

# The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

. . . it is not too strong a statement to say that we are commanded by God to live in such a way that we can also pray, in good conscience before God: "I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight." It is well that we ask ourselves very seriously the question whether we can indeed make this prayer our own. If we cannot, then there is something radically wrong.

See "My Sheep Hear My Voice" —pg. 403

## CONTENTS

Meditation—	
Revealed By the Spirit.....	386
Editorials—	
An Omitted Text.....	389
Reformed Vocabulary.....	390
The Canons and Reprobation Reinterpreted.....	391
From Holy Writ—	
Exposition of Galations.....	393
Signs of the Times—	
How Are We Living?.....	396
The Day of Shadows—	
Prayerful and Proper Preparation.....	398
Guest Article—	
The Fear of the Lord.....	401
My Sheep Hear My Voice—	
Letter to Timothy.....	403
Book Reviews.....	405
News From Our Churches.....	407

## THE STANDARD BEARER

ISSN 0362-4692

Semi-monthly, except monthly during June, July, and August.

Published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association, Inc.

Second Class Postage Paid at Grand Rapids, Mich.

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 Hando, Rev. John A. Heys, Rev. Kenneth Koole, Rev. Jay Kortering, Rev. George C. Lubbers, Rev. Rodney Miersma, Rev. Marinus Schipper, Rev. James Slopsema, 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

Editorial Policy: Every editor is solely responsible for the contents of his own articles. Contributions of general interest from our readers and questions for the Question-Box Department are welcome. Contributions will be limited to approximately 300 words and must be neatly written or typewritten, and must be signed. Copy deadlines are the first and the fifteenth of the month. All communications relative to the contents should be sent to the editorial office.

Reprint Policy: Permission is hereby granted for the reprinting of articles in our magazine by other publications, provided: a) that such reprinted articles are reproduced in full; b) that proper acknowledgement is made; c) that a copy of the periodical in which such reprint appears is sent to our editorial office.

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  
P.O. Box 2289  
Christchurch, New Zealand

Subscription Policy: Subscription price, \$9.00 per year. Unless a definite request for discontinuance is received, it is assumed that the subscriber wishes the subscription to continue without the formality of a renewal order, and he will be billed for renewal. If you have a change of address, please notify the Business Office as early as possible in order to avoid the inconvenience of delayed delivery. Include your Zip Code.

Advertising Policy: The Standard Bearer does not accept commercial advertising of any kind. Announcements of church and school events, anniversaries, obituaries, and sympathy resolutions will be placed for a \$3.00 fee. These should be sent to the Business Office and should be accompanied by the \$3.00 fee. Deadline for announcements is the 1st or the 15th of the month, previous to publication on the 15th or the 1st respectively.

Bound Volumes: The Business Office will accept standing orders for bound copies of the current volume; such orders are filled as soon as possible after completion of a volume. A limited number of past volumes may be obtained through the Business Office.

## MEDITATION

## Revealed By The Spirit

Rev. M. Schipper

*"But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.*

*But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."*

I Corinthians 2:9, 10

But as it is written . . . !

The apostle, guided infallibly by the Spirit, is led to reflect on an utterance of the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 64:4), not only to repeat it, but to expand on it.

The prophet had written: "For since the begin-

ning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him."

The apostle, without altering essentially the contents of Isaiah's message, alters the tone of the



message from direct conversation to objective revelation; while at the same time changing the pronoun "him" into the plural "them," and the last part from "waiting for him" into "that love him." The heart of the message, however, he allows to remain unaltered. The ancient prophet in prophetic vision marveled at God's preparations for His people as he saw them on the dark background of Zion's desolation, preparations so marvelously great that he observes that from the beginning of the world no mere man with all his senses could perceive. The apostle, on the other hand, beholds those same divine preparations, once hidden in the eternal wisdom of God, as now revealed through the Spirit in the gospel.

Of that hidden wisdom, or the wisdom of God in a mystery, the apostle in the context had been speaking.

Hidden, that is, in the eternal God, and ordained by him before the world of our time was founded, according to which and unto which end, he determined our glory — the eternal glory of his church.

That hidden wisdom is now revealed — first of all, to the apostles, then, through them unto the church, through the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, Who searches out the deep things of God as He searches out all things, the Spirit, Who is given without measure unto Christ and by Him poured out into the church. It is the Spirit of Pentecost, Who reveals to us the divine mystery concerning those things which never entered into the heart of man to conceive, but which God hath laid up for them that love him.

Such is the contents of the gospel of revelation the apostle had received, and which now he declares unto us — again, not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

Eternal, adorable wisdom!

Hidden beyond and behind all the things of our present vision! The reference, no doubt, is to the eternal, sovereign, and all-wise counsel of the living and incomprehensible God. For the apostle, having spoken of the hidden wisdom, continues by informing us: "which God foreordained before the world (the ages) unto our glory." That is the counsel of redemption, according to which the all-wise God wills to attain unto His highest glory through the most appropriate means. In the very center of this eternal, unchangeable will of God is the Christ, Who in Proverbs 8 is described as the Wisdom personified. And with that Christ is the church, given unto Him by the Father, which must participate with Him in His glory.

Within the brackets of time, as with unseen hand, all things, large and small, good and evil,

righteous and wicked, sin and grace, move to realize the divine purpose. Nothing happens by chance or accident in ages past, present, or future; but all is directed by the ineffable wisdom of the sovereign God. The fall of our first parents in Paradise, the deluge which destroyed the first world, the rainbow of promise, the rise and fall of the nations, the true and the false prophets, the incarnation, death, and resurrection and the glorious ascension of Christ, the manifestation of the Spirit of Pentecost, the preaching of the gospel, and the gathering of the church out of all nations, the battle of the ages, the parousia, the glorious second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ — all in their time appear and perform according to the eternal wisdom and for the purpose of God. Such is the idea of the hidden wisdom, now revealed. But there is more.

The apostle speaks, as did Isaiah, of the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. And this includes the new heavens and earth where righteousness shall forever dwell. Prepared are they in the eternal wisdom of God. All that waits for their final and glorious manifestation is the ultimate passing away of the present world of sight, and the coming of the glorified Christ with His holy angels. And also included in that new creation is what the Scriptures call the inheritance of the saints in light.

Note here how the apostle emphasizes the greatness of them. Not able are our present senses to perceive them. They defy our present understanding. Never could we as we are now composed with all our instruments of perceptibility and understanding be able even to imagine the things God has prepared for those who love him. How many and how great the things God has prepared!

Prepared they were not only in the eternal wisdom of God, but also in time by our Lord Jesus Christ. Based they are on His meritorious and redemptive work, wrought in His perfect sacrifice on the cross, attested to in his glorious resurrection from the dead, and finished in His majestic ascension to God's right hand, where now He prepares in Father's house many mansions for His people and preserves their inheritance. All of these have to do with our final and eternal glory. Of this latter the apostle made mention in the context (verse 7).

Marvelous revelation!

For God has revealed to us through the Spirit — so we read literally in the text. Always the subject of revelation is the invisible, eternal, all-wise God. Revelation therefore is always a divine act. It is the work of God whereby He unveils and discloses what was hitherto hidden and unknown in Himself. Revelation is an internal disclosure to the be-



liever. Of little significance, for example, would the vision of the four beasts to Daniel have been without the interpretation by the angel. And the revelation to the seer of Patmos could not have been disturbing to him were it not that the God of revelation had shown to him the things which must shortly come to pass. So also it must be understood in the text. The apostle is speaking of the revelation of the things God has prepared for them that love him, but it is the revelation through the Spirit.

Never could the vision and the interpretation of the things God has prepared have come up into the mind of mere man. Though the Creator has endowed man with amazing senses of perceptibility and understanding — and it may be said of mere man that he possesses natural wisdom — there is no eye, or ear, or heart in man that could possibly have penetrated into the mind of God to perceive the things of His plan. Nor could mere man with all his faculties have understood the revelation of the purpose of God as it unfolds in history. The apostle stresses this point in the context (verse 8) when he says: "which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."

What God has prepared for them that love Him can only be known by divine revelation. And divine revelation is realized only through the Spirit — the Spirit Who searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

In this brief but most profound statement the apostle explains the mystery of revelation. Job tells us by implication (Job 11:7) that no man by searching can find out God. And that means that God is an incomprehensible deep; and no mere man, curious as he may be, can by searching discover the depth of the being of God. But Paul tells us here that this is the sole prerogative and function of the Holy Spirit. That the Spirit searches out the deep things of God must mean, therefore, first of all, that He does this within the being of the Triune God eternally. The Spirit searches out the deep things of the Father and reveals them to the Son, and the deep things of the Son and reveals them to the Father. In the Spirit the Father and Son know each other perfectly and have in that Spirit most intimate fellowship. Secondly, it must mean that the Spirit searches out the depths of the attributes, the thoughts, the will of God, that is, His decrees and plan. So there is nothing in God that the Spirit does not know, and what He knows He knows most perfectly. In the third place, that Spirit also searches out and knows all things (unlimited). And that must mean that all things in history, the things that come to pass within the brackets of time, are known to Him also. He discovers that they are precisely the things of God's eternal

counsel. And that means that the creation with its myriads of creatures is essentially as they were eternally in the mind of God. It means too that events of history, from the creation of the world to the second coming of Christ, are known by Him, because He it is Who works in all things to realize the purpose of God.

The omniscient Spirit, Who discovers the depths of God and of all things, is the sole medium of revelation. He is the inerrant Author of the Holy Scriptures, and as He has come to dwell in the church as the Comforter Who would lead the church into all the truth, He is also the Author of salvation within us. It is He Who regenerates us, giving unto us the life of the resurrected and glorified Lord; and it is He Who applies the saving merits of Christ to our hearts and lives; and it is He Who through the gospel, the good news of salvation, reveals unto the church the deep things of God.

This leads us to point out finally how the Word of God in our text speaks of the recipients of this revelation of the Spirit.

When the apostle says in the text, "but God hath revealed them unto us," he is referring, first of all, to himself and all the apostles. The apostles and prophets are the repositories into whom the Spirit first commits the revelation of the mysteries of God. Ordained and qualified they were by the Spirit not only to hear and understand the testimony of the Spirit concerning the hidden wisdom of God, so that unmistakably they received it, but they were also officially appointed and qualified to speak that word of revelation and infallibly to write it. Thus it is, as the Scriptures testify, "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (II Peter 1:21b); and again, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God. . ." (II Timothy 3:16a). So they could not but speak and write of the things which they had heard and seen.

Nor should it be forgotten that the central recipient of revelation is Christ Himself. He is the Logos, the Word of God, through Whom all that is revealed of God is made known. He it is Who was appointed and sent to reveal the Father. He spoke no word of Himself, but only that which the Father gave Him to speak. And it is He also Who receives the Spirit without measure and in turn pours out that Spirit into the church, and into the apostles first. That is why, before Christ ascended into heaven and gave promise to the disciples of the coming Spirit, He said, "he shall testify of me." And it is also the truth that, upon the foundation of the apostles of which foundation Christ is the chief cornerstone, that Christ will build His church, against which the gates of hell shall never prevail. But there is more.



The recipient of revelation is also the church of Christ.

Beautifully they are described in the text as "them that love him."

And that means, first of all, that they have been made to believe the word of Christ as it comes to them through the apostles. It makes no difference really whether we read the text with Isaiah who says: "that waiteth for him;" or, with the apostle: "that love him." They that love him, wait for him; and the converse is also true, namely, they that wait for him are moved to do so by their love for him.

And always that waiting or loving is the work of the Spirit of Christ within them. That Spirit opens their eyes, which by nature are closed. Their ears, which by nature are deaf, and their hearts, which by nature are without understanding, are unstopped and renewed. In one word, that Spirit of Christ regenerates them and renews them in principle, so that they are enabled to perceive according to the measure of grace the things of the kingdom of heaven. They behold, in accord with revelation, the things God has prepared for all those who love Him. So they possess the hidden wisdom through the Spirit.

Blessed eyes, which, though they cannot yet perceive all the beauty of the inheritance of God laid away for them, nevertheless by faith fix their beholding of Jesus Who has promised!

Blessed ears, which, though they are not able as yet to catch the strains of heavenly music, are nevertheless able to discern the Word of God, the Holy Gospel of good news, that speaks to them in sweetest tones concerning the glory that is theirs in the day of Christ!

Blessed hearts, which are no longer dead in natural depravity, but made alive by the regenerating Spirit of grace, and so enabled to understand concerning the things which have abiding value — the things God has prepared for them, and unto which they are graciously preserved. Blessed they are, too, because in them has been shed abroad the love of God, the divine intention of which is that they may be conformed to His image, and be perfect as He is.

Blessed Spirit of Christ!

That wonderful Comforter, Who has come to abide in us, stilling our hearts which so often are fearful because of the things we see and hear in this vale of tears — He not only leads us into all the truth, but also establishes our hearts and joins us by faith to the Invisible.

That glorious Revealer of the hidden wisdom of God makes known unto us concerning the divine preparations, which we could never know with our meager human understanding, nor sense with all our human faculties.

Such revelation moves us to exclaim with awe:

O, God, how good Thou art  
To all the pure of heart,  
Though life seems vain.  
Burdened with anxious care,  
I groped in dark despair,  
Till in Thy house of prayer  
All was made plain.

There in thy house, under the proclamation of Thy Word, Thy Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of my glorified Redeemer, made known unto me the eternal mystery.

Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!

## EDITORIALS

*Prof. H. C. Hoeksema*

# An Omitted Text

In the May 15 editorial concerning the Study Report on the Boer Gravamen I inadvertently omitted the Study Committee's treatment of one of the Scripture passages involved. While this makes no essential difference for the discussion, nevertheless for the sake of accuracy I should have included it. The passage is Romans 9:20. Concerning this passage, cited in Canons I, 18 and criticized by Dr. Boer, the Study Report states:

Dr. Boer again argues that this text is only relevant if the "decree of reprobation" has been proven from Scripture elsewhere in the Canons. The use of this text, as in the preceding instances, is based on the assumption of the existence of a decree of reprobation in Scripture.

This question is raised in Romans 9:20 as an answer to someone who is challenging God's sovereignty. In fact, the objector has questioned human responsibility



over against God's sovereignty. A dimension of that sovereignty was expressed in 9:18 — God's sovereignty to "have mercy" and to "harden." In the analysis of Romans 9:19-24 given above, the limited and temporary character of this "hardening" was described, and Paul's continual insistence that God cannot be held responsible for the condition of the "nonelect" was demonstrated. Election is the decree which bestows the gift of God's free grace, but the "just severity of reprobation" is the result of man's own sin, not the result of a decree of God. Though Romans 9:20 in its context does not deal with election and reprobation as coordinate and parallel concepts, the passage is rightly used in I, 18 to reply to those who challenge God's sovereignty.

Once again, therefore, the committee is in essential agreement with Dr. Boer. They agree with him that Romans 9:20 really has nothing to do with sovereign reprobation, though they somehow try to maintain that it does have something to do with God's sovereignty. In addition, the committee comes perilously close to teaching conditional reprobation already here. For the statement that "the 'just severity of reprobation' is the result of man's own sin, not the result of a decree of God" is, at the very best, a highly ambiguous statement.

Once again, however, Dr. Boer is really justified by the committee.

## Reformed Vocabulary

In our creeds and, in fact, in Reformed theology in general there is an entire body of terminology which has grown up over the years which may be called our "Reformed vocabulary." Partly this vocabulary has been derived directly from Scripture. Partly it has been developed in the process of the development of dogma on the basis of Scripture. Thus, for example, in connection with the doctrine of predestination there are such terms as: counsel, decree, will, good pleasure. Or there is such a term as *providence*, and in connection with it terms like *preservation*, *cooperation*, *government*. There are terms in connection with the doctrine of salvation such as *regeneration*, *justification*, *sanctification*, *perseverance*. Examples could be multiplied. In all areas of doctrine there are such terms which belong to what may be termed our Reformed vocabulary.

However, in some circles this Reformed vocabulary is being eroded and is being replaced by a new and strange set of terms. What the motivation for this change may be, I do not know. It appears to me, however, especially in the light of the fact that the changes are unnecessary and unreasonable, that the attempt to substitute a new vocabulary is a deliberate one, and thus also a deliberate attempt to get rid of the old vocabulary.

Of this I was reminded when I read the new translation of Canons I, 6 and 15 offered by the Study Committee on the Boer Gravamen. In Article 6 this new translation runs in part as follows: "It is, however, due to God's eternal decision that some are endowed with faith by him within time, and that others are not so endowed... According to this decision...." And in Article 15 the same language is found: "....concerning whom God made the follow-

ing decision...." And again: "And this is the decision of Reprobation...."

Now the simple fact is that in both of these articles the Canons employ a perfectly good and understandable English word. They use the noun *decree* and the verb *to decree*. Not only so, but the English translation in these instances is solidly based on the original Latin. In fact, it is virtually a transliteration of the Latin. But the point is that there is no conceivable and sound reason, linguistically speaking, for changing this to "decide" and "decision." The old translation is more accurate, and the old translation is perfectly understandable, not only for theologians but for everyone.

Another example of the same thing, this time due to the fact that the Study Committee follows the Revised Standard Version, is found in connection with Matthew 11:25,26. This passage speaks of God's *good pleasure*, and the Canons quote the passage as referring to God's good pleasure. However, in the Study Report (see May 15 issue) this becomes "gracious will." This time the change of terminology is not only inaccurate and unnecessary, but it also seriously affects the text and its meaning. "Gracious will" is by no means the same as "good pleasure." The latter is both a Scriptural term and a term which has found its place in our Reformed vocabulary.

Now why is this change of vocabulary so serious? And why should we guard against discarding of this vocabulary?

The reason is very simple.

These words of our Reformed vocabulary have meaning. They stand for certain concepts. And if



you discard the terminology, you inevitably discard — whether you intend to do so or not — the concept as well. The result eventually is that a generation grows up that knows neither the language nor the concepts, that is, the body of truth which the church believes and confesses.

To be sure, we must not have only the vocabulary. We must have the concepts which that vocabulary denotes and connotes. It is the duty of the minister, both in the pulpit and in the catechism

class, to convey both — the language of the faith and the concepts of the faith — to the church in its generations. This may well be stressed in our day; in fact, it cannot be stressed too much. The minister in his preaching and teaching must develop and explain Scriptural and confessional concepts to the people of God, so that they may be instructed and founded in the truth, in the faith once delivered to the saints. But to do this successfully and in the course of generations, the maintenance and the use of our Reformed vocabulary is indispensable.

## The Canons and Reprobation Reinterpreted

No one should be fooled by the Study Report on the Boer Gravamen. There is a possibility of this: for the conclusion of the Report seems to condemn Dr. Boer's position and to maintain the doctrine of reprobation. And I have already heard of some who thought that the Study Committee's Report was commendable because it upheld the doctrine of reprobation.

Nothing could be farther from the truth.

Both the Study Committee and Dr. Boer repudiate the Reformed doctrine of reprobation as taught by the Canons. Both arrive at the same destination, but by different routes. Dr. Boer in the main — though his prejudice sometimes prompts him to say evil and false things about the Canons — *in the main* understands and sets forth the teachings of the Canons on reprobation. But he disagrees, and he claims the Scripture passages cited do not prove the Canons' position. This is the same position as that taken by many in the Netherlands today, as well as the official position of the Gereformeerde Kerken. Significantly, the Study Committee agrees almost entirely with Boer concerning the Scripture passages. And having cut away the Scriptural underpinning of the Canons, like Boer, they might just as well have stated their agreement with Boer forthrightly. Now, however, they complicate things. They too, do not want the Reformed doctrine of reprobation. In fact, they deny it. But they follow a different route, a more devious and deceptive route. In fact, their report is a masterpiece of mental gymnastics. What is that route? They *reinterpreted* the Canons and make them teach what they do not teach, never intended to teach. In fact, if the Study Committee's doctrine were the Reformed doctrine, there never would have been an

Arminian controversy and there never would have been any Canons. The Study Committee has a two-pronged attack. In the first place, they deviously reduce the doctrine of reprobation to a doctrine of *limited election*. This, of course, is nothing else than a doctrine of *single predestination*. This is the same doctrine which Boer wants, which Daane wants, and which Berkouwer wants. Remember, it was Berkouwer who a few years ago openly stated that he and his churches did not want double predestination. The Study Committee is not open about it; nevertheless they plainly teach it, if you take the trouble to analyze their devious and lengthy report. The second prong of the attack is the changing of sovereign reprobation to conditional reprobation: God only rejects those who reject him. They accomplish this also in a very devious manner; but when you analyze the Study Report, this is what the report accomplishes in a very learned and devious and adroit manner.

Frankly, if I had to choose between Boer's position and the Study Committee's position — and understand well, I want neither — I would choose for Boer. Boer is at least open and frank in his rejection of the Canons' doctrine.

There are several steps in the process by which the Study Report attempts to put across its position. It would be interesting to conduct a step by step analysis of this entire "learned" report. But this would require too much space. We will have to be content with a more condensed and summary treatment. To these steps, in my opinion, belongs a misrepresentation of the history leading to the Canons. To them belongs a misrepresentation of the written opinions of the theologians at Dordt. To them belongs a misrepresentation, I believe, of the main



thrust of Dr. Boer's gravamen. But all these things we will have to pass by. I want to point out, if possible, the main line of the committee's reasonings. To do this, I call your attention, first of all, to what the report states concerning the meaning of the word *reprobation*, pp. 359-360:

#### 4. The Meaning of the Word *Reprobation*:

It appears that the word *reprobation* (in Latin, *repro-tio*) was not always used by the delegates to the Synod of Dort in the same way. As was noted above, the delegates went to great pains to distinguish clearly between God's *passing by* (*praeteritio*) of fallen man with his grace and God's *condemnation* (*damnatio*) of man on account of his sin. It was made very clear in the reports from the various delegations that no other cause for God's passing by could be found than his good pleasure, whereas the cause for God's condemnation of man was man's sin and unbelief.

In their reports to the synod the delegates often used the word *reprobation* as a synonym for *passing by* (*praeteritio*) or *nonelection* (*nonelectio*), thus explicitly distinguishing it from *condemnation* (*damnatio*). A number of delegates, however, used the word *reprobation* (*reprobatio*) to refer to both *passing by* (*praeteritio*) and *condemnation* (*damnatio*).

This variety of usage, whereby the word *reprobation* sometimes means only *passing by* (*praeteritio*) but at other times both *passing by* (*praeteritio*) and *condemnation* (*damnatio*) is reflected in the Canons, precisely in the two articles against which the gravamen is directed. In I, 6 the phrase "that decree of election and reprobation" (*decretum illud electionis et reprobationis*) refers to reprobation in its narrower sense, as the equivalent of nonelection or passing by, with only God's good pleasure as its cause. In I, 15, however, the phrase "and this is the decree of reprobation" (*decretum reprobationis*) refers to reprobation in its broader sense, as embracing both preterition (nonelection, or passing by) with God's good pleasure as its cause, and damnation, with man's sin as its cause.

In this report, whenever there is a danger of being misunderstood, we shall make clear in which sense we are using the word *reprobation*. In harmony with the teaching of I, 6 and I, 15, however, the committee affirms that no other cause can be found for the *passing by* than God's sovereign good pleasure, whereas the cause of *condemnation* is man's sin and unbelief.

One further comment should be made. The fact that I, 15 speaks of "the decree of reprobation" should not be understood as implying that this is a separate decree or decision of God which stands wholly by itself, independent of the decree of election. The decree or decision of reprobation is to be thought of as an aspect of a single decree or decision. The fact that I, 6 speaks of a "decree of election and reprobation" makes this clear, as does also the statement in I, 8, "There are not various decrees of election, but one and the same decree...." It should be noted in addition that even I, 15, which speaks of "the decree of reprobation," begins with a discussion of election, going on

to say that it is the testimony of Scripture that "not all, but some only, are elected, while others are passed by...." In other words, that Canons in I, 15 understand God's passing by of some not as the content of a separate decree but as an action of God which is involved in, and therefore a facet of, the one decree of election.

Now there are elements of truth and elements of error in the above. It is certainly true that traditionally the decree of reprobation has been distinguished into preterition and damnation. It is also true that, while these terms are not used, this same distinction may be found in the Canons, as the report states.

But the elements of error are serious, and they pave the way for the corruption of the truth of reprobation of which I accused the Study Report above. The elements of error are two:

1) The report conveniently overlooks the fact that by "damnation" is meant the *decree* of damnation. And accordingly, it also opens the way already here for conditional reprobation. It is certainly true that man's sin is the cause of condemnation. But it is *not* true that man's sin and unbelief are the cause of the *decree* of condemnation. The latter is the Arminian error which occasioned the Canons.

2) The report in the last paragraph quoted above makes the Canons teach that reprobation is but a facet of the one decree of election. Now the committee's own correction of the translation of Canons I, 15 should have guarded them against making the statements which they make in this last paragraph. For the change in the translation exactly shuts the door on a doctrine of single predestination. Nevertheless, the committee goes right ahead and introduces this idea here. It is correct, you see, to say that both election and reprobation are facets of the one decree of *predestination*. This is nothing but the old doctrine of *praedestinatio gemina*, double predestination. But it is not correct — and the Canons do not teach this in I, 15 — to say that reprobation is but a facet of the one decree of *election*. This is the error of single predestination. But it is very plain that Canons I, 15 goes out of its way to posit a distinct and positive and active decree of reprobation — just as Dr. Boer claims in his gravamen.

To take this second matter first, one can trace a consistent and ever clearer attempt on the part of the Study Report to reduce what is called the preterition-aspect (passing by aspect) of reprobation to such a single predestination doctrine, to reduce reprobation from a positive and active decree of God to pass by and to leave in the common misery to a mere doctrine of non-election and ultimately to a literal statement of limited election. But limited election is not the doctrine of the



Canons, and it is simply preposterous to attempt to impose it on the Canons.

Here are several quotations from the Report which prove that the Study Committee takes the position which I impute to them: — p. 362 Dort points out, however, that according to scriptural teaching God decides to choose *only some* as recipients of this gift of faith, and so to choose only some for the salvation which he, on the basis of the work of Jesus Christ, has decreed as consequent upon faith. It is God's eternal decree to select certain ones for the gift of faith and to pass others by for this gift. This choosing of some and passing by of others can be thought of as a single (complex) decision. But we can also speak of the former phase of this decree as the decree of election and of the latter as the decree of reprobation. Reprobation, as understood in Article I, 6, is a passing by with respect to the gift of faith.

—p. 369 (Speaking of Calvin and Berkhof) In other words, these Reformed theologians taught the "doctrine of reprobation" because they were convinced that the kind of election to eternal life *which the Bible teaches is a limited election....*

—p. 370 These words, that is to say, are a statement about divine election — a statement which underscores and illumines the unmerited grace of that election. That statement is this: election is limited, not universal; some only are elected, while others are passed by. *This is the testimony of sacred Scripture. The body of scriptural material alluded to, in other words, is not a group of passages which independently prove the doctrine of reprobation, but rather a group of Scripture passages which affirm that election is limited.* (Virtually the same thing is stated in the next paragraph.)

—p. 391 It is the conviction of your committee that the scriptural teaching on election is this: election

to eternal life is not universal, but limited. If election is limited to certain persons, or to a certain body of persons, there are some who have not been elected. To say that some have not been elected, we believe, is only another way of saying that not all have been elected.

At this point the report produces some alleged scriptural proof for their position, all designed merely to show the same idea, that if some are elected, others are not elected.

But now note that this doctrine of limited election becomes the doctrine of reprobation, so that the terms can be interchanged. On page 396 we find the following:

We have seen that the Scriptures do not teach a doctrine of reprobation which makes God the cause of the unbelief of man and which describes God as condemning people wholly apart from their merit or demerit. We have also seen, however, that the Scriptures do teach a kind of "doctrine of reprobation" — that is, that God's election of people to eternal life is a limited one, which does not include all men. This being the case, there are some who have not been elected to eternal life. If one prefers, therefore, instead of speaking of a "doctrine of reprobation" he could speak about a "doctrine of limited election" as another way of saying the same thing. The aspect of this doctrine which has just been described is commonly called *preterition* (or *passing by*).

There you have it! The committee has at last arrived literally where it wanted to arrive: reprobation is nothing but limited election.

Space forbids more in this issue. Perhaps — if the whole matter has not been decided by our July 1 issue — we can discuss the committee's doctrine of *conditional* reprobation at that time. But I assure the reader that the committee disagrees with and contradicts the Canons also on this score.

## FROM HOLY WRIT

# Exposition Of Galatians 6

By Rev. G. Lubbers

### THE GREAT COMMANDMENT FULFILLED IN SARAH'S CHILDREN (Galatians 6:10)

Our verse still is a continuation of the spiritual keeping of the Sabbath; it is the "yielding of our-

selves" to the Lord of the Sabbath" to work by His Spirit in us." It is truly the beginning of the eternal Sabbath in this life (Is. 66:23). It is truly a walking in newness of life which is not according to the oldness of the letter (Rom. 7:6).



We are here exhorted to "work the good to all." The "good" is something useful, profitable, a benefit to our fellow men and fellow Christians. Sometimes this "the good" refers to the eternal good of being presently forever with the Son of God amongst His redeemed brethren and sisters in glory (Rom. 8:28). We are to do "good" even where evil is done to us, overcoming evil with the good (Rom. 12:21). Those who do good have praise from those who are in authority (Rom. 13:4). We are to work with our hands the good, that we may have to give to him that wants (Eph. 4:28). And whatsoever good we do, be we slave or master, we shall receive a reward from the Lord (Eph. 6:8). Notice that the "working good" in our text is the same as "doing good" in verse 8. This is evident from the "wherefore" let us do good!

There is no limit to the working the good. We must do this as we have "opportunity." We must buy out the time (Eph. 5:16). Paul had given instruction thus to do good, that no opportunity to do good be left undone. The love of Christ must constrain us! The poor were the great concern of the apostles Peter and James when Paul met with them in Jerusalem (Gal. 2:10). And had not Paul given instruction to these Galatian churches and prescribed collections to be taken in their midst upon every *first day* of the week (I Cor. 16:1,2)? For such performing of mercy is the quintessence of keeping the Sabbath Day (Matt. 12:1,2; Luke 6:2-9; John 5:9-18). And now Paul, including himself, says, "let us work the good to all." Perhaps the great directive for this doing good to all we have in that beautiful heart-searching parable of the "good Samaritan" (Luke 10:30-37).

But such good we must work "particularly to those who are of the household of faith." Mercy begins at home. The household of faith are all those in whose heart God works by His Spirit, and who, therefore, confess "the faith". This faith is the truth in Jesus, the twelve articles of faith. That faith is the manifested truth in Jesus' crucifixion, death, and resurrection, is evident from Eph. 21:19-22. See also Gal. 3:7, 23, 25. *Faith* has now come in Jesus. We are such a household of this faith, confessing this faith and walking by this faith through the power of the Spirit. This household of faith is in many lands, composed of those who are far and near. One day these shall all be in that one great Fatherhouse with its many mansions (Gal. 6:10; Eph. 2:19). To these of the household of faith we show mercy, and perform the weightier things of the law: judgment, mercy, and faith (Matt. 23:23; Micah 6:6-9). Thus we make friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, and we will be received into eternal habitation in the ages to come (Luke 16:9). Where we are faithful in little here, we

then shall be placed over much there (Luke 16:11; Matt. 25:34-40). Also here God is not mocked (Matt. 25:45, 46). God looks for the infallible fruits of election of grace in the free-born sons of Sarah.

### THE REAL ISSUE OF THE GOSPEL TRUTH SET IN BOLD RELIEF ONCE MORE (Galatians 6:11-16)

It is my understanding that now Paul took the pen from the hand of his amanuensis; he now concludes the last paragraph of the letter with his own hand. (See Lightfoot, Greijdanus, and others.) Paul will now recapitulate the entire situation in Galatia and the erroneous teaching, which is worthy of God's anathema, in a few words. For, although Paul does not state it explicitly, here rings the sound of Paul's anathema in every syllable. Paul thus ends this epistle on the very keynote on which he sounded the warning against corrupters of the Gospel in Chapter 1:8,9.

Paul will now in "large letters" set forth the very heart of the issue, once more, in a glorious personal confession. Ever Paul would preach nothing else save Jesus Christ and him crucified (I Cor. 1:18-25; 2:2). In that Cross of Christ he glories, with solid boasting in the LORD, the covenant God (I Cor. 1:30,31). Notice that Paul says that he writes in large "letters." Always remember and never forget what I here write to you. The word for letters in the Greek text is "*gramma*," which is something written or cut with a stylus in the ancient manner of writing (Robinson Lexicon). The writing on the Cross was in such letters (Luke 23:28). Paul is, evidently, not referring to the length of this letter to the Galatians, for this letter is relatively short when compared with both the epistles to the Romans and the Corinthians. Rather Paul is calling attention to his own handwriting, wherewith he did not merely sign this letter, but wherewith also he concludes this letter in the last paragraph. What a beautiful paragraph! It comes straight from the heart of the great apostle, and it goes directly to the very marrow of the entire letter once more. It is a superb defense of the truth of the Gospel in Christ.

### THE EXPOSING OF THE WICKEDNESS OF THOSE WHO APOSTATIZE FROM THE FAITH (Galatians 6:12,13)

Paul takes all these apostatizers and Gospel-corrupters in one mighty swath of his apostolic pen. Writes he, "as many as will to have a good face in the flesh." There is not one exception allowed; all are cut out of the same cloth. They are mere face-savers, who lose their soul. The term in the Greek is *euprosopoesai*, which means: make a fair appearance. There is something insincere and very hypocritical about all these apostatizers. They are really



very double-minded: double-souled they are. They want to try to live in a spiritual detente with the Jewish law-mongers, who are a scandal in the church. They will do this by fatally compromising the truth of the Gospel itself. They would place the free children of heavenly status and birth under the bondage of the law, by circumcising them with the Old Testament rite of the Covenant, making them in duty-bound to fill the whole law. Thus Christ would be of no profit for them at all. They would still be in their sins (Gal. 5:2; I Cor. 15:17).

These apostatizing confessors are ashamed of the Cross of Jesus! They would escape the persecution for the sake of the Cross which was *the* offense to the unbelieving Jews. Christ they really dare not confess before men. Their *motive* is to escape any suffering with Christ, Who atoned for our sins on the Cross. They virtually deny Him Who came to fulfill the Father's will (John 4:24; 5:36; 17:4; 19:30). For this Christ, Who is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes, whether Jew or Greek, they will not confess with their lips, because they do not believe in their hearts. Therefore, they are intimidated by the fury of the Jewish zealots; they will have the names of being Christians, while at the same time they will to placate these haters of the Cross, who stumble at the stone laid in Zion. They are like the seed sown in stony ground (Matt. 13:5,6,20,21). From such the true believers must distance themselves in order that they may bring forth fruits in patience, hundred-fold, sixtyfold and thirtyfold (Matt. 13:23; Luke 8:15).

These face-savers are also very insincere, just as were the Pharisees (Matt. 23:4). Paul says that they who would have the Galatians circumcised are not interested in keeping the law. Circumcision is not an end, but it is the fleshly means to an end, to wit, not to be persecuted. They would place a heavy burden on others, burdens which annihilate the "light burdens" of Christ (Matt. 11:30; Gal. 1:7; 4:12). They play with the souls of men. They put the pressure on them with constraining speech to be circumcised. (For the term "constrain" see Matt. 14:22; Mark 6:45; Acts 28:18.) No, they did not "compel," coerce them to yield their false teaching, as did Paul when he persecuted the church in his ignorance through unbelief (Luke 14:23; Acts 26:11; I Tim. 1:12-16). They pressure them to yield to their false teaching with overmastering influ-

ence. These false teachers are very adamant. Their purpose? To find comfort for their own accusing conscience that others too are being circumcised, who had confessed to find their all in the only Name given under heaven whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:12). They would boast (have *ground* for boasting - *kaucheesoontai*) in the flesh of you! What a low, mean motive!

### PAUL'S GREAT AND EXEMPLARY CONFESSION (Galatians 6:14-15)

Paul here sets forth forcibly and clearly the *only ground* of boasting given under heaven. He sets this his boast in sharp opposition to those who boast in the flesh of other men, or in a mere rite of circumcision, instead of in the fulfilled promise of God. Because of the excellency of the latter, he counts the former as so much dung and loss. He boasts in the knowledge of the excellency of Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:4-11). Yes, Paul really confirms this his holy resolution of boast in Christ with an oath: God forbid (*mee genoite*)! May God prevent in His mercy that he (Paul) would ever glory or boast in anything except in the Cross of Christ. At a very crucial point of doctrine or maintenance of the truth of the Gospel, Paul uses this affirmatory path often (Rom. 3:4,6,31; 6:12,15; 7:7,13; 9:14; 11:1,11). In the Old Testament Scriptures we read such a beautiful "God forbid" from the lips of Samuel and Jonathan (I Sam. 12:23; 14:45). This oath can only be spoken by hallowed lips of those who swear by the God of truth (Is. 65:16). Paul feels his deep and profound reliance upon God to keep him in the confession of the truth.

Paul would only and ever boast in the Cross of Christ! This Cross is most definitely of our Lord Jesus Christ. Notice:

1. The Cross is here singled out. In the Greek, Paul uses the definite article. This points out the well-known Cross of Christ as being in a class all by itself. There were many crosses and crucified ones in the annals of Rome; historians speak of many of these crosses. But the Cross on which the Lord of glory died, stood at Calvary between two other crosses of malefactors outside of the gate of Jerusalem (Luke 23:33; Heb. 13:12,13). Paul will go outside of the gate and bear Christ's reproach. He will not count the blood of Christ an unclean thing, neither will he trample the Son of God under foot (Heb. 10:29).

Know the standard and follow it.  
Read The Standard Bearer



## SIGNS OF THE TIMES

# The Last Time: How Are We Living?

*Rev. R. Flikkema*

In our series under the above heading, we have now reached the final article that I have been called upon to write for this rubric. And, therefore, that means that we will finish this series with the powerful Word of God as that is set forth for us in the fifth chapter of the Book of Daniel.

From the point of view of history, approximately seventy years have gone by from the beginning of chapter one up until the beginning of chapter five. We have noticed many things that have happened during those seventy years. Daniel and his three friends were taken into Nebuchadnezzar's court and were subjected to a horrible plot. Daniel by an act of faith refused to eat of the king's meat. Nebuchadnezzar dreamed a dream of a great image which was crushed by a little stone. Daniel's three friends were cast into a fiery furnace because they refused to bow down to a great image. God brought upon Nebuchadnezzar a horrible insanity as punishment for his horrible pride.

And all the while God's people sat by Babel's streams and wept. They wept! Why did they weep? They wept because for seventy long years they had been in Babylon's land. For seventy long years they had been subjected to fierce opposition and hatred. But most of all they wept because for seventy long years they had been separated from the land of Canaan and from the House of God. Oh, how they longed for that House of God and for the fellowship of God that that House provided. For that reason God's people wept.

But now their tears are all wiped away. God hath wiped away all tears from their eyes, for the Word of God to His people, as that is expressed in this fifth chapter of the Book of Daniel is, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen! God reigns over the kingdom of men and giveth it to whomsoever He will. The victory is of the Lord and of His Christ. Hence, no more tears need God's people, who are in Babylon's land, shed.

And that, esteemed reader, is also the Word of God to you and to me in these last times. The Lord our God has also wiped away all tears from our eyes as we live in the midst of this world, Babylon's land. He has! He has exactly because this powerful

word has proceeded from the mouth of Him Who is and Who was and Who is to come. Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen!

What a horrible sin was and is Babylon's sin. This chapter brings us before a great banquet hall wherein are gathered King Belshazzar, his wives and concubines, and no fewer than one thousand of his lords, his mighty men. In this banquet hall a great feast is in progress. Food in abundance is brought out. The wine is flowing freely. The king, his women, and his lords are making merry. Everyone is having a good time. And sin is being committed! The horrible sin that is being committed consisted in the first place in this, that all those who were gathered in that banquet hall were thoroughly drunk. They were stone drunk. Beshazzar, his women, and his lords had been tasting the wine for some time, and the wine was now beginning to taste good. In the very drunken state of everyone concerned, that sin of drunkenness led to another sin: the sin of the most horrible and basest degeneracy. The king's women were at that feast. They were not there because they were expected to be there. On the contrary, the very opposite is true. The king's women were simply not allowed at such royal festivities such as were in progress in the king's banquet hall. Such a thing was totally unheard of. But at this festivity, at this king's feast, they were there. And they were there because King Belshazzar had wanted them there. And he had wanted them there in order to please the king's drunken men! But such was not the end of it. For in the midst of their drunken state, and in the midst of their horrible lust, the king utters a command. A command which ordered his servants to do something which was also unheard of or allowed, namely, a command to bring in the vessels of the House of God, in order that the king and his lords and his women might drink therefrom! We must understand that also that sort of thing was totally unheard of. Oh, the wicked nations of Babylon's day had no qualms about seizing the vessels out of a given temple. But it was simply forbidden on the part of those wicked nations of Babylon's day to use those vessels for any purpose. But Belshazzar did not give a snap about that. He did not care in



the least about that which was ordinarily forbidden or unheard of. He had already brought in the women, and now he had brought in the vessels of the House of God. From those vessels which had been dedicated to the service of Jehovah God, the king drank. And having drunk from those vessels, the king "praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone." Notice that. He praised the gods of gold and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone!

And that was his horrible sin. At that feast Belshazzar praised gods that are no gods. He praised them, that is, he worshipped them. He bowed down to them. He extolled them as being the cause of all of Babylon's greatness. And in so doing he mocked the living God. He mocked Jehovah of hosts, the One only true God Who lives and reigns forever. He mocked the one God Who reigns over the kingdoms of men and giveth them to whomsoever He will. And he did that, mind you, with God's own vessels! That is the point. The king used the very vessels which had been dedicated to the service of Jehovah God to mock God! By his action whereby he brought the vessels of the House of God to his feast, and by his action whereby he drank wine from those vessels, his word was, my gods are great. My gods of wood and stone are powerful. And who is Jehovah Whose vessels these are? Jehovah is nothing. All that Jehovah is good for is to provide vessels from which I might drink wine. In utter contempt and derision did the king hold Jehovah.

That was Babylon's sin. And that is Babylon's sin still today. Still today Babylon, this world, never ceases to mock our God. Still today this wicked world glories in all its greatness. Still today this wicked world glories in all that it has done. Still today this wicked world gathers at its great feasts, becomes drunk on its wine, commits horrible fornication as a result of its great lust. And, in the midst of its horrible degeneracy and baseness, still today this wicked world dares to mock God! The world today, as it did in the past, has no use for God. We live in a thoroughly wicked and godless world. And, indeed, the most striking reality of it all is that the world today still uses the same means that it has always used to show that it has no use for God. By that I mean simply this, that the world still today uses the very vessels of the House of God which have been dedicated to the service of God in order to mock God! What are those vessels, those vessels, which have been dedicated to the service of God? Unmistakably those vessels are you and me. Those vessels are the very Church of Jesus Christ. We are God's chosen vessels whom He has dedicated unto His service. And the world today looks at us, God's chosen vessels; it looks at us who are so very small

and insignificant as far as the world is concerned, and it says to us, if you are any indication of the greatness and the powerfulness of your God, then your God is not much! Look at you. You are small. You are insignificant. You are nothing. And because you are small and insignificant and nothing, your God must be small and insignificant and nothing. And because your God is small and insignificant and nothing, He deserves to be mocked!

But you can not mock God! I know that we emphasized that in our last article. But we must emphasize that once again. You can not mock God. God will have those who hold Him in derision, in derision. And that He will is vividly manifest in this chapter. In the midst of Babylon the great's mockery of God, God sends a finger. A finger which writes a message on a wall. A message which declares to all the world, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen! God did that with Babylon of old. Belshazzar, his women, and his lords were busy mocking God. And then all of a sudden it happened! Fingers of a man's hand came forth. And having come forth, those fingers wrote three words on the wall of that banquet hall: Mene, Tekel, and Upharsin. Oh what an awesome frightening thing that must have been to see those fingers writing those words on that wall. And it was! Belshazzar was frightened. At the sight of those fingers Belshazzar was literally terrified! The joints of his loins became loosed. His knees began to shake. And we read that at the sight of those fingers his "countenance was changed." His face became pale. At the sight of those fingers all the color drained from his face. He was terrified. And in his terrified state he calls upon his wise men to interpret those words. But as so often before, the wise men can not interpret those words. Finally he calls upon Daniel. He attempts to give Daniel a gift if Daniel will only tell him what those words mean. That gift Daniel refuses. He says to Belshazzar, your gift I do not want. I will have nothing of it. And I will have nothing of it because you have mocked God. You have mocked God even as your father, Nebuchadnezzar, mocked God. Do you not remember that? Your father mocked God. And, too, do you not remember what happened to your father exactly because he mocked God? This is what happened. He was driven from among men. He ate grass as the oxen. The dew of heaven fell upon him. All of that happened to your father because he mocked God. And now you also and this great Babylon which dare to mock God shall experience the just condemnation of God. You, O king, and this great Babylon shall fall! "Mene: God hath numbered thy kingdom and finished it." That is, God hath set the limits of the kingdom of Babylon, and this Babylon has come to an end.



"Tekel: Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting." That is, God hath placed you on His balance scale, and you have not measured up. You have not measured up on the scale of God's righteousness. You are found wanting. "Upharsin: The kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians." That is, your kingdom, Babylon the great, is divided, all broken up. Babylon the great, which you thought was so invincible is all broken up. It is fallen, O king, by the hand of the God Whom you mocked!

Indeed, those were Daniel's words. No, they were the very words of Jehovah, the living God Himself, to the Babylon of long ago. And they are the words of Jehovah, the living God Himself, to the Babylon of this world. To the Babylon of this world which dares to mock God, God says, you are numbered. You are weighed and found wanting. You are broken. And you are fallen. Numbered, weighed, broken, and fallen by My Son! Yes, esteemed reader, those are God's words to the Babylon of this world. Through Jesus Who died upon the cross, God crushed the horrible mockery of this world. Through Jesus Who died upon the

cross, God brought His condemnation and just judgment upon this world. Through Jesus Who died upon the cross, the world is numbered and weighed and broken and fallen! It is fallen utterly to its everlasting ruin! But through Jesus the Church is saved. It is saved through the very blood of the Lamb by Whom God crushed this world, and by Whom God brought His just judgment upon this world.

And for us who live in these last times, that is the Word of God which we must never forget. Our tears that we shed as we walk in these last times through Babylon's land are all wiped away. They are wiped away by Jehovah the God of our salvation, Who lives and Who reigns eternally. Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen. But we are risen: risen through Christ Jesus, risen to stand with Christ Jesus forever!

That to be sure is the Word of God to Babylon. And that to be sure is the Word of God to us who live in these last times. Be comforted with that Word. Are you? Do you live with that comfort? Remember these are the last times. But the question is: how are we living?

## THE DAY OF SHADOWS

# Prayerful and Proper Preparation

*Rev. John A. Heys*

Having been strengthened inwardly by his wrestling with God in prayer the night before, Jacob now faces a most critical moment in his earthly life. Physically exhausted from his wrestling with the arm of flesh, in that night-long struggle until the day began to dawn, but with spiritual strength graciously given to him, he goes to meet the man who twenty years before made known his intention to kill him.

He goes to meet Esau, his twin brother as far as the flesh is concerned, but a spiritually different brother as far as the soul is concerned. He goes in obedience to God, Who commanded him to return to the land of his fathers. And let it be understood that walking in obedience to God will always bring us face to face with enemies. We live in a world of

enemies of God. We are children of light in the midst of a generation of children of darkness. And when we make friends with these children of darkness by disobeying God, we find that we are face to face with a far more formidable Enemy than these children of darkness. "Know ye not," James asks, "that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?" James 4:4. We ought not overlook that truth; and by all means, we ought not try to talk it away. We are surrounded by enemies; and if as God's friends we walk in obedience to Him, these enemies of God, seeing God in our walk, are going to oppose us. Yet this is far to be preferred to disobeying God in order to obtain or retain the friendship of the children of darkness and experience the wrath of an holy God.



Now these enemies of God are not always those of other races and nations and families. They can be and often are blood relatives. That surely was the case here in the family of Isaac. Jacob, who had just received his new name, Israel (Prince of God), goes to meet an enemy who is his blood brother, but is called by God Himself a "profane person." When Jacob's grandfather, Abraham, had obeyed God and left Ur of the Chaldees to go to Canaan, his obedience brought him where he was surrounded by enemies of another race and people. He, the descendant of Shem, came by God's command into the land of the descendants of Ham whose son, Canaan, was the object of the curse pronounced by Noah. And God is beginning to fulfill His promise to Shem that Canaan would be a servant of servants to his brethren. But with Jacob now it is a case of enemies that are not only related by blood ties, but of a brother so closely related to him that at birth he had hold of this brother's heel, and that came into being through the same conception and birth.

Jacob knows of his brother's hatred and of the threat which he made to take his life. This is evident in that he sends his servants ahead to assure Esau that he is not coming to take his possessions away, and that he has plenty of cattle and riches which he did not take from his brother. Jacob also knows that his brother is able to destroy him and all his family, and then take possession of all his cattle for which he worked those six hard years in the house of Laban his father-in-law. It is indeed a critical moment in his life when the day has come for him to meet his brother. It is not merely a case of meeting a brother not seen for a long time. It is not a case of a reunion with one who has been letting you know how much he misses you. It is the case of one who deceived meeting the one whom he deceived. And it is the case of one who believes in God meeting one who is not ruled by the fear of God. Although they are twin brothers, they are in no sense of the word alike. Spiritually they have a different source of life. In outward appearance they were very different from birth. The one now is a strong healthy man, with four hundred men like him, all fully equipped with sword and spear. The other is a cripple who has difficulty walking to meet his brother, and is completely unarmed as far as weapons of war are concerned. And it is to be understood that Jacob is uneasy. We must not make light of the situation and ignore the facts in the case. There was very real danger here for Jacob. The events of this day will reveal what the future holds for Jacob. The past is colored with shameful deeds of deceit and works which occasioned this hatred in Esau, and threatened death to Jacob personally. The present is filled with the potential explosion of vengeance of the

man who has no fear of God in him. The future is clouded by what may happen today.

Understand well that Jacob has divided his family so that Esau, if he kills some of the wives and children, will not be able to kill all of his seed. Remember also that Jacob has no certainty that he himself will escape Esau's sword. God had given him no such promise. When God gave rich promises to Abraham that he would inherit the land, this did not mean that Abraham himself personally could be sure that he would live to see the day when all of the land from the River of Egypt (which is not the Nile) to the River Euphrates would be his to live in and enjoy as his land. God gave it to Abraham in his seed. And God gives it to Abraham and to us in that the new creation will be ours. So, although God repeatedly promised Jacob to make a great nation of him, and to give him that land promised to Abraham, Jacob could not conclude that he personally would escape Esau's sword to live long enough to be able to say of that land of Canaan that it was his, and that all the Canaanites had been driven out. Jacob never did have such a fulfillment of God's promises to him; and he died in Egypt when none of his seed was in the land that was promised. And so the danger that Jacob himself might die that day was very real to Jacob, and in very fact. It was not a matter of unbelief for Jacob to fear such death at Esau's hand. He understood full well that God's promise would be fulfilled in his children; and in fact it was in his children's children many generations farther down the corridor of history.

Yes, God did promise Jacob at Bethel to be with him in all his way and to bring him back to this land (Genesis 28:13-15). But it is Jacob's vow that Jehovah will be his God, if He will bring him back "in peace" to his father's house. God did not tell Jacob that he would return in peace and would escape Esau's sword. Similarly today, we have God's word for it that we, as those that fear Him, shall see our children's children, according to Psalm 128:6. That is no promise, however, that in *this life* all those that fear God are going to see their children's children on this earth, and in this life. It points to the new Jerusalem where we shall see our children's children in the glory of God's kingdom. And that means a whole lot more than merely seeing them in this life before we die. So Jacob is assured his seed shall obtain the land, while Jacob himself cannot conclude that he will live to see that day.

God did tell Jacob in that wrestling match that he must in the way of prayer, and in full reliance upon God, expect God to keep all His promises. He did teach Jacob that he must not in sinful ways seek to obtain what has been promised. God even changed



his name to Israel (Prince of God) because he prevailed through prayer. Yet here as well God did not promise Jacob that Esau would not kill him. What Jacob was sure of, and what God promised him, was that Esau could not kill all his seed. Therefore it is that he prays that beautiful prayer, "O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which saidst to me, Return unto thy country and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee: I am not worthy of the least of thy mercies, and of all the truth, which Thou hast showed to Thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and am now become two bands. Deliver me I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children."

Note: "Deliver me, I pray Thee," which shows that Jacob had not the promise that Esau would not kill him. Note also that the ground for his assurance in the next verse is that some of his children will escape, "For Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered."

In light of all this, we must not judge Jacob to be utterly carnal and up to his old tricks in seeking safety from Esau, and in striving to keep his children from Esau's sword. His tremendously great gift to Esau is another matter with which we will have to deal later. But putting his wives and children in separate groups, those of the handmaids first, Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph last, was not a matter of trickery or of unbelief.

All use of means for safety is not to be condemned. Carelessness is never God's way. We may not pray to God and then sit down and wait for Him to keep us safe, when danger is present and life is threatened. Jesus never rebuked those who came to Him for healing. Scripture never tells us to throw all caution to the wind and just pray and pray and pray. If we run to the physician without any thought of God, if we seek means and put our trust in these means, we sin greatly. But if after we have committed the whole matter to God, we make use of the means which He has made available, we may not be called carnal, and be accused of walking in unbelief. After Hezekiah prayed for his life when desperately ill, and in fact "sick unto death," God

sent Isaiah the prophet to tell him that he would recover. God even told Hezekiah through Isaiah that he would live another fifteen years. Did he then refuse that treatment of the lump of figs, and say, "God promised me I would not die, and so I do not need that lump of figs"? And he had the promise of living another fifteen years, which Jacob did not have. Throwing caution to the winds and walking carelessly is not walking by faith.

No, Jacob is throwing himself upon God's mercy, and is holding on to God's promise when he puts his seed with their mothers in the safest place that he can find there on the way to Bethel. He is holding on to God's promise, and because of his firm conviction that God will give him seed like the sand of the seashore, he does what God gave him to use to defend and make safe this seed which must live, and which he is sure will live. In this we may not accuse him of wrestling with men, or of trusting in the arm of flesh.

Jacob could be very tricky and deceptive; and Jacob certainly had a besetting sin. But we must not lose sight of the fact that the new principle of life was in him. His name Israel, or Prince of God, contains the name of God, and Jacob had God not only in his name, but in his heart as a reborn child of God. We ought, therefore, to seek to find manifestations in his life of that new life and its faith, as we take note of what shows up his carnality and works of unbelief. We ought to rejoice as greatly when we hear him speak words of faith, as we feel sad when we see him wrestling with men.

Therefore his prayer after he heard that Esau was coming with four hundred armed men should assure us of his great faith in God. How humble he is here before God to confess that he is not worthy of the least of all God's mercies. How firmly he clings to God and pleads in full trust and confidence in God when he cries, "Deliver me from my brother....whom I fear."

Do not close your eyes to Jacob's sins, nor to the sins of fellow members in the church. But by all means rejoice in their acts of faith. Help them to fight their sins, but let them also know that you have noticed their faith in God and that you rejoice that they too are His children with the same promises that you have.

Subscribe Now  
to  
**THE STANDARD BEARER**





## GUEST ARTICLE

## The Fear of the Lord

Rev. R. G. Moore

The Spirit of Christ through the holy writer of the Proverbs instructs us in wisdom and understanding, the beginning of which is the fear of the Lord, according to the Spirit in Prov. 1:7 and Ps. 111:10. The wisdom of the Proverbs is at the same time simple, and profound. The proverbs give instruction in godliness and this over against wickedness and foolishness. And as there is nothing new under the sun, these proverbs are surely timely for us to consider.

Thus in this article we have chosen to write concerning a most fundamental calling of God's people as it is set forth by the Spirit of Christ in Proverbs 3:7. There is a growing tendency in the church to depart from godly reverence and fear in our day. Spiritualness is on the wane, it is even as Christ has said of the last time, "the love of many shall wax cold." And because of this growing inclination of the world, we too can easily be swallowed up in the ungodliness of our age. Let then the Word of God be a warning to us. May we have grace to hear! For only then shall we continue faithfully to manifest the church of Jesus Christ.

The Proverb that forms the basis of this article is Proverbs 3:7. We quote it: "Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil." The fear of the Lord is indeed the reverence of God's holy name, and the desire and activity of serving Him in all things. The Scripture teaches us that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Prov. 1:7). It is the instruction of wisdom (Prov. 15:33). And to do God's commandments is understanding (Ps. 110:10). The true fear of God is, according to this word, a deep spiritual, ethical knowledge and understanding of Jehovah, our covenant God.

In the second place, negatively, the fear of the Lord is the hatred of evil — all evil, with no exception! This is especially significant over against the present emphasis on synthesis in this present life, also as seen in the church world. Often the church says today that we must enter the evil works of man in order to understand and to change them. However, the fear of the Lord is not even to take on

the appearance of evil or sin. Or, as we read in another Proverb, that pride, arrogancy, the evil way, and the froward mouth does Jehovah hate, see Prov. 8:3. True godly fear is to depart from evil (Prov. 16:6, Job 1:1).

Positively once again, the fear of the Lord is a strong confidence; for God's children have a place of refuge in the mercy, in the eternal love and care of Jehovah (Prov. 14:26,27). The fear of the Lord is thus trust and hope and is a fountain of life to us (Prov. 14:27, Job 4:6). Also, the fear of the Lord is the opposite of being afraid; it brings peace to the soul of the child of God. And in its strength God's children walk as instructed by the Lord and as they receive grace to hear.

The world of wicked men also walk in fear; but the fear of the wicked world is the fear of men. It, too, is the beginning of wisdom — a wisdom in their own eyes, a leaning on their own understanding. It is a fear of which we are to have no part! And they, too, are very busy instructing in their wisdom and in leading men to their understanding. They teach that all things are to be done for the common good of man. But this fear is the opposite of that in our text, it is not the hating of evil, but is the seeking of it.

This fear is built upon the arrogancy, pride, and the froward mouth. It is a delight in one's own strength and work, a standing upon one's own abilities and understanding. Their confidence is in princes and chariots; their ability to sustain self is on the foreground — both physically and materially, as well as spiritually. It comes down to a trust in no one outside of self. This is not the way of the subject of the kingdom of Christ. We may not live in such selfish doubt and lack of trust in the ways of our God, or the means He uses to gather His church. For this selfish, self-serving fear is not a fountain of life but a veritable fountain of death. The wicked in their way cast up spiritual mire and dirt. Their tongues are tongues of fire, gnashing upon one another. And for them there is no rest. May this not be said of us.

It is obvious then that fearing is either the activi-



ty of faith, or the activity of unbelief. Note that there is no inbetween. Faith may never in its true sense be used to describe the wicked's trusting or fear. Faith is the gift of God bestowed upon the elect of God alone. And it has its source in the regenerated heart of the child of God. On the other hand, unbelief is the word Scripture uses to describe the fear and confidence of the wicked world. And unbelief has its source in the old man of sin. Thus the unbelieving world always says there is no God, and seeks wisdom in their own eyes, leaning on their own understanding. God's elect, the upright in heart, living consciously in faith by grace, trust in Jehovah alone, and walk in the fear of the Lord.

The object of the true, godly fear of the children of God is Jehovah, the living covenant God. Jehovah is the eternally changeless God, the I am that I am. Our trust and hope is not in the unstable ways, goals, and philosophies of man, but in the eternally perfect will of Jehovah. Our God is He Who is revealed to us in the inspired and infallible Scriptures. He is made known to us in Jesus Christ, the God of our salvation.

Thus, to fear Jehovah, His children must know Him! Faith is rightfully spoken of by our confessions when they call faith the certain knowledge and hearty confidence of the child of God. These two are intimately connected. To know God is to trust in Him alone, and to give to Him all glory, to fear and reverence His most precious Name. Our hope then is in His grace alone to save and in His Sovereign good pleasure to save us in His Son, Jesus Christ. This means then for us that we can rely upon His Word for the knowledge that leads us in the pathways of true wisdom and comfort. By grace God's people do so seek His Word. They lay fast hold on His word proclaimed. They turn again and again to the confessions given to the church by the leading of the Spirit of Christ for their learning. They steadfastly cling to the means of grace God provides them. And they grow and long to grow in the understanding of Jehovah. This spiritual aspect of life is their overriding concern and seeking. Thus they are prepared for the preaching from Sabbath to Sabbath. They love to gather together to study the Scriptures in fellowship of the saints; they come to catechism with a longing to grow in the truth — rather than looking to see how much work they can get out of, etc.

And so knowing Jehovah and seeking Him, they trust in Him with all their hearts and in all their lives. They see it is their calling to fear Jehovah, but also that it is their gracious privilege to do so. And they have peace, for their trust is in the unfailing God of their salvation. The opposite of being wise in one's own understanding or in one's own eyes

leaves one in trouble of soul with only anxiety and despair, weariness and finally death.

Thus Jesus instructs us to fear the Lord and depart from evil. This may lead us to question why this instruction is necessary. For since it is true that faith is a gift of God to His elect and also that the elect trust in the Lord and fear Him by grace through faith, and further that grace is not a thing from which we can fall, we could then ask, why does the Lord admonish us to fear Jehovah and depart from evil? Can God's children do otherwise? The answer of course is quite simple: we still have in this life our old nature that still clings to us. We have but a small beginning of new obedience. And may we not forget this in our preaching and instruction. Further, then, we also understand that the admonition of God's Word is the means of grace whereby Christ powerfully leads His children from sin and strengthens them to stand consciously in faith fearing Jehovah's precious Name.

We have in this life so much that yet clings to the wisdom of our own eyes — a leaning on our own understanding, which prevents the godly fear of Jehovah. We must remember that by nature our understanding and our wisdom (the wisdom of our own eyes) is darkened, corrupt, and untrustworthy. It hates God and will not put its confidence in Him. It is only as our understanding is come under grace that we shall fear God. This we receive in regeneration as Christ's Spirit grafts us into Christ and gives us faith to believe. This faith Christ powerfully activates by His Word as it is proclaimed. But even so, again I say that new obedience is just a beginning. Thus the Lord over and over again admonishes His church and calls them out of darkness into the gracious fellowship of the living God. Against this calling to spiritualness do not rebel!

Our experience as God's children is certainly one of need for this Word. All too often we assume a position of being wise in our own eyes. Much of our life is on this level. So often there is much of the earthy and little of the truly spiritual in our lives. This can and is indeed a cause of much anxiety, and even the cause of being afraid in this day. But even this is because we trust only that which we have immediately in our hand. We are not trusting Jehovah, nor do we fear His Name, the God of our salvation.

Christ admonishes us for our sanctification and for very life itself. It is His means to make us aware of our sin, weakness, and frailty. He calls us to repent and makes us aware of our calling before God. But at the same time the assurance comes to us in the way of our trust and godly fear. For the command of Christ is always accompanied by the



promise. They are knit together. Take note of this in the context of our text, in verses 1 & 2; 3 & 4; 5 & 6; 7 & 8; or in Proverbs 14:26,27. The Lord directs the paths of His children, and He is changeless from eternity. Our God blots out our sin and

iniquity in the blood of His own Son. And by grace He applies this Word to our hearts, He renews our understanding. And our God quickens our faith, leading us in the fear of His wondrous Name. He gives to His own life eternal!

## *MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE*

# Letter to Timothy

May 15, 1980

Dear Timothy,

In our last letter we discussed the wonderful power of confession which God works in the hearts and lives of His people, by which power God's people escape from the vicious cycle of sin which, apart from confession, drags them deeper and deeper into sin's bondage. Confession is exactly the great power whereby the shackles of sin are broken by which we are held captive. It is the God-given means whereby escape is effected from sin's slavery. It is the way in which we gain dominion over sin rather than sin having dominion over us.

We were discussing this in connection with the conscience. We talked about the fact that when the sinner continues in the way of sin, his conscience becomes more and more hardened to sin and his spiritual sensitivity to sin is more and more lost. A good conscience comes about, therefore, through confession. It is this truth which we must investigate in our present letter.

What does it mean to have a good conscience before the Lord? This is the crucial question. It is so crucial because it is only when we have a good conscience before God that we can have the joy of salvation, the peace that passes understanding in our hearts and lives, the assurance of God's favor and love upon us, and the spiritual and mental well-being which we so greatly crave. It is only when we have a good conscience before God that we can have serenity and quietness of spirit in the midst of this life no matter what the circumstances of our life may be. Whether we have prosperity or poverty, sickness or health, an easy road to walk or a life filled with trouble and distress, if we have a good conscience before God, we have the assurance that all is well and we have peace and joy in all our life.

The best way to understand what is a good conscience before God is to consider an example of this in Scripture. Such an example is found in II Kings 20:3. If you consult the history which forms the occasion for this text, then you will discover that Hezekiah was king over Judah. He had instituted a great reform in the southern kingdom after the terrible apostasy of Ahaz. He had brought Judah back again to the service of God and had banished idolatry from the land. But, in chapter 20, we read that Hezekiah was sick unto death and that Isaiah the prophet was sent to him to tell him to set his house in order because he would die and not live. Now Hezekiah did not want to die. We are not told specifically the reason for this, but it is possible that the reason was that he had, as yet, no son to sit on the throne of David after he died. That this is possible is suggested by the fact that his life was prolonged fifteen years and that his son, Manasseh, was twelve years old when he began to reign. This would seem to suggest not only that Manasseh was born after Hezekiah was told he would die, but that Manasseh was the only son Hezekiah had who could reign over Judah. However that may be, Hezekiah did not want to die; and so he prayed. His prayer is given to us in verse 3: "I beseech thee, O Lord, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight."

If you stop to think about it, this is a remarkable prayer. I can recall that when I was a child I wondered how it was possible for Hezekiah to pray a prayer such as this. He speaks in the prayer of his life which he had lived and describes that life as a walk before God with a perfect heart and in truth. He mentions that he did that which was good in God's sight. There is no mention made of sin at all. And he uses this as a basis for his request that his life be spared.



One would almost get the impression that Hezekiah is making in his prayer the loud boast of the Pharisee in the temple who thanked God that he was not as other men were. But this cannot be, for God heard this prayer of Hezekiah and sent Isaiah back to him with the words: "Thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will heal thee: on the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of the Lord."

Nor can it be that Hezekiah was simply not aware of the many sins which he had, as a matter of fact, committed in his life. This is impossible for any child of God, whether he lived in the Old or in the New Testament. He certainly knew, as we all know, that he was a very great sinner. And yet he prays: "Remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight."

Nor is this prayer of Hezekiah an isolated case in Scripture. It is a theme which is repeated often, in the Psalms for example. To quote but one example, the Psalmist of Psalm 119 sings: "So shall I keep thy law continually for ever and ever. And I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts. I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed. And I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved. My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments, which I have loved; and I will meditate in thy statutes" (vss. 44-48).

That this appears as a recurring theme in Scripture is certainly due to the fact that this ought to be and can be the prayer of every child of God. In fact, it is not too strong a statement to say that we are commanded by God to live in such a way that we can also pray, in good conscience before God: "I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight." It is well that we ask ourselves very seriously the question whether we can indeed make this prayer our own. If we cannot, then there is something radically wrong. We must arrive at that point in our lives when we can truly make this prayer our own. Then we have a good conscience before God.

But the question is: how is this possible in the light of the fact that we sin continuously and that, to use the words of our Heidelberg Catechism, even our best works are corrupted and polluted by sin?

The answer to this question is to be found in the cross of Jesus Christ. This is, e.g., stated literally in Hebrews 10: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us

draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water" (vss. 19-22).

So true is this that in the Old Testament there was only a limited reality of a good conscience before God. We read of this also in Hebrews 10:1, 2: "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins." The idea here is very clearly that, because the blood of the animal sacrifices could not take away sin, those who brought such sacrifices never ceased to have a conscience of sins. No doubt, when they brought their sacrifices by faith and saw in those sacrifices the perfect sacrifice of Christ Who was to come, they also experienced forgiveness. This is clearly taught throughout Scripture. But the fact remains that these animals could not make a perfect sacrifice and the offerings had to be repeated. The result was that the "conscience of sins" constantly returned. We have the perfect sacrifice of Christ once offered on the cross; and by His sacrifice, "our hearts are sprinkled from an evil conscience."

Now this means two things. It means, in the first place, that the child of God has a good conscience before God when he brings all his sins and guilt to the cross of Calvary and, by faith, appropriates the perfect sacrifice of Christ as his own so that he stands before God in the righteousness of Christ. When he lays hold, by faith, on Christ's perfect work and relies upon the one, finished sacrifice of Christ then, he knows in the depths of his heart that before God he has no sins. Then he can say: "I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight."

But it is immediately obvious that this cannot be all. Hezekiah in his prayer says more than this. He does not only speak of the fact that, even though he is a sinner, he stands forgiven in the blood of the promised Seed; he also speaks very emphatically of his walk as being in truth and with a perfect heart; and he claims that he has done that which is good in the sight of God.

This also refers to the cross of Christ, but from a slightly different point of view. When our Savior made His perfect sacrifice for sin on the cross He not only died for our sins and for our guilt, but He also earned for us full and complete salvation. He earned for us not only justification but also sanctification. He earned for us deliverance from sin but



also a new life of holiness and uprightness of heart. One who walks in good conscience before God is also one who so lives out of the power of the cross of Christ that he appropriates for himself the life of Christ earned for him on the cross. And living out of the perfect sacrifice of Christ, he lives in the holiness of life which Christ earned for him.

This lies in the nature of the case. When the child of God goes to the cross with the burden of his sins which trouble him so greatly, he confesses his sins, cries out for forgiveness and mercy, and pleads to be delivered from his sins through the power of Christ's cross. He *repents* of his sins! He turns away from them! He forsakes them! He leaves them all behind! This is implied in confession itself.

But he knows that he cannot leave his sins behind and "walk in a new and holy life" in his own strength. And so he walks every moment in conscious dependence upon the power of the cross. And, walking in conscious dependence upon the power of Christ Who lives in him, he walks in the ways of his God.

Then he also, walking in the way of sanctifica-

tion, walks in good conscience before God. His sins he confesses; his guilt he leaves at Calvary; his life he lives in the shadow and by the power of the cross.

Then it is true what our Belgic Confession so beautifully expresses, though in a negative way: "In the meantime, we do not deny that God rewards our good works, but it is through his grace that he crowns his gifts. Moreover, though we do good works, we do not found our salvation upon them; for we do no work but what is polluted by our flesh, and also punishable; and although we could perform such works, still the remembrance of one sin is sufficient to make God reject them. Thus then we would always be in doubt, tossed to and fro without any certainty, and our poor consciences continually vexed, if they relied not on the merits of the suffering and death of our Savior" (Article XXIV).

Next time we shall have to see how this is important for our spiritual and mental well-being.

Fraternally in Christ,  
H. Hanko

## Book Reviews

**I BELIEVE IN THE CHURCH**, by David Watson; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978; 368 pp., \$4.95 (paper). (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko)

This book is part of the "I Believe In. . ." series which Eerdmans is publishing. It is authored by the Pastor of St. Michael-le-Belfrey Church in York, England. The author came to this Church when it was very small and all but dead. Using the methods advocated in this book, the author built up the church into a large and flourishing congregation. Abandoning in large measure the traditional view of the Church and advocating a restructuring of the Church in almost every respect, the author presents a view of the Church which, though not in accord with the Scriptural doctrine of the Church, is in his judgment better suited to meet the demands of the Twentieth Century. It is not much help in the all-important study of ecclesiology and

gives insight only into what is being done today in an effort to revive dying congregations.

**SAFE IN THE HARBOR?**, by Jimmy Lyons; Reformation Educational Foundation, Manassas, Virginia; 1979; 42 pp., \$1.40 (paper). (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko)

Jimmy Lyons is a missionary evangelist at large in the Presbyterian Church of America. He wrote this book as a sort of diary which he kept on a "round-the-world" trip to visit places of poverty in Southeast Asia and India. It is his purpose to tell of the incredible suffering of the Vietnam refugees, of the indescribable poverty of the masses in India, of the efforts which are being put forth by the Church to alleviate some of this suffering, and of the solemn duty which the Churches in America have to support these relief efforts. The book is not intended to be theological, nor is the bit of theology contained in it soundly Reformed. Its intention is



more to give some impression of the suffering among the poor and displaced in Asia. But it is almost too brief even to do that.

The book can be ordered from REF, Inc., 9400 Fairview Avenue, Manassas, Virginia 22110.

I might add that the Reformed Educational Foundation which has published this pamphlet is a printing concern founded by men of the Presbyterian Church in America which offers a complete line of printing services and has as its goal the publication of materials of a Reformed and Presbyterian nature.

**THE ELDERS HANDBOOK**, A Practical Guide for Church Leaders; by Gerard Berghoef and Lester De Koster; Christian's Library Press, 1979; 303 pp., \$12.95. (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanks)

Gerard Berghoef is a furniture manufacturing executive who also served as elder in the Christian Reformed Church for twelve years; Lester De Koster is at present the editor of *The Banner*. These two have collaborated to prepare a book which can serve as a guide to ministers and elders in the work which Christ places upon them in the congregation.

The book is written from the viewpoint of Paul's last admonitions to the elders in the Church of Ephesus which are found in Acts 20:28-31. It has six main sections to it: these sections cover the idea of the eldership, the calling of elders in relationship to each other, the calling of elders in relation to the church both on the local level and on the level of the broader ecclesiastical assemblies, the calling of elders with respect to particular problems such as divorce and remarriage, etc., and the calling of elders with respect to the future. There are many worthwhile aspects to the book, some of which ought to be mentioned. Generally speaking, the book is written from a conservative and Biblical viewpoint and can be used by elders within our own Churches. It has many excellent practical ideas in it for particular aspects of the work of elders and much practical advice which is helpful in the many problems which elders confront. I have no doubt but that the book can be read and studied with profit by anyone who is determined to perform the work of his office in harmony with the Scriptures. It has also a rather lengthy section which deals with particular texts which can be used by elders in different problems which they meet and in different aspects of their work. This section alone is very worthwhile.

Nevertheless, there are weaknesses in the book. I do not dwell on these weaknesses to leave the impression that the book is not worth getting; but rather to serve as a guide to those who make use of it, so that they may know for what to beware.

While the book is intended to be a *practical* guide to the work of elders and while there is some material in the book concerning the idea of the office, we nevertheless consider the book deficient in this respect. I suppose it is difficult to say how much on this subject is too much when the book aims to be practical. But the fact remains that a clear understanding of the office as to its Scriptural idea is important for an understanding of the work which elders must perform. That the book lacks this becomes also apparent in places. Some of the advice given to elders would apply equally well to a busy executive in charge of a large manufacturing plant.

The book is written with too broad a purpose in mind. I mean that the book is intended to serve all elders regardless of their church affiliation and regardless of the type of church polity embraced in their particular denomination. It is therefore not always specific with respect to Reformed Church Polity and does not take a definite stand on particular doctrinal issues.

There are serious mistakes in the book. I mention three of the outstanding ones. In the first place, the book does not have a correct view of the relationship between the autonomy of the local congregation and the authority of the broader assemblies. While this subject is not treated in detail, the authors state:

Presbyterian and Reformed Churches locate authority, derived from Christ, in the congregation's eldership. Broader assemblies derive their authority, by delegation, from the local council or consistory or session. The classis, presbytery, conference, and again, the synod, general assembly, general conference can act for the local unity because they are presumed to be but extensions of it. It is out of this context that this handbook is written, allowing for such denominational adaptation as required. (p. 38)

In the second place, the book takes a wrong view of divorce and remarriage. It allows for those who are divorced and remarried to be members of the Church. This is contrary to the Scriptures, although well within the position of the Christian Reformed Church.

In the third place, the book openly advocates financial help from social agencies and government funds for the poor and, in fact, speaks of a broad function of the Church in social work. There is a promise in the book that another volume will appear on the work of the deacons, and, presumably, these questions will be treated more fully in that volume. But this viewpoint is nevertheless wrong.

Nevertheless, we recommend this book to those who are elders for it has much in it which can be of good use to them in their work.



**WEDDING ANNIVERSARY**

On June 15, 1980, the Lord willing, our parents, MR. AND MRS. JOHN BISHOP will celebrate their 45th wedding anniversary.

We, their children and grandchildren are thankful to our Heavenly Father for Christian dedicated parents and for the covenant training which they have given us. Our prayer is that God will continue to bless them in their remaining years together.

"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 and grandchildren,

Elaine Brockhouse  
Cindy, Cheryl, Merlyn, Loren,  
Steve and Howard

Alvin and Ardis Mejeur  
Rhonda and Debra

Clarence and Sandra Tinklenberg  
Craig, Pamella, Julie and Kevin

Douglas and Sara Bishop  
Ryan, Bradley, Chris, Lane  
and Tracy

Henry and Nancy Tuinstra  
Tanya, Cameron, Bonnie and  
and Denise

**RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY**

The Ladies Society of the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church expresses its sincere sympathy to one of our members, Mrs. Bea Talsma, in the loss of her mother, MRS. WIERINGA.

May our Covenant God comfort her with His Word and Spirit in the assurance that — "all things work together for good to them that love God." (Romans 8:28).

Rev. G. Van Baren, Pres.

Mrs. H. Zwak, Sec'y.

**WEDDING ANNIVERSARY**

On June 17, 1980 our parents, MR. AND MRS. CHARLES PASTOOR will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. We are thankful to our heavenly Father for keeping them for each other and for us, their children and grandchildren.

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." (Ps. 103:2).

Cornelius and Joyce Pastoor  
Mary, Linda, Jane and Charles

Harry and Thelma Boonstra  
Jeanne, Anne and Sarah

Carol Ann Pastoor

**WEDDING ANNIVERSARY**

On June 9, 1980, the Lord willing, our dear parents, MR. AND MRS. MARTIN DOEZEMA, will commemorate their 60th wedding anniversary. We thank God for the years He has given them together.

May they confess with the Psalmist: "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." (Psalm 16:5-6)

John Timmer  
Jay and Ruth Doezeema  
Ken and Gloria Doezeema

eight grandchildren

ten great grandchildren

A daughter, June Timmer, and a granddaughter,  
Sandra Timmer, have passed on into glory.

**IN MEMORIAM**

On April 26, 1980, it pleased our Heavenly Father to take unto Himself our dear daughter and sister, and wife and mother, DOROTHY JANE CHABOT (VAN DYKEN), at the age of 28 years and 3 1/2 months.

Services were held on April 30, in the Lynden (WA) Protestant Reformed Church with Rev. Dale Kuiper officiating.

"Our souls are joyful in the Lord, in whose Salvation we rejoice." (Psalm 35, Psalter No. 92).

Mr. and Mrs. Paul Van Dyken, parents  
Mr. and Mrs. S. Daniel Van Dyken  
Mr. Gordon Chabot, husband  
Jason Paul, son  
Nathan Richard and Seth Daniel, nephews  
Alyssa Beth, niece

**WEDDING ANNIVERSARY**

On June 27, 1980, the Lord willing, our parents, MR. AND MRS. HENRY VELTHOUSE will celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary. We, their children, are thankful to our Heavenly Father for the Christian home and Christian education they have provided us. We pray that the Lord will continue to bless and keep them in His care. (Psalm 128).

their children and grandchildren

John and Jerri Velthouse  
Debbie and Jodie

Irv and Barb Velthouse  
Dawn, Amy, Kari and Sara

Bob and Sharon Velthouse  
Robbie and Emily

Grand Rapids, MI

# News From Our Churches

Rev. Gise Van Baren, pastor of our Hudsonville Church, has declined the call extended to him by our Redlands, California congregation.

Rev. John Heys is retiring after preaching his farewell sermons on June 1. The congregation of our church in Holland, Michigan is scheduling a

program and social hour for Rev. and Mrs. Heys on Friday evening, May 30 in the church. Members of our neighboring churches were invited to attend and to extend best wishes to Rev. and Mrs. Heys.

Holland's trio for a new pastor includes Rev. David Engelsma, Professor Herman Hanko, and



Rev. Bernard Woudenberg. The trio for our Hope Church in Walker, Michigan, includes Professor H. C. Hoeksema, Rev. G. Van Baren, and Rev. B. Woudenberg. A special congregational meeting to extend a call to one of these men is scheduled for May 21.

Two deacons from our Hudsonville Church, Ted Miedema, Jr. and Bob Garvelink, along with Rev. Woudenberg, pastor of our church in Kalamazoo, Michigan, left for Jamaica on May 12 for a week's stay to see to the distribution of benevolence in connection with the destruction there of last year's floods.

The Hudsonville Sr. Young People's Society has scheduled a senior citizen's appreciation program and coffee for June 17. A similar event was held in First Church for the senior citizens of that congregation in early April — also sponsored by the Sr. Young People's Society.

The Grand Rapids area Sunday School Teachers' Mass Meeting was scheduled on May 20 in South-east Church. Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma was to speak on an interesting but un-named topic.

The Mr. and Mrs. Societies' Spring League Meeting was held in our Hudsonville Church on Tuesday, May 6. Rev. Carl Haak spoke on the topic, "How We Should Prepare Ourselves and Our Children For the Last Times."

Rev. G. Van Baren lectured in Kalamazoo on Tuesday evening, April 29. His topic was "The Practical Importance of Election." This public lecture was sponsored by our Kalamazoo congregation. Rev. Van Baren also gave this lecture in the Grand Rapids area on May 8 in the South Christian High School Auditorium in Cutlerville. A cassette recording of this lecture is available. Send your request with \$2 to: The Reformed Free Publishing Association, P.O. Box 6064, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506.

A special congregational meeting was scheduled

on May 6 in our Kalamazoo Church to deal with plans to proceed with the construction of a new church building.

Steps are being made toward the construction of a new church building for our congregation in Redlands. A grading permit was obtained in early May and grading was begun on the property where a new church is to be erected.

The council of our South Holland, Illinois church has decided to designate all future collections taken in the catechism classes for the poor. The South Holland Council also decided to discontinue the annual congregational picnic because of a lack of interest over the last few years, but then later decided to schedule a picnic after all — but on a somewhat reduced scale.

The South Holland Men's Society sponsored a public lecture on March 24 in their church. Rev. Engelsma spoke on the topic "Evangelism and the Reformed Faith." Refreshments were served afterwards in the church basement.

The annual Ladies Circle Hostess Supper was held in our church in Doon, Iowa on March 26. Rev. Kamps spoke on the topic "S.O.S." Perhaps the meaning of that topic was evident to those in Iowa, but to some of us it is not.

The choir presented a program in our Loveland Church after the evening service on Easter Sunday. The offering taken was for new Psalters and Bibles in the church.

The newly reconstituted Radio Choir sang three numbers before the evening service in First Church on Easter Sunday. The Radio Choir recently recorded five numbers which will be used on the Reformed Witness Hour Radio broadcast in the near future.

A Quiet Thought from the Southeast bulletin: "Those who think much of themselves, think little of Christ."

K. G. V.