

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

. . . And so we behold the amazing spectacle, the paradox of paradoxes, that God from heaven is pouring out His wrath upon His people, and that God in the flesh, suspended on the accursed tree of Calvary, receives all the wrath of God in our stead and in our behalf.

God is pouring out His fierce wrath upon God in the flesh!

God is with us in the darkness, Immanuel is descending into lowest hell for us!

It is the mercy of the Lord that we are not consumed in that hour of darkness!

When I Survey . . . (Herman Hoeksema)

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Editor-in-Chief: Prof. Homer C. Hoeksema

Department Editors: Rev. Wayne Bekkering, Rev. Arie den Hartog, Prof. Robert D. Decker, Rev. David J. Engelsma, Rev. Richard Flikkema, Rev. Cornelius Hanko, Prof. Herman Hanko, Rev. John A. Heys, Rev. Kenneth Kooile, Rev. Jay Kortering, Rev. George C. Lubbers, Rev. Rodney Miersma, Rev. Marinus Schipper, Rev. James Stopsema, Rev. Gise J. Van Baren, Rev. Ronald Van Overloop, Rev. Herman Veldman, Mr. Kenneth G. Vink.

Editorial Office: Prof. H.C. Hoeksema
4975 Ivanrest Ave. S.W.
Grandville, Michigan 49418

Church News Editor: Mr. Kenneth G. Vink
1422 Linwood, S.E.
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49507

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Business Office: The Standard Bearer
Mr. H. Vander Wal, Bus. Mgr.
P.O. Box 6064
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506

New Zealand Business Office: The Standard Bearer,
c/o OPC Bookshop,
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Christchurch, New Zealand

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MEDITATION

The Wonder of the Resurrection

Rev. C. Hanko

Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed.

John 20:8.

The Lord is risen!

Wondrous work of God, a recreation which brought life out of death, far more marvelous than the creation of the heavens and the earth.

The Son of GOD came in the likeness of sinful flesh, in the form of a servant, to surrender Himself

throughout all His life to the wrath of God, in order to atone for the sins of His people.

The Son of MAN came as the Shepherd to lay down His life for His sheep, even when this involved separation from God in anguish of hellish torments, crying out in the amazement of His complete

isolation under the righteous judgment of the God of heaven and earth.

Jesus, the Man of Sorrows, willfully submitted to the power of death; first dying our spiritual death during the three hours of darkness on the cross, and then entering into our physical death by surrendering His spirit into His Father's hand and commanding death to take His body as its prey. He took His place among the dead of all ages. He set the stage, so that He could march triumphantly before the eyes of the whole world through death into heavenly life.

As a reward on His accomplished work of the cross God raised Him up in the early hours of the third day. As the mighty Conqueror the Son of God arose from the shades of death and entered into a new, heavenly, spiritual, immortal life in His resurrection body.

He lives. We know He lives, for we have the testimony of God's infallible Word informing us of His resurrection, and we have the seal of the Holy Spirit by faith in our hearts.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, our Lord, Who . . . suffered . . . was crucified, dead and buried, descended into hell. The third day He arose again from the dead. Glorious resurrection!

Total confusion.

When we follow the movements of the followers of Jesus on the morning of the resurrection we are impressed by the total confusion that reigned among them.

A group of women, their arms laden with spices and ointments to perform their last acts of love upon Him to Whom they still clung in faith, come at the break of day to the now vacated sepulchre. They find the stone rolled away, and, looking into the tomb, they see two men clothed in white garments as guardians of the grave, who inform the women that Jesus is not here, for He is risen from the dead.

Mary Magdalene was with the women as they approached the tomb, but, seeing that the stone was rolled away from the grave, she hastily concluded that someone had been here before them and had stolen the body of Jesus and buried it elsewhere. Without investigating any further she only adds to the confusion by returning to the city and informing Peter and John that the body of their Lord had been stolen. Only later would she learn about the resurrection when she met Jesus in person at the tomb.

Entirely misinformed, John and Peter rush to the grave to ascertain what might have happened to the earthly remains of Him Whom they loved. In their excitement they do not stay together, but each hastens as fast as he can, so that John is the first one to arrive at the tomb. John sees the stone rolled

away, but does not enter in as yet. Looking in, John notices the linen clothes in which the Lord's body had been wrapped. Impetuous Peter arrives just a bit later, ignores his fellow disciple who is standing looking into the grave and rushes past him to investigate for himself what has happened.

God methodically works out His plan and purpose even through our disorder and confusion. He was preparing His own eye witnesses to learn about the wonder of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. God directed each one in his or her own time and manner to come to the tomb to behold that which eye has never seen, human ear has never heard, and far exceeds our fondest imagination. One thing stands out very clearly, and that is that none of the early visitors to Jesus' grave expected to find a risen Savior. God leads each one step by step, preparing each of them for the moment when Jesus would appear to them personally and their faith could embrace a living, risen Savior and Lord.

Holy wonder.

John tells us in his own unique way how he learned about the resurrection. All the emphasis falls on what John *saw*. Three times he uses that word in this connection, yet each time with a different connotation, which is lost in our translation. Let us try to picture before our minds the entire scene as John describes it. After standing at the opening of the tomb and *perceiving* that the grave clothes are still lying in the very place where the body of Jesus had lain, John follows Peter into the sepulchre. Together they stand staring at the grave clothes in deep study. It was obvious to both of the disciples that Jesus' body had been embalmed in the usual manner, just as Lazarus' body had been prepared for burial. Strips of linen cloth with spices and ointments had been wrapped about the torso and about each limb separately. His head had also been wrapped in a special napkin, or covering. Peter stands gazing at the linen clothes, probably rubbing his chin and beard in rapt amazement. Along with John he notices that the linen clothes lie in the same position as when the body of Jesus was wrapped in them, but now the body is no longer there. Even the head piece lies separately, exactly as it had been wrapped about the head of the Lord. And then, as John tells us, the light dawned. John saw, that is, he knew. And he believed.

Marvellous revelation.

To John it was perfectly evident that Jesus could not have risen in His earthly body and returned to this life, as was the case with Lazarus. When Lazarus was raised he came forth still wearing the grave clothing. Jesus left the grave clothes behind. Moreover, it was also evident that no one could have desecrated the grave by carrying off the body of the Lord. How could anyone take the body and leave the

grave clothing undisturbed? There was but one explanation, and that was that God had performed the greatest resurrection wonder here that this world can ever know. Like a tulip bulb growing out into a plant and flower, or like a moth coming forth out of its cocoon and leaving the vacated shell behind as evidence of its departure, so the Lord came forth out of His grave clothing in a new, heavenly, spiritual body. He no longer needed earthly coverings. Nor would these coverings fit that heavenly body. He entered the tomb in an earthly body, He came forth from the tomb, as it were, on the other side, the heavenly side, with a resurrection body fit for heavenly perfection and glory. No human eye could see Him in this new body. He could enter the room unseen, and He could make His presence known by taking on an appearance. He would fade away, as it were, and no one saw Him go. The only time His disciples perceived His going was when He remained visible to them as He ascended to heaven and entered the cloud of glory.

We cannot help but ask, why were the disciples so slow in understanding the resurrection of their Lord? We must bear in mind two things. First, the disciples were of the earth earthy, so that they could not understand the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven except these mysteries were revealed to them and they could perceive them by faith. Secondly, the disciples were still in the dispensation of shadows, lacking the full revelation of salvation as we have it today. They had to be taught by signs and wonders that accompanied the preaching of the Word. And therefore God in infinite mercy and divine understanding of our human frailties led them step by step into the unfolding of the glorious wonder of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Not as if the full light of this wonder flooded their souls at once. John and Peter still needed a personal appearance of the Lord to instruct them more fully in the marvellous victory over death and the grave. Jesus had to assure them that He was not a spirit, but had a real body, even though now this body was heavenly and immortal. He also had to convince them that it was the same body, as He demonstrated with the marks of the nail holes in His hands and feet. Repeatedly Jesus appeared in various forms to unfold the mystery of the new life of the risen Lord. It was weeks later that John was still wondering about this mystery, for He knew that it was Jesus that appeared to them, yet as risen Lord they had difficulty knowing Him. Therefore John tells us, "And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord." John 21:12. It took the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost to make them fully understand.

Wonder of wonders.

Never before had anyone risen from the dead in a new, heavenly body. Enoch and Elijah had gone into heaven without passing through the anguish of death. Others had been raised from the dead to return to this life, only to be faced with that last enemy for a second time. All of these served to foreshadow the resurrection of our Lord. But the Lord Himself passed through death into everlasting life. Christ's body was sown in corruption and was raised in incorruption; it was sown in dishonor and was raised in glory; it was sown in weakness and was raised in power; it was sown a natural body and was raised a spiritual body.

The mighty Conqueror entered into the stronghold of Satan and took Satan and his whole host captive. He marched triumphantly through our physical death and the grave, arose on the third day, paused on His way for forty days, just long enough to show us the wonder of His triumph over death, and then ascended before the eyes of His disciples into the cloud of glory, where He was greeted by millions of angels who accompanied Him as the Victor to the throne of the Ancient of Days, the Eternal God, where He was given all power in heaven and on earth with a Name above all names. Daniel 7:13,14.

We now see much more than John saw in the vacated tomb, and we know far more than he knew when he saw and believed. For with an eye of faith we see Jesus crowned with glory and honor at the right hand of God in the highest heavens. Heb. 2:9.

How can the human tongue ever fully declare all that this victory over death means to us? We have a Highpriest in the heavens, Jesus Christ, the Righteous, Who intercedes for us day and night. The Father hears Him and bestows on Him every spiritual blessing, which our Lord, in turn, bestows upon us according to all our needs.

We are born again as new creatures in Christ by "a supernatural work, most powerful, and at the same time most delightful, astonishing, mysterious, and ineffable; not inferior in efficacy to creation, or the resurrection from the dead." Canons III, IV, 12. With the apostle Paul we confess, I live, yet no more I, Christ lives in me. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

Even as Christ is risen as the Firstfruits from the dead, so also we will be raised in His likeness when He returns with the clouds to take us to Himself. "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." I Cor. 15:51,52.

"Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory in our Lord Jesus Christ!"

EDITORIAL

As to Changes in Student Aid

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

The recent report (Feb. 15 issue) of Classis East made mention of two overtures concerning seminary student aid which Classis had before it. The overtures themselves are not included in the report. However, the report does contain a summary of the overtures and of the action of Classis, as follows:

Classis also considered two overtures re seminary student aid. The first was submitted by LaVerne Casemier via Holland's Consistory. Mr. Casemier's proposal is to abolish the synodical student aid committee and that these funds be distributed instead by a classical committee. The motivation for his overture was the increasing practice (because of the limited funds available to students from synodical committee) of individual congregations establishing their own student aid funds, a practice which Mr. Casemier believes to be contrary to the presbyterian form of church government. Mr. Casemier's overture was sent to synod with the disapproval of classis. The grounds cited were these (summarized): 1) it would be difficult to classify students from Classis West since all students eventually hold membership in the churches of Classis East, 2) the overture does not solve the problem of supporting married students, 3) implementation procedures for the establishment of classical funds does not exist, since all funds are synodical. Holland Consistory, as a result of the overture of Mr. Casemier, and through its responses to him, also submitted an overture to synod re student aid. The concern of the Holland overture is for the increased support of married seminary students. Holland requests the revision of Article 5 of the Constitution of the Student Aid Committee to allow for the increased financial support of married students. Holland's overture was forwarded to synod without prejudice.

Our Present Situation

In order to discuss either of these overtures or the classical decisions about them, it is necessary to have in mind the situation to which they are addressed.

In the first place, there is Article 19 of our Church Order: "The churches shall exert themselves, as far as necessary, that there may be students supported by them to be trained for the ministry of the Word." We need not at this time go into the history and the details of the article. We merely point out: 1) That the article is very broad, leaving the details of execution to the churches. 2) That in our churches at present this has been interpreted to mean that the churches in common, formerly through the General Classis and now through Synod and a synodically appointed committee, take care of the support of the students mentioned in this article.

In the second place, the Student Aid Committee of Synod functions according to a synodically adopted constitution. For the purposes of our present discussion we may call attention to the following aspects of its regulations: 1) It is possible for students for the ministry in our churches to receive support through all the years of their schooling, both pre-seminary and seminary. In the near future, when the new 4-year seminary program goes into effect, this will mean a total of 8 years. 2) One of the duties of the Committee is to determine and to recommend to Synod annually the maximum allowable aid for a student. 3) Theoretically, all students, both pre-seminary and seminary, could obtain this maximum amount. But there are certain limitations: a) Pre-seminary students must maintain an average grade of B (3.0) to be eligible for aid. b) Married pre-seminary students are not eligible for aid. c) Married seminary students are eligible for aid, but to an amount not greater than the maximum allowable for single students. Thus, for example, if the Committee and Synod determine in a given year that the maximum allowable aid is \$2000.00, any married student could obtain that amount; but the fact that he is married does not entitle him to more. Now if we use this

figure of \$2000 per year of aid, and add to this the free tuition for both pre-seminary and seminary, this will total some \$22,000 to \$23,000 per student for the present 7-year program of pre-seminary and seminary training.

In the third place, to complete the picture of the present situation which forms the background of these overtures, we mention the fact that more than one congregation has given supplemental aid to some or all of the students. This is not done through the Student Aid Committee, but it is done independently by the local consistories. In some instances such supplemental aid has been given only to the students belonging to the congregation granting such aid; in other instances there has been no such limitation. I believe it is accurate to say, too, that at least in some instances this aid was given in the belief that especially the *married* students needed more help. Evidently the Consistory of Holland, according to its overture, feels that married students should receive more aid.

Such is the background of the overtures which were before Classis East.

The Cogency of Classis' Grounds

It is, of course, impossible on the ground of the classical report to say anything about either the Holland overture or about the classical action — or inaction — on that overture. Holland wants to provide for increased aid for married students. But its reasons are not mentioned in the report. And Classis East simply sent the overture to Synod “without prejudice,” a technical expression which means, I take it, without either approval or disapproval. If this also means that Classis was neither for nor against the overture, then this seems to me to be a rather strange stance. One would think that, in view of the fact that there are evidently those who favor increased aid for married students and in view of the fact that this issue is perennially discussed at synod when the Student Aid Committee's report is considered, the Classis would have grasped the opportunity to express itself. Then Synod would at least have a way of knowing the desire of the churches in Classis East.

However, on the Casemier overture the Classis expressed its disapproval and adduced three grounds, summarized in the report. To the cogency of these grounds I wish to address myself. For whatever else one may think of the overture, in my opinion the grounds adduced by Classis are very, very weak.

The first is that “it would be difficult to classify students from Classis West since all students eventually hold membership in the churches of Classis East.” Now, in the first place, this ground is not factually correct. I can name more than one student from Classis West who never did hold membership in

a church of Classis East while he was a student. I can name others who retained their membership in a church of Classis West until they married and temporarily settled in Grand Rapids. Secondly, even if this ground were factually correct, it would not be a cogent ground. A very simple standard could be applied: what was the classis of your origin at the time you became a student at our school? Thirdly, this is the method in operation in the Christian Reformed denomination. Each classis has its own machinery for student support, and each classis issues, or can issue, its own call for pre-seminary and seminary students who need and desire support. And from time to time one may read various announcements of such calls for students in *The Banner*. Ground 1, therefore, falls away.

The second ground adduced by Classis is: “the overture does not solve the problem of supporting married students.” What about this?

In the first place, this ground assumes that there is such a problem. Perhaps there is, in the minds of some; perhaps there is not, in the minds of others. In the second place, it seems to me that the real problem lies in another area, namely, that there is difference of opinion as to the extent to which married students should be supported. There are those who are not satisfied with the present synodical regulations. Hence, they go their own way as consistories and supply additional support to some or all students on their own initiative. Now let it be clearly understood: I am not questioning their motive. They love our students and evidently want to help them and feel that they need help. This is good; I am glad about it. I am questioning the *method*. It is chaotic, leads to duplication of effort, could lead to inequity, and smacks of independentism. For one thing, I believe that if the churches agree (as they have) to take care of student aid *together*, then we should do it *together*, i.e., as churches-in-common, not individually. This is in harmony with our presbyterian form of church government. For another, unless consistories are simply going to hand out additional support at random and without regard to the question of actual need, every consistory that engages in this practice has to make its own inquiry, have its own student aid committee, and set its own standards. For another, since one consistory knows not what another is doing, this could lead to inequity as to the amounts of aid which various students receive. Perhaps one student gets additional aid from his home consistory plus another consistory, while another student does not.

And while it may be true that the overture does not as such solve the problem, it is also true that the overture could make it possible to solve the problem more readily.

How?

In the first place, it should be kept in mind that it is always sound church polity not to relegate to the broader level what can be accomplished just as well, and perhaps better, at a less broad level. There are indeed some things which have to be taken care of at the broadest level, synod; they are things which belong to and can be taken care of properly only by all the churches in common. An example is our Theological School. There are other things which can and should properly be taken care of by the least broad assembly, the local consistory. And there are still other things which, while they cannot very well be taken care of by every local consistory individually, can efficiently and properly be taken care of by the broader assembly, the classis. And it is sound practice not to work at any broader level than is necessary.

There is good reason for this, also from a practical point of view. That reason is that the broader the level, the more distant are the labors from the local congregations and the membership. Synod — and perhaps this is true of synod's committees even more — is in its very nature far distant from the local consistories and congregations. The latter do not participate directly in synodical affairs, but only indirectly and through classis. As it is now, the Student Aid Committee is in the nature of the case from the Grand Rapids area. Once a year they must announce a meeting so that possible applicants for aid may appear at the meeting. The committee adopts its recommendations to Synod, in accordance with its constitution; Synod adopts a budget. And then aid is dispensed by the synodical treasurer in pursuance of synod's decisions. No one out there in the churches has anything directly to do with it. At present the current revised edition of the committee's constitution is not even in our Church Order. Few, therefore, even can know and realize that the committee acts strictly in accord with its constitution and is not so stingy as some might think. Everything is so distant.

Perhaps someone may ask: but why do we have this setup, and how did we ever get it? How did this matter become synodical?

The answer lies in history.

When our denomination changed from having one general classis to having two classes and a general synod, all the classical funds became synodical funds, whether they were in their nature synodical or not. The reason for this lay in the fact of the imbalance at that time between Classis East and Classis West, both numerically and as far as financial power was concerned. Classis East was numerically about twice as large as Classis West; due to variations in sizes of congregations, Classis East, generally speaking, also

had greater financial power. Hence, it was not feasible, for example, for each classis to have its own, classically operated and supported classical expense fund. Instead, these funds were maintained on a denominational level by synodical assessments, rather than by classical assessments and at a classical level. The same is true of the former E.B.P. Fund, which became the Student Aid Fund. Classis West would have found it difficult to maintain and administer its own Student Fund. Yet it had been the practice in the Christian Reformed denomination, from which we inherited our Church Order and many of our practices, to have Classical Student Funds and committees, not one, large synodical fund and committee.

Today, however, our two classes are much more nearly equal in numbers and financial power. Perhaps we ought to consider more changes than merely in student aid. Would it be possible, perhaps, also for each classis to have its own Classical Home Missions Committee, rather than the present synodical committee? This would also solve the problem of trying to have a synodical committee with representation from both classes in its membership.

However, this may be, I can see no practical reason why each classis could not have its own Student Aid Fund and its own Student Aid Committee, operating under its own Student Aid Constitution. The advantages of this would be several, it seems to me. In the first place, Synod would be rid of the problem and the work permanently. Synod has enough to do without doing work which could just as well be done by others. In the second place, each classis could then do as it seems good in its own eyes. If it wants to give more support or even full support to married students, it can do so. In the third place, this work will be brought much closer to the local consistories and churches. This is very important in my opinion. All consistories will then have a direct part and a direct voice in student aid and its regulations, because all consistories are represented at the classical level. This is not true at present. A consistory can have a voice at synod only by way of protest or overture. In the fourth place, in each classis there can be annually a call for students to be supported by that classis. In that way the churches can more directly and more diligently fulfill the mandate of Article 19: "The churches shall exert themselves, as far as necessary, that there may be students supported by them. . . ." Finally, if consistories have a more direct voice in the matter, there will no longer be any need for the present scatter-shot activity in the area of student aid.

The third ground adduced by Classis East is, of course, very weak: "implementation procedures for the establishment of classical funds does (sic) not exist, since all funds are synodical." I would say: let such implementation procedures be initiated if synod

should approve the overture which classis disapproved. This is very simple. What is needed is a constitution, a committee, a treasurer, and assessments and funds to replace the present machinery. Surely, this is not difficult. It is doubtful whether classes would even have to be incorporated for this purpose. If they do, I understand Classis West is

already incorporated. Moreover, at least in Classis East, which has frequently found it difficult to stay occupied until dinner time, this would have the added advantage of giving the classis something constructive and worthwhile to do.

Think about it.

MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE

Letter to Timothy

April 1, 1980

Dear Timothy,

We were discussing together the subject of the conscience and its importance for the mental and spiritual well-being of the child of God. We talked especially about two or three points: all men in the world have a conscience which is the voice of God in their consciousness by which they know the difference between right and wrong; this voice of God always comes in connection with God's objective speech whether in creation or in the Scriptures; and the closer one stands to the bright light of revelation, the sharper and more definite is also his conscience, but the greater his punishment when he does not do the will of God.

There are other aspects of this question which we must still discuss.

The first is that the conscience is *not* the abstract voice of God in the consciousness of man. The conscience is not, so to speak, a kind of communication of the moral law of God. We have the moral law of God revealed to us. The wicked, through the things which are made, know that God is God and that, because He is God, He alone must be served. But that moral law of God also comes revealed to us in the Scriptures. There it is spelled out in all its details in clear and unmistakable language. Any one who knows the Scriptures knows also how God determines right and wrong in the whole of man's ethical conduct. The conscience is not some additional law or some further definition or explication of the law. It is not a body of codes which somehow stand next to the law of God revealed in His Word.

The conscience always speaks in connection with man's own conduct. This is an important point and it is difficult to emphasize this sharply enough. Man walks his pathway here in the world. Every part of his life has ethical implications. He is always called to love the Lord his God with all his heart and mind and soul and strength. Every thought, every desire, every inclination of his heart, as well as all his external conduct in word and deed must be in conformity to the law of God. No part of man's life escapes from the demands of God to love Him Who is God alone. But because every single part of man's life has ethical implications and a moral dimension, so also God passes judgment upon every single deed which man does, whether that be hidden inside him or apparent to those with whom he comes into contact. Nothing is hidden from God. All is naked and open before the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do. Now, the conscience is exactly God's judgment which comes every moment of a man's life concerning the rightness or wrongness of what he has done. Every step of the way, with every deed which man performs, God comes in judgment upon him. God says, every moment, this deed is right and good in my sight; or, this deed is wrong and sinful before Me.

It has been said that conscience is the voice of God which always comes *after* the act. That is, the voice of God comes only after a man does something. From the moral law of God man knows what he ought to do and what he ought not to do. The conscience does not speak until after the deed is performed. Then, the deed having been done, God passes sentence upon it and either approves or disapproves of it. In a certain sense this is true. It is implied in all that I have said

above. But we must remember that the deed can begin and surely always does begin with the thought and the desire. And already upon that thought and that desire the Lord passes His judgment. If the thought, e.g., to steal some money enters our minds, the Lord does not wait with passing His judgment upon us until we actually reach out our hand and take money that does not belong to us. The Lord passes His sentence upon the thought, the desire, the covetousness which lies behind the actual deed. And even if the deed itself is never performed, God's judgment is there in our consciousness.

So, the conscience is the voice of God which comes to us in every moment of our lives speaking of God's sentence upon what we have done. And because God's voice is not just a bare sentence of whether a particular deed is right or wrong, God's judgment is always accompanied by His approval or His disapproval. If we do right, then God's approval and blessing rest upon us. We have the testimony of our conscience that God is well-pleased with us and that His favor and love rest upon us. If we do wrong, we have the testimony of our conscience that God condemns our actions and that He is angry with us and that His wrath is upon us.

This is the reason why Solomon could write, in Proverbs 3:33: "The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked: but he blesseth the habitation of the just." Notice: the curse of the Lord is not only *upon* the wicked; it is in their house. The curse of the Lord is wherever the wicked go — even in the secret chambers of their house where no man may ever come. The wicked eat that curse and drink that curse. It dogs their footsteps and follows them so that they can never escape from it. It is there continuously as the abiding and unrelenting testimony of God that they are doing wickedly. But, in an analogous way, the blessing of the Lord is upon the habitation of the just. That blessing is upon them always for they have the testimony of God, no matter what their pathway in life may be, that God loves them and cares for them; that the approval of God rests upon them and that God works all things for their good.

The conclusion of this point is, therefore, that every man knows whether what he does is good or bad. There are no exceptions to this. No man sins in ignorance or unaware of the fact that what he does is wrong. Always every man knows whether what he does meets with God's approval or disapproval. And, because he knows this, every man knows too either God's wrath or God's love. There is no neutral ground where a man hangs suspended between the two or without the consciousness of either. A man may deny that and he may protest that, even though he sins, he has no consciousness of God's wrath; but this is impossible. After all, God is God and He maintains

His righteousness — even in the consciousness of the sinner or the saint. The judgment day is not, after all, the first time the wicked hear what the sentence of God is. They know that every step of the way. When they die and open their eyes in hell, they are not surprised to be there because they always thought they would probably go to heaven. God will never let this happen. God will not approve of the sinner or leave him in suspense all the days of his life and then tell him finally at death or at the judgment what shall be his final destination. Always God is a judging God. And always man knows what God's verdict is upon what he has done.

But now there is another aspect to this question. The apostle Paul in his letter to Timothy speaks of consciences which are seared with a hot iron. The passage reads: "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron." I Timothy 4:1, 2. What does the apostle mean by that expression?

It is possible for man to still the voice of his conscience so that his conscience no longer speaks to him. That, apparently, is the idea here. A man reaches a certain point in his life when the voice of his conscience is stilled and the testimony of the wrong he has done is gone. Apparently, this is exactly what is happening in our modern world. Some time ago *Time* magazine had a rather lengthy article about crime in our big cities. I do not remember the details of the article any more, but I do recall that *Time* made a considerable point of it that many criminals, some very young, in their early teens in fact, were apprehended after performing senseless and incredibly brutal crimes of violence against helpless people. When these very young criminals were caught by the police and brought before the courts, police, judges, and criminologists were surprised by the fact that these people showed not the slightest remorse, not the faintest detectable emotion over their crime, not the least bit of regret. In fact, so *Time* said, they did not even seem to have any sense of right or wrong left. They did not appear to be aware of the fact that they had done something wrong. They were utterly unmoved by it all and showed no conscience whatsoever.

The authorities may have been surprised by this, but the fact remains that this is exactly what happens. A person, after committing a particular sin often enough, can succeed in stilling the voice of his conscience so that it no longer condemns him at all. He is in a certain sense of the word, amoral. He does not respond any more, not even with regret or remorse, over what he has done.

I am not sure what is happening in our modern cities which can bring about a state of mind like this in a very young person of fourteen or fifteen. I am not sure if we can even imagine a situation where a very young person is unmoved by the feeble cries of an old man who has been beaten senseless (by chains and belts) for 15c. But it is a terrible thing nonetheless. And this very thing is becoming increasingly widespread in our civilization. The government itself is to blame for a large measure of this. It stands to reason that when government itself approves or even encourages abortion, e.g., that those who seek such abortions will not have the struggle with their conscience that they would have if their deed were illegal according to the laws of the land. But however that may be, the fact remains that our present culture is bringing up a generation which has no conscience left any more with respect to terrible sins. It is frightening to contemplate what will happen when these conscienceless people are in positions of authority and rule this country. That will indeed be a bad time for the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ. Of that we may be sure.

But the fact remains that this searing of the

conscience also can, and often does, take place within the Church. I am told by our teachers that they have instances of this all the time. A certain child is brought into the office of the principal or before the teacher because he has lied or cheated in a test. The evidence against him is unassailable and there simply is no question that he is guilty of this. Nevertheless, when confronted with his sin, he will openly lie, deny he ever did it, and in the process of lying, show not the faintest evidence of regret or remorse — much less sorrow for his sin. I have seen this in my own children. They will not only lie, but persist in the lie, and all appeals to Scripture, to God's all-seeing eye and to the punishment which will come upon them from God, leaves them utterly unmoved. This is a terrifying thing.

A seared conscience is the most terrible thing that can happen to a man. We must discuss this a bit more and especially ask the question: How does this happen? But we shall have to wait with this till our next letter.

Fraternally in Christ,
H. Hanko

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

A Pillar of Witness

Rev. John A. Heys

An infuriated Laban pursued after Jacob when he learned that Jacob had fled with his wives, children, and cattle. Although when he caught up with Jacob he put on a front of loving his daughters and grandchildren so much that it pained him to have them leave without as much as saying good-by to him, the statement above is true. He was far more infuriated than hurt because of deep love. He was angry and not lonesome. And although we will not say that he did not have reason to be angry with Jacob, he acted more hurt about being separated from his children and grandchildren than he actually felt.

These were his daughters, even though now they were Jacob's wives. Nothing can ever change that.

Likewise, these were his grandchildren, and nothing is going to change that. Jacob's departure was one of stealth. Genesis 31:20 says that he "stole away unawares." And to take Laban's daughters and his grandchildren away in that manner is not above criticism, even though God told him to go back home. God did not, however, tell him to do it that way. The statement follows the revelation that Laban had gone to shear sheep some distance from the home. The implication is plain that Jacob knew this and took advantage of this departure of Laban to get away without bidding him farewell, and without letting his family do the same thing. Granted that Laban did not love his children, and that the love of the daughters had waxed cold toward their father,

there is that command of God – even though it was not yet written in stone in the Ten Commandments – that children should honour their father and mother. And Jacob did not give them the opportunity to do so. Laban's daughters erred, and Jacob helped them to do so, before they would drop out of Laban's life forever.

Then, too, Jacob had worked deceitfully in the service of Laban. He did faithfully the work assigned to him. But his attempted trickery with the pillared rods was not a work of honesty. Even though the pillared rods had nothing to do with the cattle bringing forth the kind of sheep that Jacob had with Laban decided would be his hire, his attempt to gain Laban's sheep and cattle that way was far from above reproach. The fury of Laban is then to be understood. Jacob's trick did not work to cause the sheep to bring forth the specified kind of offspring, but it did work to create bitterness between Laban and Jacob.

We are, however, to doubt very seriously Laban's claim that he would have prepared a farewell feast. There is nothing recorded concerning him in the whole account in Scripture that would indicate such action as forthcoming from Laban. Certainly the misrepresentation that Laban makes in verse 43 is against such an idea. He is correct when he states that these are his daughters, but not in the sense in which he presents it. He begat them, but they are not his possession. He sold them to Jacob. These are his children, if you speak of grandchildren, but they are not that which he has a right to insist must remain in Haran. And he is all wrong when he says that these are his cattle. These were Jacob's hire. He cannot even say that they ever were his cattle, for in his own tricky way Jacob's hire depended on his sheep bearing young. And if Jacob worked for a year and the sheep were sterile or their young were born dead, Jacob would have been out of all that work with no pay. But the moment the sheep was born of the kind agreed upon by both of them, it was Jacob's and at no time Laban's.

Jacob expressed his fear. And he not only had reason to fear such a man as Laban, but he was helpless with his family and servants over against the brethren of Laban, the other Syrians which he took along. And that in itself reveals that Laban was furious and meant to capture them and bring them back to Haran. Only the grace of God that protected Jacob and warned Laban in a dream kept him from violence and capture of Jacob and his family.

And after Laban accused him of stealing his gods, Jacob became furious, and no doubt would have liked to lay his hands on this man who had treated him so shamefully, though he was a close relative, not only as an uncle, but also as his father-in-law. We must see this tense, hate-filled scene to appreciate that

pillar of witness which Laban and Jacob erect. That pillar is often misrepresented because these facts are not taken into consideration.

Before we take further note of this pillar, however, let it be pointed out that the approach of Jacob to the whole situation is quite different from Laban's. He was wroth, we read in verse 36. But having rehearsed all the evil that Laban did to him Jacob confessed that it was God who protected him over against Laban and his evil deeds. And he challenges Laban to mention one sin which he committed so that these men who came with Laban may judge whether Jacob is guilty of it. And then he warns Laban that God saw his affliction in Laban's house and was witness to all the ill treatment afforded him. Indeed Laban also spoke of God, but not in faith, and as though God was on his side. He boasted in verse 29 of having Jacob in his power – which also indicates that he wanted to capture him and bring him back, and that Jacob had reason to be filled with fear at the sight of Laban and his brethren. But he is forced to speak of God, and reveals that God told him not to speak good or bad to Jacob. Jacob's confidence is in God. Laban is forced to walk in God's way with Jacob. And Laban has an idol which he loves so much that he searched all of Jacob's tents and goods to have it restored to him.

On that background, of Jacob putting his trust in God and Laban being afraid to touch Jacob because God is with him as his protection, they make a covenant, and build a pillar of witness to that covenant. The idea of the covenant comes from this idol-worshipping Laban who cannot do what he intended to do and still wanted to do, but was warned against doing it by the word of God.

If we will take careful note of Laban's speech we will find that by this pillar he did not have in mind what is usually ascribed to this pile of stones. It will become plain that he did not have kind and pleasant thoughts toward Jacob. Mizpah to many today represents God's gracious watching over His people while of necessity they are absent one from the other, due to work or travel or any other circumstance that makes for separation between those who love each other. And in the church, believers will say Mizpah to each other when they separate. Laban did not mean that at all. He is not here wishing Jacob God's blessing. He is not expressing his desire to see the mercy of God rest upon Jacob. He is not wishing him well. The watch of God over Jacob of which he speaks is not one of loving care. He is not declaring his deep concern for Jacob to be kept in safety and in loving protection from harm and evil.

Note verses 44-53: "Now therefore come thou, let us make a covenant, I and thou; and let it be for a witness between me and thee. . . . And Laban said,

This heap is a witness between me and thee this day. Therefore was the name of it Galeed and Mizpah: for he said, The Lord watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another. If thou shalt afflict my daughters, or if thou shalt take other wives beside my daughters, no man is with us; see God is witness betwixt me and thee. And Laban said to Jacob, Behold this heap, and behold this pillar, which I have cast betwixt me and thee; This heap be witness, and this pillar be witness that I will not pass over this heap to thee, and that thou shalt not pass over this heap and this pillar unto me, for harm. The God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge betwix us. And Jacob sware by the fear of his father Isaac."

Plainly Laban's meaning is, "Jacob, don't you dare hurt my daughters, either physically or psychically. Bring no injury upon their bodies, and torment not their souls by taking other wives besides them. And remember, Jacob, that God will judge you and sees all your actions. I cannot watch you from the land of Haran to which I return. And I do not trust you, Jacob, so I demand of you that you promise not to hurt my daughters, or to come back this way to bring harm to me. This pillar, this heap of stones will be witness, and will remind you that God sees you while I cannot. He will judge you in my absence. Do not cross this line with harm to me in mind. And I will not cross it to harm you. But God is on both sides, and He will punish you for your evil."

It was not then a token of deep love, and a pillar to witness such love since now they part from one another and will not see each other's faces again. It was not meant to be a call for God's mercy and protecting care. It was a warning that God would watch his deeds. The very wording is significant. Laban does not say, "The Lord watch over us that no harm befall either one of us and that we may meet again." Instead it is a warning that God will watch Jacob's actions to see that he does no more of his tricks, and does not return to take more of Laban's goods from him. Mizpah is not the same as Ebenezer.

Samuel took a stone and set it between this same place called Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." I Samuel 7:12. This is quite a different situation and an entirely different type of speech. God had thundered that day upon the Philistines and discomfited them, so that the Israelites smote them and had the victory. Here we have a beautiful picture and beautiful speech of faith. Here is praise to God and thanks for all that which He did in His watchful care over His people, with hope of that same protection for the future. Ebenezer speaks of joy and hope. Mizpah speaks of suspicion and fear. The one is a place of hope. The other is a place of distrust.

That does not mean that we may not use Laban's speech, and as we part from one another to say, "The Lord watch between us, when we are absent one from another." It all depends on what we mean by watch, when we declare our desire to have Him watch between us. We do better to express our desire that God watch over us and not between us. Laban's between has an unpleasant sound to it, and therefore Mizpah gives off a bad taste. And truly to wish one another God's blessing by such an expressed desire that He watch over us while we are absent one from the other is far to be preferred to, "Take it Easy." Or, "Be good," "Be seeing you," or the like. Such speech is wholly without faith. Why not reveal your faith in God? Believers should wish each other God's blessing. Paul speaks of greeting one another with an holy kiss. I Corinthians 16:20, and again in II Corinthians 13:12. He does the same thing to the Church at Thessalonica in his first epistle, chapter 5:26. Certainly we ought not to part with suspicions, demanding of each other oaths and covenants that we will not injure and seek harm to loved ones. Instead of asking God to witness between us, let us pray Him to watch over us in tender mercy as those for whom the blood of Christ was shed to cover our sins and to assure us that all will work together for our good for His sake.

NOTICE OF LECTURES!!!

The public is invited to attend the following Lectures to be given, the Lord willing, at the Hull Community Building in Hull, Iowa.

On Friday, April 18, 1980, Rev. David Engelsma, Pastor of the South Holland (IL) Protestant Reformed Church will deliver a message entitled — *REPROBATION — IS IT REFORMED?*

The following week, on Friday, April 25, Rev. Ronald Cammenga, Pastor of the Hull Protestant Reformed Church speaks on the subject — *THE FOOLISHNESS OF PREACHING*.

Both lectures start at 7:30 P.M. Plan now to attend with your family and friends.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

The Last Time: How Are We Living?

Rev. Richard Flikkema

The last time: how are we living? Are we living in these last times as humble children of God, who ascribe all the glory, might, and honor to God? Or are we living as proud boastful people, who ascribe all the glory, might, and honor to ourselves? If the former is true, then we are living in these last times as we should. But if the latter is true, then we had better give heed to the vivid warning of Scripture as that is found in Daniel chapter 4.

We read in that chapter, "I Nebuchadnezzar was at rest in mine house, and flourishing in my palace: I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts upon my bed, and the visions of my head troubled me." "I saw a dream." Another dream did Nebuchadnezzar see. That is, for the second time in his life Nebuchadnezzar had received a dream sent to him by God. God sent that dream to him, when, to use Nebuchadnezzar's own words, "I was at rest in my house and flourishing in my palace." What those words of Nebuchadnezzar mean is that there came a time in his life, undoubtedly somewhere towards the end of it, when all his wars and when all his fightings and when all his conquests had come to an end. There were no more peoples to fight or nations to conquer. He had conquered them all. And now Nebuchadnezzar was at rest and flourishing. And that word "rest" simply means that he was at ease. There came a time in the life of King Nebuchadnezzar when he thought that he had absolutely nothing to worry about. He had done it all. He had accomplished everything that he had set out to accomplish. And now he was, so to speak, taking it easy and basking in the luxury of all that he had done.

But how wrong he was! He thought that he had nothing to worry about. But then God came. God spoke to him in a dream, and Nebuchadnezzar was "troubled." Once again, as he had done before, he called all his wisemen before him. He recounted his dream to them; but no interpretation could his wisemen give him. And then Nebuchadnezzar called Daniel. Oh, yes, when it became apparent that his heathen, godless wisemen could not interpret the dream, then, to use the words of this chapter, "at the last" Nebuchadnezzar called Daniel. Daniel was a last resort. If his own wisemen could not satisfy Nebuchadnezzar, then he would call on Daniel. Nebuchadnezzar reminds one of King Ahab who would not seek counsel from a prophet of God until King Jehoshaphat demanded it of him. And the reason King Ahab would not seek counsel from a prophet of God was that, in Ahab's words, "he never prophesied good unto me, but always evil." So also was that the case here. Nebuchadnezzar waited until the very last to call Daniel, exactly because he knew from past experience that Daniel never prophesied good unto him, but always evil. And indeed he did!

To Daniel Nebuchadnezzar recounted his dream, a dream which had to do with a tree — a great tree, a strong tree, a tree the height whereof reached to heaven; a tree the sight thereof to the end of the earth; a tree whose leaves were beautiful and the fruit thereof abundant. The fowls of the heaven gathered in its branches. The beasts of the field received shade from its boughs. And all together received food therefrom. That tremendous tree Nebuchadnezzar saw. And then, having seen that tremendous tree,

Nebuchadnezzar saw and heard something else that was tremendous. He saw and heard "a watcher and an holy one come down from heaven." That is, he saw in his dream an angel sent from God who cried with a loud voice: Hew down the tree! Cut off his branches! Shake off his leaves! Scatter his fruit! But leave the stump and his roots in the earth. Do not touch that. But rather, let him be wet with the dew of heaven. Let his portion be with the beasts of the field. Let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him until seven times pass over him!

That was the dream which Nebuchadnezzar recounted to Daniel. And we read that Daniel, when he heard the telling of that dream, was astonished and troubled. And the reason why he was astonished and troubled was that he was simply amazed at the awesome word of judgment which God would now bring upon Nebuchadnezzar. Having recovered from his state of astonishment, Daniel interpreted that dream. Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar: that tree, Nebuchadnezzar, which thou didst see, that great tree, that strong tree, that tree the height thereof that reached to heaven, and the sight thereof that reached to the end of the earth, is thou, O King! You, Nebuchadnezzar, are that tree! And you are that tree which God has determined according to His decree to cut down! You will fall Nebuchadnezzar! Your mighty kingdom which you ascribe to your own efforts, will be taken away from you! You will be driven from among men! You will eat grass as the oxen! And you will do that until you recognize that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men and giveth it to whomsoever He will! Repent Nebuchadnezzar! Put away your sins and iniquities! Show mercy to the poor! Repent before the judgment of God comes upon you!

But Nebuchadnezzar refused to repent. It is the fool who says in his heart that there is no God, and Nebuchadnezzar was a fool! He should have known that all that Daniel had told him would surely come to pass. He should have known that God is, and that He accomplishes all His good pleasure. And he did know that! He had to have known that. The ungodly reprobate are never ignorant of all of that. God never leaves Himself without witness. God had taught him all of that with respect to the first dream that He had sent to him. God had taught him all of that when He preserved the three friends in the fiery furnace. God taught Nebuchadnezzar in and through all of that that God is, and that He accomplishes all His good pleasure. Why then, the question is, did not Nebuchadnezzar acknowledge that? And having acknowledged that, repent? The answer to that question is that, exactly that, Nebuchadnezzar was a fool! A wicked, godless fool! And most of all, a proud fool!

He was a proud fool! One year went by from the time that Nebuchadnezzar had his dream. Nebuchadnezzar is walking in his palace. He looks at all the things that he had done. And he exclaims: is not this Babylon the great? Is not this Babylon the great that I have built? And that I have built by my own might and my own power, and for my own majesty? Look at it! Isn't it wonderful? I have done it all! It is all because of me! And it is all mine, mine, mine!

But it was not. Immediately, even as he boasted in his pride, a voice cried out from heaven. Immediately all that he thought was his was taken away from him. And immediately the proud boastful Nebuchadnezzar fell. The just and horrible judgment of God came upon him. He was driven from among men. He ate grass as the oxen. The dew from heaven fell upon him. His hair grew like eagle's feathers, and his nails like bird's claws. The just and horrible judgment which God brought upon that proud fool of a man was this: he became insane. And insanity is indeed a fit and just punishment for a proud fool.

There are many such proud fools today. We have them in the world around us — men who walk in their palaces and who say to themselves, even as Nebuchadnezzar: is not this Babylon the great that I have built? Look at it! I have done it all! It is all because of me! And it is all mine! By my own power and by my own might I have done what I have done! For my own praise and for my own glory I have done what I have done! Oh, yes, there are many such proud fools today. All of them without exception boast in their own strength. All of them without exception fill themselves with horrible, stinking pride. And all of them without exception either are now, or they surely will be, burning in the fires of everlasting hell!

You see, God is not mocked. You cannot mock God and get away with it. Your sins will find you out. If you boast in your strength, if you fill yourselves with stinking haughty pride, if you rob God of the glory which is due unto Him, you will experience the just judgment of God. God is God. God is supreme. God is all-glorious. God reigns over the kingdoms of man and gives them to whomsoever He will. That is God's word to the proud fools of this world.

And that is also God's word to the Church! To the Church today God gives a warning, a warning to which it had better pay attention. How often is it not the case today that the Church is filled with pride? That pride becomes manifest when it glories in the large and beautiful churches which it has built. That pride becomes manifest when it glories in its vast evangelism campaigns. And most of all that pride becomes manifest when it has the audacity to tamper with the Word of God. When it has the audacity to

say that the Word of God is not God's Word but man's word; when it says that the precious, time-honored truths of the Word of God are not the truths of the Word of God, that is the height of stinking, haughty pride! And God is not mocked! Men who say such things are not shepherds of the sheep. They are proud fools who rob God of the glory which shines ever so brightly in His Word. Are they ignorant? Do not they know any better? No, they are not ignorant. God has not left Himself without witness. He has given His Word as the clearest witness imaginable. He that hath an ear, let him hear!

And that applies to you and me also. We must never be proud. But rather, we must always be humble. We must ascribe all the glory, might, and honor to God. We must! In humility we must do that.

As Protestant Reformed Churches, to whom God has given so much and for whom God has done so much, we must do that. And we must do that as individuals who walk in the midst of this world. To us God has given so very much. For us God has done so very much. Why must we do that? Simply because it is all His. All that we have, all we call our own, all that has been given to us, has not been given to us because of our might or our power. But rather, it has been given to us by God, and by God's might and by God's power. To Him then be the glory.

Do we do that? Do we give all the glory to God, and do that in deepest humility? Remember, these are the last times. But the question is: how are we living?

IN HIS FEAR

Teaching Our Children the Fear of the Lord

Rev. Arie den Hartog

We have seen from the beginning of our discussion of the theme of the fear of the Lord how very fundamental it is. The fear of the Lord is the very heart of true godliness and Christianity. The fear of the Lord must be the dominating and controlling motive of all our life as the people of God. We have emphasized also that the fear of the Lord must begin in our homes. We must establish our homes in the fear of the Lord and continue to live daily in that fear of the Lord. A very important part of living in the fear of God in our homes of course is that we also instruct the children which the Lord gives to us in that fear of the Lord.

As Reformed people we know the blessed truth that God is a covenant God. He is our God and the God of our children after us. He keeps covenant from generation to generation. God is pleased to continue His covenant in the line of our generations as we faithfully and diligently instruct our children. Exactly

because God is the one Who gives us covenant children and because He has promised to be the God of our children after us, we must with fear and trembling fulfill our covenant obligation to nurture our children in the fear and admonition of the Lord. We must teach our children about Jehovah their God and the God of their fathers before them. We must teach them to worship and serve this Jehovah God, to obey His commandments and to glorify Him in all of life. Fundamental to all of this is that we instill in them the fear of the Lord. A true godly life can come forth only out of a heart that fears God. To teach our children merely formally and objectively the doctrines and commandments of scripture is not enough. We must instill in the hearts and souls of our children the fear of the Lord their God.

To teach our children the fear of the Lord we must teach them who and what Jehovah God is. A profound spiritual knowledge of God is one of the

chief parts of the fear of the Lord. We must teach them that God is the Sovereign God of heaven and earth Who created all things and Who rules sovereignly over all and demands the obedience and service of all His creatures. We must teach them that this God lives today and is our sovereign Lord. We must teach our children of the wonderful gracious covenant of God according to which He of sovereign grace alone purposed to choose His people as His own and to establish and continue His covenant with them. We must teach our children of the sovereign almighty power of God and how He alone by that sovereign power is the God of our salvation. We must teach our children of the perfect holiness and righteousness of God. We must teach them that God is so holy and so righteous that He cannot suffer sin to go unpunished. We must teach them that He is so fearfully holy that He is a consuming fire to all the workers of iniquity. His wrath is revealed from heaven against all of the unrighteousness of men. We must teach them that God is so holy and just that He casts the sinner into everlasting hell. We must teach our children that it is only because of sovereign grace and because of the wonderful work of God in Christ Jesus that we are saved from His holy, just wrath and made heirs of eternal life and blessing. These are the things that will instill in them by the grace and Spirit of God the fear of the Lord. We must teach them all that God is in His infinite perfection, goodness, and greatness. We must in no way hide from them the true knowledge of God. Above all we must not tell them the lies of modernism and Arminianism which teach that God is a God who winks at sin and who loves all men.

We have a most beautiful example of proper instruction of children in the fear of the Lord in Psalm 78. We cannot of course quote this long Psalm here. But notice what the Psalmist tells us to tell our children. We must show to the generations to come "the praises of the Lord, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done." From there on, the Psalmist goes on to recount all of the mighty wonders which the Lord performed for His people Israel to save them, to bring them out of Egypt through the wilderness and to the land of promise. He tells of the wonderful faithfulness and longsuffering mercy of God. All this the Psalmist makes mention of in order to cause his people to remember how great and how wonderful their God is. This must be the manner in which we teach our children the history of the scriptures. We must not teach that history as nothing more than good stories. We must show our children from all of this history the sovereign greatness and wonderful goodness of their God.

We must teach our children the perfect obedience which the Lord requires of His people. We must teach

them the sovereign law of the Lord that we must love the Lord our God with all our heart and soul and strength and mind. We must teach our children that the Lord is displeased with every transgression of the law. He is so righteous and holy that He cannot merely ignore sin or pass it over. He is a God Who is jealous for His own holiness and righteousness, Who by no means clears the guilty but Who visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of all that hate Him. We must not in any way minimize the requirements of God's holy law or tell our children that transgression of the law is not so serious.

If we turn again to Psalm 78 we will find the Psalmist makes mention again and again of the sin and apostasy of Israel. The Psalmist recalls the dreadful consequences of that apostasy for Israel as they came under the anger and chastening of the Lord. If we are to teach our children the fear of the Lord we must teach them the dreadfulness of sin and the awfulness of the holy wrath of God. We must not teach them in any way to take a complacent attitude about sin. We must teach them how God is grieved by the sins of His people and how sin brings upon His people the chastening rod of the Lord. We must warn our children again and again of the awful judgment and wrath of God upon the ungodly. The scriptures are full of warnings of God's judgment. Let us not read them to our children as though they are nothing more than past history. Let us use the scripture to warn earnestly our children, that they might fear the Lord and not come under the judgment of wicked and apostate Israel.

We must exhort our children from His word to flee the just wrath of God which is from their very birth upon them, to flee to the sovereign forgiving mercy of God. We must teach them daily to go to the cross with their sins as the only ground of righteousness and forgiveness. We must urge our children daily to implore the forgiving mercy and grace of God.

We must teach our children their own hopeless condition in the sight of God. We must teach them that of ourselves we are worthy of hell and we are so in bondage to corruption that we can do nothing whatsoever to escape death and everlasting condemnation. We must teach our children to put their hope and their trust alone in Jehovah the almighty God of salvation. We must tell them daily that there is to be found salvation in none other save in God and in His Christ. Therefore we must teach them to fear the Lord and trust in Him alone.

Not only must we teach our children the fear of the Lord by teaching them from God's Word that God is a God to be feared. We must also teach them what true godly fear is by our example. All our

instruction will mean nothing if it is not reinforced by the example of our own godfearing life. We must strive to let the fear of God reign in all life in our homes.

There is of course no end to the examples of what this means. Let us consider just a few of them as space allows. There is first of all the basic matter of the centrality of the Word of God in our homes. How often is the Word of God read in our homes? How much time is spent in reading the Word of God? How much zeal and effort are spent on reading and studying the Word of God and how much is spent on other things such as watching television or engaging in other entertainment? One could compare the excitement that is evident in the home with the Word of God and with other things such as sports or cars, or nice houses or clothes. What kind of example are we setting for our children if we spend more time watching television than we do studying the Word of God or if we are far more interested and excited about the outcome of the world series than we are about learning the wonderful truths of God?

How is the Lord's day observed in our homes? Is the Lord's day kept holy? Do we go to church as the Lord gives us opportunity? Why do we go to the house of the Lord? Is it evident that we do this merely out of form and custom, or do we do this because we fear the Lord our God and know our calling to worship and serve Him in His house? Is it for us a burden to go to the Lord's house, or do we go with eagerness to hear the Word of the Lord our God? If we are to instill in our children the fear of the Lord, we must reveal that the true worship of God is to be central in our lives.

How is sin dealt with in our homes? When father or mother commits sin is there a going on the knees and a pleading for forgiveness, or do mother and father give the impression that sin is not so serious and that it can easily be forgotten? Do mother and father reveal in their own life that they have a profound sense of the grievous character of their sin before God? What about when children disobey their parents and sin against God? Do the parents simply ignore this? Do the parents merely react to disobedience of their children because it is an offense against them? If we are to instill in our children the fear of the Lord we must tell them of the seriousness of sin in the sight of God. We must take the time and the effort to do this.

What about the whole matter of prayer in the home? Is our family truly a family that prays together? Can the fear of God be heard in the prayers, in what we pray for and how we pray, or are they merely the repetition of the same words everyday and is it evident that we simply pray out of form? Do we set an example of giving thanks unto the Lord for all the things that He has given us? Do we know how to bring earnestly our families to the throne of God's grace, unto the God Whom we need every day, in Whom lies all our strength and help and salvation?

How do father and mother live with each other in the home? Does father take up his place as the head of the home and rule the home according to the Word of God in the fear of the Lord? Does mother labor faithfully in the home in her God ordained place because she knows that this is her calling before God, or is mother led away by the wicked philosophy of women's liberation to forsake her calling in the home for worldly fame and fortune?

How is the money of the family spent? Do father and mother give an example of good stewardship to their children? Do they teach their children that all that they have is given to them by the Lord God? Do they teach their children that they must give an account for all that God has given to them? How much is given to the church? Is the home filled with all manner of luxuries while father and mother give meagerly to the cause of God's kingdom? Is it evident from how much we give and how we give it that our central concern is not with the things of this world but with the kingdom of God?

How does father carry out his occupation? Does he do it for the glory of God, or for wealth and glory among men? Is father willing to suffer loss even of all things for righteousness' sake? Is the righteousness of God the most important thing in all that he does even in his daily occupation?

We could of course go on and on with such questions. How urgent that we examine each and every area of our life as parents. We are the examples for our children. We must teach them by our every example what it really means to fear God. Ours is a world where there is no fear of God. God has ordained that our homes are *the* place where our children learn by instruction and example the fear of the Lord.

THE STANDARD BEARER

is a thoughtful gift for a "Shut-in".



TAKING HEED TO THE DOCTRINE

The Incarnation (conclusion)

by Rev. David Engelsma

There is also the danger of dividing the natures, so that in Jesus are two different individuals. This brings us to a consideration of the union of the natures in one Person. The Church faced the danger of dividing the natures of Christ so as to posit two different individuals in Jesus. She confronted this in the teaching of Nestorius. We need not burden ourselves now with an examination of all the fascinating aspects of the controversy with Nestorius, particularly the intrusion into the controversy of the developing devotion to Mary in the description of her as "mother of God," which became the watchword of the orthodox party and, indeed, was used by the Symbol of Chalcedon. Nestorius pressed the Church to do justice to the oneness of Christ and the union of the natures.

This was also at issue in the doctrine of Apollinaris (who, you will remember, held that the Word replaces the human spirit, or "reasonable soul," in Jesus). His concern was to establish a union of the natures, an intimate union.

Against Nestorius, Chalcedon said, "indivisibly, inseparably," and went on to say, "not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ."

Jesus is one Person. By a "person," I understand the ego, the "I," the self-conscious and self-asserting subject of all one's action (another term is "subsistence" — that which stands under; the Greek word is *hypostasis*). Jesus' Person is the Divine Person of the eternal Word. The Word became flesh (John 1:14); the Son was made of a woman (Galatians 4:4). The "I" of the Word-become-flesh is the "I" of the eternal Word; the "I" of the Son-made-of-a-woman is the "I" of the eternal Son. Christ expressed

this in His words, so offensive to the Jews, in John 8:58: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am." This makes all of the words and deeds of Jesus so weighty, so infinitely weighty: that which 'stands under' them is God.

In this Divine Person, the two natures are united. The union is not by mixture; nor by the Divine replacing part of the human; nor by the human being defied; nor by the Divine being humanized; but by the two natures concurring in one Person. The Word took to Himself a human nature which was not itself personal, but which becomes personal in the Divine Person of the Word. John Owen put it this way:

In itself, it (the flesh of John 1:14 — D.E.) is impersonal — that which hath not a subsistence of its own, which should give it individuation and distinction from the same nature in any other person. But it hath its subsistence in the person of the Son, which thereby is its own.

The union thus established is a permanent union. It remains after the resurrection and ascension. According to the Reformed creed, the two natures of Christ "were not separated even by his death . . . the divine nature always remained united with the human, even when he lay in the grave" (Belgic Confession, Article XIX). This is a reason why the body of Christ did not see corruption in the grave.

By this personal union of the natures, the Christ is one Christ, not two Christs. All that the creed is expressing is the perfectly plain fact of all Scripture, that Jesus is not two individuals, but one individual.

Also, there is living communion of the two natures. This is not the same as confusion, or mixture. But there is such a relationship between the two natures that the Divine can sustain the human nature as it suffers the punishment of the infinite wrath of God

against sin and can give infinite value to those sufferings, since they are the sufferings of God the Son; and the human nature can be the seat in which the Divine nature sustains the burden of the wrath of God.

Because of this personal union, the properties of both natures are ascribed to the one Person of Jesus. Jesus says, "Before Abraham was, I am," thus claiming eternity — a perfection of the Divine nature. But the same Jesus says, I thirst; I am weary; I do not know the hour of the end; My Father is greater than I — thus acknowledging the frailties and limitations of His human nature.

In truth, the Word *became* flesh!

This wonder took place by means of the Virgin Birth, to which belongs conception by the Holy Spirit. The Virgin Birth was not only the sign of the invisible miracle of incarnation, but it was also the necessary means by which the incarnation occurred. Man's act must be excluded, so that God may act. Only in the way of the Virgin Birth is the Child God and man. If Jesus is begotten by a man, as well as born of a woman, He is a human person; and He is flesh only. On the other hand, if He is not born of a woman, He is at best merely the appearance of a man.

Conception by the Spirit also safeguards the flesh of Jesus from the defilement of original sin. By this work of the Spirit, Jesus is both "Son of God" and a "holy thing" (Luke 1:35).

Concerning the manner in which the Word became flesh, Scripture says, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35).

The necessity of the incarnation was expressed by the Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan Creed in these words: "who, *for us men and for our salvation*, came down from heaven."

In his *Cur Deus Homo*, Anselm put it thus:

... for what cause or necessity, in sooth, God became man (Book First, Chapter 1).

The answer is given in Book Second, Chapter XVIII (b): The restoring of mankind ought not to take place, and could not, without man paid the debt which he owed God for his sin. And this debt was so great that, while none but man must solve the debt, none but God was able to do it; so that he who does it must be both God and man. And hence arises a necessity that God should take man into unity with his own person; so that he who in his own nature was bound to pay the debt, but could not, might be able to do it in the person of God.

The incarnation was necessary for the redemption of sinners. This is the necessity of every aspect of the

incarnation. He must be real and full, though sinless, man — for the redemption of sinners. He must be very God — for the redemption of sinners. His natures must be distinct, not confused — for the redemption of sinners. The natures must be united in one person, and that the person of God the Son — for the redemption of sinners.

The death that shall be the death of death must be the death of the Son of God in our flesh; the blood that shall purchase the Church from sin must be God's own blood (Acts 20:28).

The incarnation was also necessary for the renewal of the redeemed unto eternal and holy life. Only God can quicken, and only God can break sin's power. But only one who shares our nature can impart His own life to us. It is necessary, for a holy life, that the redeemed be conscious of the incarnation. The impelling motive of a holy life is thankful love — thankfulness for the incarnation. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world . . . to be the propitiation for our sins" (I John 4:9,10). Consciousness of this motivates us to love God and to love each other.

A godly life is obedience to Jesus as Lord; and obedience to Jesus as Lord stems, ultimately, from reverence for Him as God the Son.

And all of the Christian's life and labor in this world is permeated with the sense of wonder and awe that he is the friend, the disciple, and the member of God Incarnate.

Salvation is friendship with God. In Christ Jesus, God dwells with His people in friendship — the covenant — because of the incarnation.

Therefore, the Athanasian Creed speaks sober truth when it says, "Furthermore it is necessary to everlasting salvation: that he (whoever will be saved) also believe rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ."

I John 4:1-3 makes it the very touchstone of the Spirit of God and true prophecy, that it is confessed that "Jesus Christ is come in the flesh," whereas it is antichrist that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.

We must believe rightly the incarnation of the Lord Jesus. For this faith, we must be born again, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God; so that we rightly and thoroughly know the misery of the guilt of our sins, our need of pardon by the righteousness of God in Christ's cross, and God's utterly gracious provision for our need in His own Son. Then, we believe in Jesus the Christ, as the Word become flesh for us poor sinners; and believing, we have eternal life in His Name.

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of Galatians

by Rev. G. Lubbers

THE TENDER AND MERCIFUL RESTORATION OF A FALLEN FELLOW-SAINT. Continued — Gal. 6:1-5

This restoration of a fallen saint is a delicate task indeed! It cannot be performed in a hard and haughty way at all. Only the meekness of Christ can be of help here; it must be the tender gentleness of our merciful high priest, Who can be and is touched with the feeling of our infirmities (Heb. 4:15; 5:2). The fallen saint needs the rebuke, reproof, and correction in this hour of need, even as a child needs the tender, firm love of a correcting parent! He must find mercy and grace in the visit of the elders or in that of one of the brethren who would save a brother from sin (James 5:19,20). It must be a hand reaching from heaven, the touch of the risen Savior, Who says, "fear not; I have the keys of hell and of death. I was dead, and, behold, I live for evermore" (Rev. 1:17-19). I live and, therefore, ye shall live. (John 14:19)

Surely, it requires great meekness to be the messenger of Christ, Who Himself is meek and lowly, and Whose yoke is easy and Whose burden is light (Matt. 11:28-30). It must be remembered that he who is a "spiritual" brother, who is Spirit-led, will surely have his sinful flesh to contend with when he goes to seek and find the sheep lost on the mountains. So serious is this business and so fraught with temptation to sin, that Paul underscores this by changing from the third person plural (ye) to the second person singular thou (*su* in Greek). The temptation is, that, when we speak to the brother, we do not come and speak in the meekness of Christ, that we do not truly represent the Chief Shepherd in all his meekness and love. This is a meekness which leaves all the judgment to God Himself to heal and restore, and to perform the wonders of the glory of

His grace. Where meekness is wanting, we exalt ourselves as a holier-than-thou toward the fallen saints, and we do not seek to restore with the restoration of heaven's love and grace. We fail miserably to walk orderly by the Spirit and fall into judgment! (Matt. 7:1-5)

WATCHFUL SELF-SCRUTINIZATION IN RESTORING THE BROTHER. (Gal. 6:1)

In close connection with, yea, implied is this tender restoration to the perfection of saints (See Eph. 4:11-16) is "the bearing of each others burdens." The text places the great mutuality of this bearing of each other's burdens on the foreground. The Greek text when rendered rather literally reads, "of each other's burdens on the foreground. The Greek text when rendered rather literally reads, "of each other, the burdens keep on bearing" (Gal. 6:2). Such is practical godliness with power to help each other, to sustain each other, upholding each other in the love of Christ (Eph. 4:1-3). Yes, we all have burdens. The Greek text singles these out as a special class of burdens, which one finds in the midst of the household of faith. These are *the* burdens, which are found there for believers, as they fight the good fight of faith as the militant church. Many are the burdens for the struggling saint, with sins which so easily beset him. Apart from the light burden of Christ we would all succumb. However, in the body of Christ, where "every joint supplieth," every member is necessary for the other (Eph. 4:16). Christ bears our mutual burdens, through the members of His body, the saints. And to these saints He gave a new commandment in His blood, that we love one another in the midst of this world (John 13:34). Bearing the burdens of the brother, the saints fulfill the law of Christ. The law of Christ is that law which he has

given us in the New Testament in His blood. This law we must fill up. The Greek verb is a composite verb. It is "anapleeroo." This means to make full to the brim so that no more can be added. Paul uses this verb to depict the horrible plight and sin of the Jewish nation in fulfilling their sin always in their rejection of the Gospel and in their persecuting those who believe and teach the Gospel of Christ's Cross (I Thes. 2:16). Here we see the condemning words of Jesus fulfilled over Jerusalem, who killed all the prophets from Abel to Zacharias, the son of Barachias, who was slain by Joash in the temple (II Chron. 24:20,21; Matt. 23:35).

Yes, sins filled up. The measure of iniquity is heaping full so that the wrath of God comes upon Israel, and they cease to be a nation. But when we fulfill the law of Christ, then too no more can be done. This is done when in love we bear each other's burdens, help each other upon the wings of faith and love, caring for each other before the throne of grace. Here the children are truly gathered, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings. Here we perform under Christ, what Christ did for us essentially, when He took all our burdens upon Him, and gave us the easy burden yoke and the light burden. When we help our neighbor bear his burdens, we have learned that Jesus is meek and lowly, and we find rest for our souls. Thus we walk on the way as it narrows on the way to heaven (Matt. 7:13,14). All men see in us thus that we are Christ's disciples. Here the Lord commands His blessing, even life forevermore (John 13:34,35; Ps. 133:3).

Therefore, keep a watchful eye on self. When you go to restore the brother do not be tempted *not to lift* up his heavy burden under which he has fallen! Fulfill the law of Christ! It is not written upon tables of stone, but upon the tables of your fleshy hearts by the Spirit of God! Be a letter, read of all men, a letter written by Christ himself (II Cor. 3:3).

THE SPIRITUAL SELF-DECEPTION OF THE WOULD-BE RESTORER OF THE BROTHER Galatians 6:3

Paul writes a very severe warning that we see to it that we, indeed, fulfill the law of Christ to the brother and sister, who fell into sin. The warning finger is that we do not walk in self-delusion. We must be a spiritual somebody, who knows how to lift the burdens of the brother to be a true fellow-saint. Writes Paul, "If a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself." We should notice here that Paul uses a conditional sentence. It assumes to be true that a certain man, you or I, thinks that he is something, a real somebody in the church, with real loving intentions and ability to restore an erring brother. But while he is thus

thinking great thoughts about himself, he is *all the while* a "nothing"! The text says "Being nothing." The thinking of this man, you or I, is pure presumption; it is arrogancy! Such a conceited person claims much for himself and concedes little to others. A presumptuous person claims place and privilege above all others. When such is the case, such a spiritual non-entity, does not very often deceive others; he only deceives himself. Paul gives us a very beautiful and telling description of such a spiritual nothing in I Cor. 13:1-3. Writes he, "If I have the gift of all prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity (*love*), I am *nothing*." Yes, there you have it, clearly and unmistakably stated. Yes, in comparison to God, the best preacher too is a mere "nothing." The preacher cannot make the preaching efficacious (I Cor. 3:7). Well may we take to heart the word of God in Psalm 73:6; Proverbs 8:13; 14:3; 29:23.

The word translated "deceiveth oneself" is very expressive in the Greek text. It is *phrenapatao heauton*. It is not found in the Classics; Paul is coining a word here. The *phren* is the mind, the heart, the soul, including the intellect, dispositions and feelings. See I Cor. 14:20. The term *apatao* joined with *phrene* emphasizes the subjective fancies of such a man who thinks to be something, while all the time he is a mere nothing. It is a ludicrous picture of a spiritual fool. Such we must not be! The Bible speaks of being deceived by others (Eph. 5:6), of Adam and Eve being deceived by Satan in paradise (I Tim. 2:14). James comes very near to what Paul teaches here when he says that men "deceive their own heart," when they do not have the pure and undefiled religion, which visits widows and orphans in their affliction, and keeps self undefiled by the world (James 1:26). Now a man, who deceives his own mind, has spiritual hallucinations and whimsical fancies concerning himself. The man who is overtaken in a fault knows very well that this loveless visitor only walks in his spiritual dream-world (Eph. 5:6; I Tim. 2:14; Rom. 7:11; I Cor. 3:18; Titus 2:14). All this proud preening is an abomination to the Lord because it does not even begin to fulfil the law of Christ, the royal law of the kingdom. It is not walking in the liberty in Christ Jesus, being impelled by the Spirit of Christ.

EVERY MAN SHALL BEAR HIS OWN BURDEN (Galatians 6:4,5)

The term "own burden" is the very personal (*idion*) burden of assigned duties of the Lord. For this burden the christian is responsible, answerable to God in Christ. We shall all need to be manifested in our works in the day of Christ (II Cor. 5:10). Paul

refers to this in Gal. 5:10 where he says "each shall bear his judgment, whoever he is." The term for burden is *phorton*, that is, a burden of Christ. The term is employed five times in the New Testament: Matt. 11:30; Matt. 23:4; Acts 15:28; Rev. 2:12. These are not the heavy burdens of the law and the curse, such as were bound upon the necks of men by the teaching of the Pharisees (Matt. 23:4), but they are the light burdens, the easy yoke of Christ (Matt. 11:30). John says: "And his commandments are not grievous" (I John 4:3,4). These are love duties, which Christ places upon our shoulders giving us His Spirit so that we are very ready in the day of His power. Well may we walk in this love-duty, that we may give account in that day. It is such a love-duty to restore that brother who is overcome by a trespass.

In view of such giving account, each must "prove his own work." The Greek makes this very emphatic, "*The work of himself let each approve.*" This "work" refers to the *sum total* of all one's work as steward of God. It is the rule in judgment: every man shall be judged by his own work, whether he was a good or an evil tree (Matt. 25:31-46). We are to walk as those

who are watchful for Jesus' return in glory to judge the living and the death (Ps. 62:12; Jer. 17:9,10; 32:19; Matt. 16:27; Rom. 2:6; 14:12; Rev. 2:23; 22:12). The actual proving of the work is to ascertain the *genuineness of the works*, whether they proceed from faith which works by love, as pure manifestations of the love for the brother and for God Himself. Gold is tried in the fire to remove the dross; here the proving is a judging with a pure conscience our own work in the light of God's holiness and perfect law. It must be able to stand in the day of Christ so that we are not ashamed (I John 2:28). Remember too that God knows our works in their deepest motives (Rev. 2:2, 9,13,19,23; 3:1,2,8.) Our works must be perfect before God in Christ (Matt. 5:20,48). Thus we walk at liberty.

Yes, we must have solid ground for boasting in our works. Not that these works are meritorious. But they must be genuine, good works, approved of God in Christ, as the fruits of grace. They must be God's love perfected in us (I John 4:17). We must have boldness in the day of judgment, and not boast by comparing our work with that of others.

Book Review

SERMONS FROM JOB, John Calvin; Baker Book House, 1979; 300 pp., \$4.95 (paper). (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko.)

John Calvin has long been known as one of the great, if not the greatest, theologians of the Reformation. What is not so well known is that Calvin was also an outstanding preacher and, in fact, considered himself, first of all, to be a preacher. This ignorance of Calvin the preacher is partly due to the lack of published sermons of Calvin. It is surprising that, after Calvin's death, for the first fifty or sixty years, Calvin's sermons were published in many languages, distributed far and wide and underwent many reprintings in many lands while his other works were comparatively ignored. Indeed, his sermons probably had greater influence than any of his other works in spreading the Calvin Reformation. But after the first half century or so, this printing of Calvin's sermons almost ceased and his other works increased in popularity. Once again, starting about a decade ago, Calvin's sermons are being published. For this we may be grateful.

This book is made up of twenty of Calvin's sermons on Job. The great reformer preached a total of 159 sermons on this book during the years 1554 & 1555 when he preached daily in Geneva. These sermons on Job are, in my opinion, some of the finest of all Calvin's sermons. Here you find Calvin the

superb exegete; Calvin the master of truly prophetic preaching; Calvin the theologian dedicated in all his work to the glory of God; and, not by any means least, Calvin the pastor. In fact this latter aspect of these sermons was particularly striking. We seldom think of Calvin as pastor of God's sheep in Geneva. But these sermons make abundantly clear that he was indeed a pastor who understood the problems, sorrows, temptations, sins, and deep spiritual needs of his flock.

While these sermons are considerably different from the type of preaching to which we are accustomed — especially from a homiletical viewpoint — nevertheless, every minister of the Word will gain insight in how to preach from these sermons, and every pastor will learn at the feet of the great reformer of Geneva how to be a better shepherd in God's sheepfold.

The book has the added value of an interesting and important introduction written by Harold Dekker on Calvin as preacher.

Yet, while the book is of value for every minister, every one of God's people can easily read the book. The translation is generally excellent and the material easy to understand. I highly recommend this book to all our people. No one who reads it will go away unrewarded. It is Calvin the preacher at his best, and his sermons still speak to the heart.

The League of Eastern Men's and Ladies' Societies will meet at Hudsonville Church at 8:00 on Wednesday, April 9. Prof. Decker will speak on "The Signs of the Times." Everyone is welcome.

NOTICE!!!

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, May 14, 1980 at the SouthEast Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids.

Material to be treated at this session must be in the hands of the Stated Clerk no later than ten days prior to the convening of this session.

Jon Huiskens, Stated Clerk

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On April 10, 1980, our beloved parents, Mr. and Mrs. Gerrit Lubbers, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. We thank our heavenly Father for preserving them for each other and for us, and pray that He will continue to bless them in the years to come.

"But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children's children" Psalm 103:17.

Their children,
Bernard and Ruth Lubbers
Jay and Donna Lubbers
Paul and Carolyn Schipper
Glenn
Ted and Gloria Miedema
David and Marcia Doezeema
26 grandchildren
11 great-grandchildren

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

We wish to express our sympathy to the Vriesinga family in the death of their mother and of our sister in Christ, MRS. SENETTA VRIESINGA. We find our comfort in the words of the Good Shepherd, "In my Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am there you may be also" (John 14:2-3).

The Consistory of the SouthEast
Protestant Reformed Church
Grand Rapids, MI
Rev. C. Haak, Pres.
Gerald De Vries, Clerk.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

We take this occasion to express our Christian sympathy to Mr. John De Vries in the death of his wife, MRS. FENNA DE VRIES. Although this is difficult for the flesh, we believe that in this God works His wonders. We find our comfort in the words of the Psalmist - "They go forward from strength to strength, everyone of them appeareth before God in Zion" (Psalm 84:7).

The Consistory of the SouthEast
Protestant Reformed Church
Grand Rapids, MI
Rev. C. Haak, Pres.
Gerald De Vries, Clerk

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

It is with deep gratitude and thankfulness in our hearts to our heavenly Father that we take the opportunity of their 40th wedding anniversary on April 12, 1980, the Lord willing, to thank our parents, MR. AND MRS. GERARD (BUD) BYLSMA for the years of loving, covenant guidance and instruction they have unselfishly given to us. We pray that God will continue to sustain them in their lives together, that they may constantly experience His blessings.

"The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage" (Psalm 16:6).

Gerald and Bonnie Kuiper
Gerald, Pamela, Karen,
Matthew, Timothy and Andrew
Don and Judi Doezeema
Duane and Shirley Gunnink
Shelley, Kevin, Tracy,
Jason and Aaron
Paul and Linda Young
Steven and Cathy Jo

ANNIVERSARY ANNOUNCEMENT

On April 13, 1980, the Lord willing, our beloved parents, MR. AND MRS. GILBERT SCHIMMEL will commemorate their 30th wedding anniversary. We, their grateful children, thank God for the many years of love and Christian instruction they have given us. Our prayer is that our covenant God may continue to bless them and keep them in His care.

"But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children's children; To such as keep His covenant, and to those that remember His commandments to do them" (Psalm 103:17,18).

Their children,
Jim and Carol Schimmel
Dan and Judy Schimmel
Hank and Deb Vander Waal
Steve and Ruth Kerkstra
Dave
Tim
Tom
and 8 grandchildren.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Faith, Hope and Love Society of the South Holland Protestant Reformed Church expresses their sincere sympathy to one of our members, Mrs. Louis Regnerus, in the passing of her father, MR. WILLIAM WEIRINGA.

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

Rev. David Engelsma, Pres.
Mrs. R. Poortinga, Sec'y.

News From Our Churches

Hope Church in Walker, Michigan scheduled a special congregational meeting on Monday, March 10. The congregation voted to extend a call to one of its own members, Professor Herman Hanko. The trio also included Rev. G. Van Baren and Rev. B. Woudenberg.

Our church in Redlands, California extended a call to Rev. Kenneth Koole of Randolph, Wisconsin.

Rev. Robert Harbach was scheduled to have eye surgery on Wednesday, March 5, in Bronson Hospital in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

Rev. Arie den Hartog and his family arrived safely in Singapore on Friday, February 1. He and his family were welcomed by many members of the Gospel Letters and Tract Society (G.L.T.S.) when they arrived at the airport. The G.L.T.S. has acquired a 'nice place' for the home of the den Hartog family in the Bedok section of Singapore. The Doon bulletin goes on to say that "We thank our faithful God for Rev. den Hartog's safe arrival and seek His blessing upon the Word preached by us there through our Missionary." The Hull bulletin reports that Rev. den Hartog will labor as missionary in Singapore for two years, D.V., and then return to the States for a two-month furlough.

Construction of a new sanctuary for our Covenant Church in Wyckoff, New Jersey is progressing. The carpenters were to begin framing the building in early March. If all goes as planned the building ought to be closed in by the time spring arrives. Covenant also received some rather encouraging news that one of their bondholders has asked to donate a piano and an organ to the congregation.

Hope Church in Walker, Michigan approved a proposal to install carpeting and paneling in their large society room in the church basement.

Our Southeast Church in Grand Rapids started a new procedure the first of the year. At the close of the service, after the Benediction, the congregation is asked to maintain a moment of silence while the elders go forward to shake hands with the minister, then the minister and elders go to the various exits to greet the congregation. The congregation begins to exit as the organist begins the postlude.

The elders and deacons of our Faith Church in Jenison, Michigan have decided to meet separately

from now on. Up to this time they have met jointly. The new procedure is as follows: the deacons (diaconate) will continue to meet on the first Tuesday of each month. The elders and deacons (council) will meet on the second Tuesday of each month to consider matters for the attention of both of them. After that business is finished, the deacons will leave, and the elders (consistory) will meet to consider business particular to their office.

Our congregation in Loveland, Colorado recites orally the Apostles Creed which is contained in the prayer of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Apparently they had also recited orally the Lord's Prayer, but the consistory decided to discontinue that practice in order to avoid confusion.

The Reformed Witness Committee of our Edgerton, Hull, and Doon Churches published a newsletter recently. The committee decided to see if the 600 persons on their permanent mailing list really wanted to receive their publications. Each person on the list was sent a message that in order to stay on the list, they would have to let the committee know. The list dropped from 600 to 0 and then rebounded to 50. Through this effort the committee also received many letters of encouragement. Beside the permanent mailing list, the committee sends 500 copies of each of their pamphlets to the *Standard Bearer* office and 750 to Loveland for distribution there. Whenever the committee sponsors a lecture series, they bulk-mail pamphlets in the area in which the lecture is scheduled. The latest pamphlets published by the committee are: "Pentecostalism" by Rev. Bekkering; "Women in Office" by Professor Decker; and "Predestination" by Rev. Flikkema.

The Covenant Christian High School Alumni Choir has made available a cassette recording of their Christmas program presented in First Church last December 16. The title of the program is "A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols." While this is not a professionally produced recording in wide-vision-stereo-matic sound, it will allow you to enjoy this beautiful program. If you wish to look forward to Christmas or to enjoy Christmas past - send your tape request with \$2 to: Tape Ministry, First Protestant Reformed Church, 1145 Franklin SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49507.

K.G.V.