To deny the Deacons a right to vote in cases of discipline, for instance, would be contrary to the Church Order and the duties which have been imposed on them by local arrangement." (p. 166)

The question might be asked: But is this also true in those congregations where the elders and deacons meet separately? The answer is that even where elders and deacons meet separately, they nevertheless meet together in matters which pertain to the congregation as a whole, among which matters are matters which also concern the government of the church. Van Dellen and Monsma quote Jansen on what matters ought to be treated by general meetings where both elders and deacons are present. These include: 1) All matters pertaining to the election of office-bearers: Nominations; final decision whether or not one chosen shall be called; consideration of objections registered; releasing one from his call to office, etc. 2) The issuing and receiving of certificates of Ministers arriving or departing. 3) Provisional consideration of and decision regarding emeritation. 4) Mutual cen-

sure. 5) Church visitation. 6) Administration of finances. 7) The general administration of benevolence matters. 8) General business administration of the material interests of the Church. 9) Consideration of general correspondence.

Now it is clear from all this that even in those congregations where elders and deacons meet separately for their own unique work, there are many matters which must be dealt with by both elders and deacons. These matters involve the rule of the Church. If women, therefore, are permitted to hold the office of deacon, they will also, in the nature of the case, be permitted a voice in certain aspects of the rule of the church. And then they will be in direct violation of the Scriptures.

This fact extends far beyond even what we have discussed above. If women are voted in as deacons there is nothing at all to prevent them from also leading worship services in the congregation in those places where deacons are added to the Consistory. And so we could go on.

The whole point is that the principle of Article 84 of the Church Order is a Scriptural principle. Article 84 reads: "No church shall in any way lord it over other churches, no minister over other ministers, no elder or deacon over other elders or deacons." Positively stated, this article teaches that all the offices are on a plane of equality. And they are equal because they are all representatives of Christ through whom Christ is pleased to rule over His Church.

There is still one other matter which we might mention in this connection.

It sometimes appears that those who argue in favor of women in office do so on the grounds that by excluding women from office, women are pushed into a position of inferiority in the Church of Christ. The argument goes something like this. To hold an office is to hold a position of authority over others. Those who hold such positions of authority are, by virtue of that fact, placed in a superior position. Those who are excluded from such positions of authority are placed in positions of submission to authority, and are relegated to inferior positions in the Church.

This is a false argument and is based on a serious misconception of the whole office. The Scriptures are very clear on the point that those who hold positions of authority within the Church do not occupy superior positions over others so that they can, by virtue of their office, relegate others to a lower status. Quite the opposite is true. This is clear, for example, from the Lord's teachings in John 13:12-17. At the time of the last celebration of the Passover Feast with His disciples, Jesus had taken the opportunity to wash His disciples' feet. After finishing and after answering

the objections of Peter, the Lord said: "Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

Now Jesus' teaching here is plain. Jesus was the Master and Lord of His disciples. He was their supreme Lord. Yet He took upon Himself the lowliest of menial duties — a task assigned to the lowest of slaves. And He did this because of the fact that He was teaching them that as their Lord, He had to become their Servant. His Lordship could only be exercised properly by becoming the lowliest of their slaves. And He did this when He suffered and died on the cross for them to take away their sins and secure for them washing by His blood.

But He laid down a fundamental principle of lordship here when He added: "Ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." The point is that the disciples had to learn that to occupy a position of authority was *not* to occupy a position superior to others. The truth is the very opposite. To occupy such a position was to be a slave of those over whom they were placed. Then and only then would they properly fulfill their role in a position of authority. So it is always in the Church. Officebearers are the servants and slaves of those over whom Christ places them. This is, from this viewpoint, an inferior position. If this were understood properly, perhaps there would not be all this silly propaganda for equal rights for women in the Church.

So, Timothy, we come to the end of the argument. From every point of view, Scripture forbids women to hold office in the Church. May God keep us faithful to His Word.

Fraternally in Christ,
H. Hanko

STUDIES IN ISAIAH

God's With Us! Fear Not!

Rev. Robert C. Harbach

"For so spoke Jehovah unto me in the being strong of the hand (of God impelling me) and dissuaded (disciplined) me from going in the way of this people, saying, 'Do not call conspiracy (treason) everything which this people shall call conspiracy (treason), and its fear fear ye not, nor be awed (by their line). Jehovah Tsebhaoth himself sanctify ye, as He (is) your fear, and He your terror' (v. 11-13).

The picture in v. 11 is that of a father, who, by his hand, seizes his fickle, unresponsive child so as to compel him, for his own good, to obey. Children are

just naturally inclined to imitate anything violent and wicked. They do not see lurking dangers as their parents do. They are not able to distinguish clearly and quickly right and wrong in a sound, mature way. Hence their need for constant instruction and guidance. Some wrongs are hidden by "the plausible cloak of public opinion," so that many are brought "to adopt an established custom as if the will of the people had the force of a law to authorize their corruptions." This affects children so that they are liable to become addicted to the "Well, everybody is

doing it” defence mechanism. Everybody’s doing it doesn’t make it right. We are not concerned with the question, Is it popular? but with the question, Is it right? But it is often surmised that if wrong gets to be prevailing, then it must be right. Evil and wrong are in this world in epidemic proportions. But an epidemic of small pox, for example, does not make the disease desirable or socially acceptable, but rather all the more dreadful! Men, in the natural sense, see these things readily enough. Why are they unable to see them as they apply spiritually? Any dead fish can float belly up downstream; it takes a live fish to swim against the current.

Isaiah himself had been disciplined and well taught in truth, righteousness, and godliness, that he might teach the more forcefully and effectually. One who teaches and preaches out of rich personal experience and from the heart is most likely to reach the hearts of his disciples. So the prophet says, The Lord instructed me, disciplined me, and so dissuaded me from going in the way of this apostatizing people. They go astray, trusting in ungodly alliances and seeking counsel from spirit-mediums. To do this is to fall into a Deistic denial of the providence of God. Many are dissatisfied with God’s providence and have long since given up trusting in it. They want something more (but certainly not more up-to-date). So they turn to the occult, to such pseudonymous sciences, as spiritism, astrology, witchcraft, Satan worship, clairvoyance, extra-sensory perception and para-psychology, the latest form of necromancy. A few years ago the high priests of the science hierarchy showed nothing but utter contempt for all this evil nonsense as infantilistic superstitious animism. Now they themselves are dabbling in and dallying with everything occult.

“Do not call conspiracy everything this people call conspiracy.” Remember Athaliah at the inauguration of the boy king Joash. She cried, Treason! Treason! (2 Chron. 23:13). She had made this motion, but was not seconded, as it was not treason, but reformation and justice. God commands His prophets and His saints not to be swayed by the false policy of crying treason or conspiracy against them. Jeremiah, for example, had preached that the nation must surrender to the inflooding enemy, that doing so they would be spared, while resistance would result in their destruction. But the officers of state despised this as treason and put Jeremiah into a miry dungeon for what they deemed capital crime. Amos, too, was charged with conspiracy by the apostate priesthood (Amos 7:10-13). So Isaiah and his disciples might expect to suffer. All these prophets were branded as conspirators against the state and its cherished, but corrupt foreign policy. For they opposed appeal for foreign aid, advocating instead absolute dependence

upon the Lord. But to that faithless element, in the cases referred to, this was surely treason. When the prophets called upon the theocracy to act theocratically, they were accused of conspiracy (E. J. Young). When the true Church calls upon the churches in the world to stick to their one exclusive calling to conduct only ecclesiastical matters in an ecclesiastical manner, it is branded as obscurantist, obstructionist, and troublemaking.

“Neither fear ye their fear.” Do not fear the terror of this people who think all is lost if they do not have the Assyrians for their allies. There is nothing to fear from those two kings, who are no more than the two butts of smoking firebrands. The kingdom of Judah can not fail, until Shiloh come, until Immanuel be born of a virgin in His own land. Today, so many believe our nation would be helpless without the United Nations connection we have, although there is very little, if any, advantage to show for our alliance. Our nation looks more to such alliances than it does to the Lord, being more like Ahaz than Isaiah. Some in the nation like to frighten themselves, and others, with warnings of plots and conspiracies they are always forecasting. It becomes an amusement, with every occurring evil, to look for evidence of a plot and to cry out, Conspiracy! Not that there is no great deal of treason within the professing church. Just recall the Remonstrants within the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands. But the point is, Do not be afraid: the Lord will preserve His remnant!

We do not need some sort of fetish of neo-science to ward off earthly dangers or to exorcize unearthly demons. For the Lord of hosts himself is your holy fear. Do not fear what these dabblers in devilry fear. Have a reverential fear of Jehovah, in which you sanctify the Lord God in your hearts in faith and love. This means that you regard and treat Him as holy. King Saul, in going to a spiritist, a medium, regarded God as vile, like the whole filthy business of the occult. But He is the Holy One, the God of hosts, of the hosts of the armies of men, of the myriads of angels and of Satanic forces. But if there is no fear of God before men’s eyes, they will tremble continually with inordinate alarm. The revival of witchcraft and Satanism is evidence enough that they who have to do with this dark, offensive slime no longer know the true God, no longer believe in His holiness. Perplexed and confused, they torture themselves with their mind- and soul-destroying iniquities, in which they do not sanctify the Lord in their hearts, but instead, devote themselves to every loathsome abomination. They have, in effect, altered the glory of the incorruptible God into an image of corrupt man, and to images of birds, quadrupeds, and reptiles. They make the living God a dead idol. Doing so, they forsake the only haven of safety and protection. So

they, the fearful and the unbelieving, suffer troubled minds, shattered nerves, chronic phobias, and wretched uneasiness as God's just judgment on their denials and insults to Himself and His holy Being. Hear what He says to the redeemed of the Lord: "I even I, am He that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man who shall be made as grass, and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? and where is the fury of the oppressor?" (Isa. 51:12-13).

Such as go to the occult for their religion, comfort, and guidance, God has given over to a reprobate mind (Rom. 1:28), and it is all a sign that God has forsaken them. Comfort there is not from that source, neither from above nor from beneath (8:21, 22), for they knock at the gates of hell to find a friend and get benevolent advice. The danger of the occult is God's abandonment, to be left to Satan, to be taken captive at his will. Strange, how the perverted mind seeks counsel other than from God, that is, from the Devil, God's rival! As Milton makes that fallen angel say, If I fail with heaven, I will succeed with hell. But a holy fear of God over all, blessed forever, is proof of the grace of God's covenant, and leaves the covenant member in perfect peace with the strength of quietness and confidence.

This holy, gracious fear of the Lord is especially the Old Testament way of expressing the whole of godliness. It does not merely express one Christian virtue; it expresses also worship of God, love for Him, motivation to please Him, avoidance of all evil, and diligently to walk in holiness and righteousness all our

days. So the fear of the Lord is the expression denoting the whole of true religion, the very atmosphere in which a Christian lives and breathes. Where there is religion, but no godly fear of Jehovah, there is no true religion. Godly fear consists in godly living, in knowing, loving, and living God's perfect will. At the very center of it all, godly fear is depending on the precious blood and sacrifice of Christ Jesus as our only ground of confidence.

This one sacrifice was not enough for King Ahaz. A member of the Old Testament church, he apostatized to totally abandon the worship of God. He went off to worship when, where, and how he pleased. Drawn to the latest in cultured, aesthetic religion, he went to Damascus, where he thought he found it in a pagan altar. It was more of his idea of an altar, and he wanted one like it. The old-fashioned Davidic altar seemed abominable to him, and the abominations of the heathen seemed beautiful to him. So he became an independent. But he was not content simply to abandon the religion of Jehovah in favor of his neology. For he set about stamping out the worship of the Lord. He broke up the holy vessels of God's house, extinguished the lamp of God in His temple and shut its doors. How much better to be able to say, "My knee shall bend to God, and God alone; but if my knee never bends to God, you may depend upon it, it will soon be bending when I do not want it to do so — it will tremble before the face of man. If you fear God with a deep and powerful fear, you shall fear nobody else; you should be able to say before a fierce tyrant like Nebuchadnezzar, with the three holy children, 'Be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.' The fear of God is the death of every other fear. Like a mighty lion, it chases all other fears before it." (C. H. Spurgeon).

Book Reviews

COMMENTARY ON REVELATION, by Henry Barclay Swete; Kregel Publications, 1977; 338 pp., \$12.95. (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko)

There are not many good commentaries on the book of Revelation, so this volume is a welcome addition to one's library. The author lived in the 19th Century, served as a pastor in an Anglican church and became professor of pastoral theology at King's College, London in 1882.

There are several valuable features about the book.

For one thing, it has a valuable introduction of 219 pp., in addition to the 338 pp. of the Commentary proper. The Introduction treats of matters such as contents and plan of the book, Christianity in Asia at the time of writing, use of the Old Testament and other literature, Doctrine, history and methods of interpretation, and many other subjects. Another valuable feature, especially for a minister, is that the text contains the entire Greek text of the book along with critical notes. Further, the interpretation is reasonably sober, brief and to the point.

The main criticism of the book is the influence of higher criticism. This is not all-pervasive, but it does require that the commentary be used with care. The author, e.g., believes that Daniel was not the author of the last part of his prophecy; that the narrative of Acts 2 is perhaps unhistorical; that inspiration has some human limitations. The effects of this higher critical approach can be seen, e.g., in the author's interpretation of Rev. 13. The beasts of this chapter are made to refer to the Roman Empire because the wound of the beast (the death of Nero) and the healing of the wound (the story that Nero was not really dead) were ideas influencing Christian thought of that time.

Nevertheless, the book can be of help in understanding Revelation and in giving the student of Revelation new ideas to ponder and study.

ANATOMY OF AN EXPLOSION, by Kurt E. Marquart; Baker Book House, 1977; 176 pp., \$3.95 (paper). (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko)

The Missouri Synod Lutheran Church has been torn by conflict, which conflict is not yet over. This book deals at length with the strife which has gone on in that Church body, and, as the subtitle says, it concentrates on the theological questions. The subtitle reads: "A Theological Analysis of the Missouri Synod Conflict."

It includes a brief history of Lutheranism in this country and investigates the conflict from the broad perspective of Lutheranism throughout the world. In discussing especially the theological issues involved, it takes a close look at how the heretics dealt deviously with the Lutheran Confessions and shows the danger of this. This section of the book is valuable reading for those who must deal with the same problem in

Reformed and Presbyterian circles.

Written from the Lutheran perspective, the book sharply sets forth the Lutheran position, especially overagainst Calvinism, and, more especially, on the question of the sacraments. Its Lutheran bias is unmistakable.

Especially valuable is the lengthy discussion of the attacks on Scripture made by the heretics as they sought to defend and develop the historical-critical view of the higher critics. There is a wealth of material here and many pungent and excellent criticisms of the method, which makes for good reading for all who defend the integrity of Scripture and the truth of its infallible inspiration.

We recommend the book.

PERSON AND WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, by H. C. G. Moule; Kregel Publications, 1977; 252 pp., \$5.95. (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko)

Kregel has printed a number of commentaries by this same author, some of which have been reviewed in these columns. This work on the Holy Spirit includes a number of papers written by the author which are collected for the first time in book form. These studies are more devotional than theological, although, of course, they include many theological insights. Subjects such as the following are included: "The Dual Procession"; "Union With Christ by the Spirit"; "The Holy Spirit as the Interpreter of Scripture"; "The Spirit Convincing of Sin"; "The Spirit Glorifying Christ to the Soul"; and a treatment of the doctrine of the Spirit in the various New Testament writings. While adding little that is new to the truth concerning the Holy Spirit, the book makes interesting reading and is recommended.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Martha Ladies Aid Society of the Hull, Iowa, Protestant Reformed Church hereby expresses its sincere sympathy to Mrs. Tom De Jong and Mrs. Frank Vogel in the loss of their mother — and to Mrs. John Boer and Mrs. John Hoekstra in the loss of their sister, MRS. ALBERT VOGEL, at the age of 88 years.

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." (Psalm 116:15).

Martha Ladies Aid Society
Mrs. Nellie Brummel, Sec'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies' and Men's Societies of the Randolph Protestant Reformed Church expresses its Christian sympathy to their fellow members, Mr. and Mrs. Ted Huizenga and Mrs. Grace Fisher in the death of their brother, MR. JOHN HUIZENGA, who passed away December 8, 1978.

In their bereavement may they find grace to speak the words of I Peter 1:3 — "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

Know the standard and follow it.
Read **The Standard Bearer**

News From Our Churches

Rev. Kortering has declined the call extended to him from our Southeast Protestant Reformed Church.

First Church in Grand Rapids has undertaken a church extension project in Bradenton, Florida. In response to a number of requests that our churches do some work in this area, the First Church consistory has decided to hold preaching services in Bradenton beginning on December 31. Services will be held in the auditorium of the Manatee Hotel at 309 10th Street. A midweek Bible Study class will also be held. These services will be advertised in the local media. Each of our ministers who spend a few weeks in Bradenton will also be expected to do a good deal of work in personal contacts with those who express interest in our churches. This work was not conceived as a "winter church" for those of our people who spend some time in Florida during the winter months, but as a genuine effort in church extension with a view to establishing a congregation in that area. Prof. Robert Decker will be the first of our ministers to preach in Bradenton. Prof. Decker expects to labor there for three weeks, leaving the area on January 22. At this writing, the schedule of those who are to follow Prof. Decker is not definite.

The pastor of First Church, Rev. Meindert Joostens, expects to leave for Jamaica on January 17 with Mr. Clare Prince. This will be a short trip of about 10 days. The mission work on the Island of Jamaica continues under the direction of our denominational Mission Committee. Rev. Joostens and Mr. Prince will teach and preach, but also will attempt to assist the struggling churches on the Island with some of the many problems they face.

There seems to be quite a bit of activity in the area of Missions and church extension activity in our churches presently. The bulletin of our church in Pella, Iowa, contained this additional summary: "If the Lord wills, Rev. Marvin Kamps and Mr. Dewey Engelsma will travel to Singapore after the first of the year. They plan to labor there for a period of up to two months. Rev. Mark Hoeksema and Rev. Wayne Bekkering recently spent two weeks in Birmingham, Alabama. A young man from that area is presently attending our seminary. Rev. Bernard Woudenberg continues to travel from his home and church in Kalamazoo to Charlotte, Michigan, to meet and to

study with interested people there. The Mission Committee expected to hold Sunday preaching services in Charlotte beginning on January 7. Rev. Herman Veldman has spent a number of weeks preaching in Skowhegan, Maine. He expected to return there after the holidays. This work is in addition to the labors of our missionary, Rev. Robert Harbach, in British Columbia and to the work of Rev. John Heys in New Zealand.

The Reformed Witness Committee of our church in Redlands, California, recently sent out one of their little papers entitled "God's Desire To Save" to 938 homes in the Redlands area and 146 on their permanent mailing list. The Reformed Witness Committee of our church in Loveland, Colorado, sent out 540 copies of the pamphlet "Discipleship In The Face Of Apostasy." Loveland Men's Society sponsored a program on the mission work of our churches in Singapore on December 5. Rev. James Slopsema, pastor of our church in Edgerton, Minnesota, spoke and showed slides. Rev. Slopsema spent a month in Singapore early in 1978.

There was quite a number of special activities in our churches for the Christmas season. The young people of our churches in the Grand Rapids area gathered on Sunday afternoon, December 24, in the new Faith church auditorium for their Christmas Mass Meeting. Rev. Van Baren was the speaker. The Hudsonville Choral Society presented their Christmas program the same evening. The Hudsonville young people brought carols, bread, and other goodies to some of the shut-ins and elderly of their congregation the week previous. The young people of Redlands also went caroling at the homes of the senior members of the congregation on December 19. After caroling, they held a Christmas party. The Redlands Choral Society also presented a Christmas program after the evening service on December 24. An offering was taken for new Psalters and Bibles for the new church Redlands plans to build. The South Holland Mr. & Mrs. Society went caroling at the South Holland Holland Home on December 7th. The Sr. Mr. & Mrs. Society of First Church in Grand Rapids held their pre-Christmas meeting in the Holland Home in order that the 15 members of the congregation living there might join them in Bible discussion, carol singing and refreshments.

K. G. V.