

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

The knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord is of inestimable, incomparable value. In fact, it is life eternal! It is worth living for and working for. That knowledge is worth dying for! Nothing can equal or surpass it. All things—wealth, pleasure, a name in this world—all things without exception are loss, but dung. Pursue that knowledge

See "In Pursuit of Excellence"—page 423

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MEDITATION

Believing While Dying

Rev. H. Veldman

"By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff."
Heb. 11:21

A Christian is as his faith is. This does not mean that a man can believe himself into becoming a Christian, can become what he wants to be. But, faith is a bond, a spiritual bond uniting him with Christ; faith is, therefore, the source and root of all our life; hence, as is my faith, so am I.

Faith and assurance are therefore inseparable, and it is certainly proper for a Christian to stand in the assurance of faith. Some deny this. They claim

that to doubt is peculiarly Christian, even frown upon those who would stand in the joy of salvation. How wrong this view is! On the one hand, they deny or doubt the Word of God. The Word of God exhorts to rejoice in the Lord, to rejoice always. On the other hand, this attitude of doubt is also deeply sinful because then it is impossible to walk in the way of the Lord and live to His glory, the glory of our Redeemer. If I doubt my salvation I cannot sing

of God's glory, love, and grace. And it is certainly my calling to say with our Heidelberg Catechism that my only comfort in life and in death is that I am not my own but belong to my faithful Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Faith also gives us the victory. How often this is emphasized in this eleventh chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews! It is also the victory over our natural weaknesses and infirmities. How this is demonstrated in this history of Isaac when he blessed Jacob although he was naturally attracted and drawn to Esau, his profane brother. Yea, what is more, faith is also victorious in the hour of death. This is held before us in this scripture to which we now call attention: Jacob blessed the sons of Joseph while he was a dying. What an amazing demonstration we have here of the power of faith.

THE WONDER OF IT

Death—what is it?

We must grasp the idea of the Word of God here, in order to understand its beauty. Jacob certainly revealed his faith when he blessed the sons of Joseph. And he also revealed his faith when, as we read, he worshipped as leaning upon the top of his staff. But the amazing beauty of the text is expressed in the words, "when he was a dying." This expression does not merely denote when he believed. But it also emphasizes the amazing character of Jacob's faith. We read literally that he believed while dying. Jacob was in the final moment of death. Of course, we are all dying, every day, something which we do well to remember. We are mortal. Dying we die, every day. Our life here is a journey from the cradle to the grave. But Jacob was in that final moment of dying; the arms of death were encompassing him, taking hold of him. He was in death's final agony.

What is death? First, death is unnatural. Man was created, not to die but to live. And, in the elect, man shall live. Secondly, death is suffering and agony. All men do not die the same way. Some die violently, as in a moment. Most people die gradually. However, be this as it may, death is always suffering. Thirdly, death is a divine visitation. It is not an accident, a merely natural process. People do not simply pass away. The unbelieving world would have us believe this. Death, however, is a divine visitation, execution. It is the result of sin. And this is death's worst feature; it adds to the horror of it. Therefore, dying we must remember that after death comes hell, an endless torment, everlasting ruin and misery. That this does not apply to the Christian is only for Jesus' sake. But then we know and must know that our sins are washed away in His blood.

Hence, how amazing is Jacob's faith! Applying this to Jacob, he was in the agony of death. What a change had come over the old patriarch! Remember him when he was young, still in his parents' home, his cunning and shrewdness, when he and his mother would deceive Isaac? Shall we remember him when he spent twenty years in Padan-Aram, with his greedy and selfish uncle, trying to outwit him...? But, then, Peniel, had entered his life and the incident had followed at the Jabbok when he was filled with terror and the angel of the Lord had wrestled with him. Indeed, Jacob had changed! He had changed naturally. But he had also changed spiritually. There was a time when he was considerably pelagian, would help God. But this had changed, fundamentally, at the Jabbok. There he had learned to place all his strength in his faithful covenant God. O, he did not lose completely all his old tricks. But he had undergone a tremendous change.

And now? He is in the agony of death. The reality of imminent death confronts him. And now, what shall he say? Shall he think of his experiences of the past? Does he resent the approach of death, bewail that he must soon die? Does he lie there in fear and terror? Does he tremble now? The very opposite is true! His eyes, although physically dim, are spiritually bright. In faith he takes hold of the promises of his God. He is engaged with the things that are future and eternal. His faith, also now, has the victory.

And what shall we say? What shall we say in the moment of death? Will we also believe, so that our faith will overcome and have the victory in death's dark vale? This is the amazing character of Jacob's faith in this text.

THE EXPRESSION OF IT

We know the history.

Joseph, very busy of course in the affairs of the land of Egypt, informed of the sickness of his father, is summoned to the bedside of his father. He hurries to his father's bedside with his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, approximately twenty years of age. It is evident that these sons, considered to be of both royal and priestly descent and therefore whose position was equalled only by Pharaoh himself, spent their lives in the Egyptian world. And Jacob sees them now for the first time.

First, Jacob addresses his son. He speaks about the appearance of the Lord to him at Luz, recorded in Genesis 35:1-9. Then he speaks of the land of promise, the land the Lord had promised to the fathers and also to Israel. So, in the midst of a strange land, and while dying, Jacob by faith speaks

of the land of Canaan as the land of their people. Thereupon he reclaimed the two boys of Joseph and expressed his wish that they shall be to him as Reuben and Simeon, that they shall bear the name of Israel. This means that it is surely the meditation of the dying old patriarch which can be expressed in one word: the Word, the promise of God, the God of his salvation.

Secondly, Jacob now concerns himself with Joseph's sons. He notices the two boys as they appear dimly before his failing eyesight. And how he blesses them, changing their position, is a narrative familiar to us.

We may speak of Jacob's faith in a general sense. On the one hand, these sons of Joseph surely had access to all the glories and honour and riches of the world. They were Egyptians, although their father was a Hebrew, of royal and priestly descent. On the other hand, however, we have here the promises of Jehovah. Should Jacob bless them with the blessing of Israel it would mean that they would become affiliated with the people of God, with them who were strangers in the land. So, the alternative was clear: the oft-occurring alternative between the world and the people of God. Jacob chooses the latter.

But we may also speak of Jacob's faith in a specific sense. Let us notice the situation. Jacob is in a strange land. He had lived in Canaan, as a stranger, without any claim to it. And now he had been in Egypt some seventeen years. And, on the other hand, these boys were well established in Egypt. Things certainly looked hopeless from the viewpoint of the promise.

What, now, shall Jacob do? Shall he maintain the promises of God, now, in the moment of death, over against these tremendous odds? Or will he, because of the weakness of the flesh, succumb, lose his courage, yea his faith? Shall he judge that it is better for these boys to remain in Egypt? What is his answer? Solemnly he declares what we read in Genesis 48:15-16. Indeed, we have here the blessing of Abraham. The dying Israel is strong and clear in his faith; he does not waver.

To this must be added two more incidents. First, already here, Jacob, in actual fact, deprives Reuben of the blessing of the firstborn. Reuben was the

firstborn, in the natural sense of the word. According to all rational judgment, the birthright blessing would be his. But the blessing shall be divided between Judah and Joseph. Judah would receive the blessing of the covenant, to bring forth the Great Seed. And Joseph would receive the double portion, divided between his two sons. Jacob claims them as his sons, and they shall be to him as Reuben and Simeon, according to his own words. And, secondly, notice the crossing of the hands. To Jacob was also revealed that the elder would be inferior to the younger. Jacob also recognizes this, even now in the moment of death.

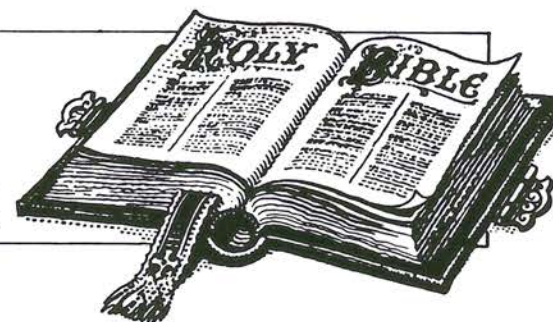
HOW ACKNOWLEDGED

Jacob now bows himself upon his bed, assuming the form of worship. He lifted himself and then bowed down before his God. What an act of faith! In this moment of death he, for one moment, by faith, pushes death aside as it were, to worship his God.

What this means? Worship here is not prayer, but acknowledgment of the greatness and sovereignty of his God. He had spoken of the promises of the Lord; he had made his son to swear that he would not leave his bones in Egypt; he had thereby expressed his faith in the promises of his God. And now he worships God. He realizes his own smallness, sin, and unworthiness. And he glorifies and extols his God, that to him, such a miserable and unworthy sinner, the mercy of the Lord had been sovereignly shown. And while Joseph and his sons look on in silent awe and reverence, the old dying patriarch lifts himself up, worships God, and declares: O God, my God, my covenant God, all glory and praise be Thine for Thy grace and Thy mercy, which Thou hast bestowed upon me, a sinner.

Such is the power of faith, also for us, even in the moment of death! Indeed, this faith is not of us. It is never of us. It is solely of the Lord. And this faith, the gift of God, is able to preserve us, even until the end. God's work of grace, once begun, shall be finished and completed, that He, and He alone, may receive all the praise and the glory, now and even forever.

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EDITOR'S NOTES

Publication News. *Behold, He Cometh!* is now newly available from the RFPA, after a brief period of being out of print. It is also available at a new price: \$12.95, due to our increased costs. We may also report that *The Voice Of Our Fathers (An Exposition of the Canons of Dordrecht)* has gone to press and should become available sometime in early fall. One more note—this one a note of warning. Many of our earlier publications, when they are reprinted, will go up in price. If you want to buy at lower prices, buy now. Write to: Reformed Free Publishing Association, P.O. Box 2006, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49501.

Report on Synod '80. Since our 1980 Synod is convening a week later than usual, it will be impossible to carry a report in this July 1 issue. However, Rev. G. Van Baren has promised to prepare a report on this year's Synod; you may look for his report in the August 1 issue.

As you may have realized by now, we publish only once per month during the months of June, July, and August.

EDITORIALS

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Pre-Seminary Graduation—Class of 1980

Friday, May 23, was a red letter day for our Theological School.

Why?

On that date three more young men graduated from the Pre-seminary Department of our Theological School; and this signifies that in September, the Lord willing, they will be ready to begin the last stage of their studies in preparation for the ministry of the gospel in our Protestant Reformed Churches. The young men who received their diplomas are Everett Buitter, a son of our South Holland, Illinois congregation; Barry Gritters, a son of our Redlands, California congregation; and Kenneth Hanko, a son of our Hope, Grand Rapids congregation.

In years when there are no seminary graduates—and this year there were none—we hold a scaled down pre-seminary graduation program in the school's Assembly Room. The seminary personnel (professors and students), the Theological School Committee, and the relatives and friends of the graduates are represented at this program. Although the audience this year was rather small, we nevertheless had an enjoyable morning; and

May 23 was indeed a red letter day both for the graduates and for our school. The main item on our program was an address by Prof. R. Decker; you will find a transcript of his address elsewhere in this issue.

And so we have more fruits of the pre-seminary program which was inaugurated at our school several years ago. Although the program is limited in this respect, that we ourselves cannot teach all the required subjects but must limit ourselves to those which we deem the most important, we wish to emphasize, first of all, that our pre-sem students are required to have the equivalent of a four-year college course. In the second place, we are happy to note that some of the area colleges are willing to give our students credit toward a B.A. degree for the subjects which they take at our school; and our students are finding that with very little additional work they can obtain their college degree. Increasingly our students are taking advantage of this possibility. In the third place, as faculty we continue to see the benefits of the pre-seminary program in so far as it is taught at our own school.

These benefits are both academic and spiritual. Eventually, of course, it is our churches which reap these benefits.

I cannot take leave of this subject without pointing out that these three graduates of our pre-sem department will be replaced next fall by only two new pre-sem students. The need for ministers in

our churches, and thus the need for new students, continues. These students must come, in the main, out of our own churches. Let our churches continue to bear this need in mind in their prayers and in their labors with the young men in our congregations. Especially would I urge young men in our churches to consider this matter prayerfully.

The Canons and Reprobation Reinterpreted (2)

(Note: At the time this is written, the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church has not yet convened; and therefore there has been no decision concerning the Boer Gravamen. If a decision is reached before our publication deadline, we will try to report it in this issue. Meanwhile, we continue with our critique of the Study Report and related items.)

Last time we called attention to the fact that the Study Report makes a two-pronged attack on the Reformed doctrine of reprobation as taught by the Canons. By means of this attack they seek to take the wind out of Dr. Boer's sails by maintaining that he has misinterpreted the Canons in his gravamen, so that the gravamen was not really necessary. Meanwhile, the Study Report—though, mind you, it has agreed almost completely with Boer's evaluation of the Scripture passages cited by the Canons—seeks to leave the impression of agreeing with and maintaining the Canons' teaching concerning reprobation. Actually, however, the Report puts an interpretation on the Canons which they cannot possibly bear, which, in fact, they contradict. It is safe to say that if the Study Report's view of reprobation had been the view of our Reformed fathers in the 17th century, there would have been no Arminian controversy and no Canons. I would also guess that if various Dutch theologians read the Study Committee's attempted reinterpretation of the Canons, the patently wrong interpretation of the Study Report must be the laughingstock of the theologians across the sea. Dr. Boer's criticism of Canons I/6 and Canons I/15 stands directly in the line of criticisms voiced by men like Dr. Woeldekink, Dr. Berkouwer, Dr. Polman, Dr. H. Ridderbos, in the line of the Brouwer Gravamen in the *Gereformeerde Kerken*, and in the line of the GKN decision concerning the Brouwer Gravamen. The

Study Committee would not even have had to do a great amount of research to discover this—if they did not know it. This is all well documented in Klaas Runia's section of the Reformed Fellowship's publication, *Crisis In The Reformed Churches*. Nevertheless, while leaving the impression of disagreeing with the Boer Gravamen and of agreeing with the Canons, the Study Committee is in basic agreement with Dr. Boer in that both deny the Reformed doctrine of reprobation as taught by the Canons. The difference is that the Boer Gravamen is brutally frank, while the Study Report is deviously deceitful.

One prong of the Report's attack, we saw last time, is the changing of the decree of reprobation into the doctrine of limited election.

The other prong of the attack is the changing of sovereign reprobation into a form of conditional reprobation. To this we give our attention in this essay.

Tampering With The Translation

In another connection (see previous issue) we have already made reference to the fact that the Study Committee furnishes a new translation of Canons I/6 and I/15. The committee makes a big point of this, even mentioning the fact that they have 10 pages of footnotes concerning the translation which they are willing to furnish to the advisory committee at Synod.

Now I can only guess that these must be 10 pages of learned malarkey, if you'll pardon the expression. For the simple fact is that the original Latin of these two articles is so plain and simple that any reasonably good student with two years of high school Latin could produce a good translation of them. In fact, I find it difficult to understand how

anyone could amass ten pages of notes about the translation.

But what is worse, the Study Committee very obviously tampers with the translation. Furthermore, I can only conclude that this tampering was deliberate and that it was done to suit the purposes of the committee.

The first instance of tampering involves I/6. The committee's translation of the first part of this article is: "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." The Psalter Hymnal Translation (the same as that of our Psalter) is: "That some receive the gift of faith from God, and others do not receive it, proceeds from God's eternal decree." Now the difference in this instance is not as serious as in the second instance (see below). Nevertheless, "is due to God's eternal decision" is not as specific as "proceeds from God's eternal decree." If the committee had wanted to improve the translation they would have (in agreement with the Dutch translation, which they mention and which they acknowledge has official standing) translated by "comes forth from," which is even clearer and stronger. For the Latin is: "*Quod autem aliqui in tempore fide a Deo donantur, aliqui non donantur, id ab aeterno ipsius decreto provenit.*" And the Dutch has: "*Dat God sommigen in de tijd met het geloof begiftigt, sommigen niet begiftigt, komt voort uit Zijn eeuwig besluit.*" It is obvious that "is due to" leaves the matter much less sharply defined—particularly with regard to unbelief—than "comes forth from."

The second instance, involving I/15, is far more serious. It involves a deliberate tampering with the position of certain modifiers in a key sentence of this article to suit the committee's purposes. You will recall that a distinction was made between preterition and condemnation. Preterition, passing by, the committee is willing to ascribe to God's good pleasure. Condemnation, according to the committee, has its cause in man's sin and unbelief. And the committee claims that this distinction is made in I/15. Now for a long time, I must confess, I puzzled over the reason for the committee's new translation of I/15. While I saw some changes and some reason for change, I did not realize the major reason and the major change. But upon more careful study and comparison, I began to see the light. Here is the committee's new translation of the segment of the article in question. In it I have italicized the crucial modifiers which have been moved by the committee to the wrong position:

...those, that is, concerning whom God made the following decision: to leave them, *out of his entirely free, most just, irreproachable, and unchangeable good pleasure*, in the common misery into which, by

their own fault, they have plunged themselves, not to endow them with saving faith and the grace of conversion, but at long last to condemn and eternally punish them (left as they have been in their own ways and under his just judgment), not only for their unbelief, but also for all their other sins, in order to demonstrate his justice.

And this is the decision of Reprobation, which does not at all make God the author of sin (a blasphemous thought!) but rather its fearful, irreproachable, just judge and avenger.

Now it is plain that the words "out of his entirely free, most just, irreproachable, and unchangeable good pleasure" in the above translation apply only to the one element of God's decision, the element of preterition, or passing by, or leaving. The quoted words are deliberately placed by the committee as a modifier of only that one element. This suits their theory, as mentioned above.

In actual fact, however, these words do not belong in this position at all. They very plainly belong with the words, "concerning whom God made the following decision." The clause would read, in part, as follows then: "concerning whom God, out of His entirely free, most just, irreproachable, and unchangeable good pleasure, has made the following decision." And then would follow the three items quoted above, including the item of "but at long last to condemn and eternally punish them...." But, you see, this would not fit the committee's theory that only preterition is according to God's good pleasure, while the cause of condemnation is sin and unbelief.

Is there any linguistic justification for this deliberate change by the Study Committee?

The answer is: none whatsoever! This is a deliberate, totally unjustified, intellectually dishonest tampering with the translation. No ten pages of footnotes can ever justify it!

That my contention is true is plain from:

1) The accepted English translation of both the *Psalter Hymnal* and the *Psalter*. They both have: "...whom God, out of His sovereign, most just, irreprehensible, and unchangeable good pleasure, has decreed," etc.

2) The official Dutch rendering of the Synod of Dordrecht itself: "...welke God, naar Zijn gans vrij, rechtvaardig, onberispelijk en onveranderlijk welbehagen, besloten heeft...."

3) The original Latin version of the Synod of Dordrecht: "...quos, scilicet, Deus ex liberrimo, iustissimo, irreprehensibili, et immutabili beneplacito decrevit...." Again, any reasonably capable high school Latin student can see that the whole modifying phrase in question comes before the

verb *decrevit* and after the subject *Deus*, and therefore cannot possibly have the position which the committee gives it in its new translation.

But this corrupted translation is the first step in the committee's corruption of the doctrine of reprobation. They do not want a condemnation which is rooted in God's good pleasure. They leave the impression of holding to a preterition, or passing by, which is according to God's good pleasure; but even this they do not want, but change into a doctrine of limited election. But it is abundantly plain that they deliberately change the condemnation-aspect of reprobation into a form of conditional reprobation and, at times, into a general, indefinite, and impersonal decree of condemnation.

Further Preliminary Steps

There are two more steps in the process which the committee follows in getting rid of the doctrine of reprobation while trying to leave the impression of holding to the Canons.

The first step, as we noted last time, is taken in the Study Report's explanation of the meaning of the word *reprobation*, pp. 359, 360. Here the committee refers to the distinction between preterition and condemnation in the decree of reprobation, a distinction not mentioned in the Canons but having some theological legitimacy. However, the committee fails utterly to note that by "condemnation" is meant the *decree* of condemnation. Secondly, the committee fails to note that the *decree* to condemn some men does not have its reason in sin and unbelief, but is rather a decree to *condemn* some men on account of their sin and unbelief. This difference is crucial. And it is very plain from what we have written above concerning the translation of I/15 that the committee must have been aware of this crucial difference, but did not want it. But the Study Report states the following:

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. (pp. 359, 360)

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. (p. 360)

A second step in the process is the failure of the committee to deal directly and head-on with Dr. Boer's analysis of what the Canons teach concerning reprobation. On p. 371 they call it Dr. Boer's

"official" explanation and suggest that actually Dr. Boer criticizes various ancillary teachings which he ascribes to the Canons. This analysis of the Canons by Boer contains four elements: "a. a divine decree; b. which has been made in eternity; c. which condemns a segment of mankind to eternal death; d. and which is characterized by distinctly positive as well as negative actions on God's part." Now I have stated repeatedly that this is the fundamental issue in the gravamen, and that Boer correctly analyzes the doctrine of reprobation here. The choice of language would not be mine. Nor, of course, do I agree with the inferences which Boer draws from this doctrine. But his analysis is basically correct. However, the committee at no point deals *directly* with this analysis by Boer. Meanwhile, the committee hedges and evades the issue, but nevertheless makes it plain that Boer's analysis of the Canons is not theirs. Rather do they reinterpret the Canons to teach exactly what they do not teach. In fact, it is safe to say that if the committee's view on the matter of reprobation had been held by the fathers of Dordt, there never would have been an Arminian controversy and never would have been any Canons.

Direct Statements Of The Study Report

The following are statements made by the Study Report concerning this subject of the condemnation-aspect of reprobation. For the most part, I need add no comments. For the most part, too, they are statements with which any Arminian would be in fundamental agreement; the most significant difference is that a genuine Arminian teaches that the *only* sin for which a man can be condemned and go lost is the sin of unbelief.

—p. 362: There is an eternal decree on God's part to the effect that he who sins shall perish, unless in some way the sentence of condemnation shall be lifted from him on the basis of something which exculpates him (Article 1 of the Second Head). In Article 15 of the First Head it is apparent that this decree of condemnation is included in what is called the decree of reprobation....

—p. 364: Does Dort teach that before the existence of human beings, thus before they have done anything, God consigns some to destruction wholly apart from what they may do? Or, alternatively, does Dort teach that God decides to *make* some people perform the sins for which he subsequently punishes them? Worse yet, does Dort teach that God creates some people for *the purpose* of consigning them to destruction? To each of these questions the answer is most emphatically, "No."

—p. 364: So can we then say that God rejects those who reject him? Most emphatically we can. What

Dort wishes to emphasize, however, is that God does not reject *all* who reject Him. Some who reject Him He decides nonetheless to choose as recipients for the gift of faith, and thus, for salvation....

—p. 365: In the body of the Canons it is taught that God has not created anyone for the purpose of damnation. Damnation is a response to the evil the "reprobates" do, of which God is not the cause.

—p. 373: We have seen that the Canons speak ambiguously in their reference to a decree of reprobation. In I,6 it seems clear that reprobation is simply *passing by*: From eternity God has decided to elect some *but not all* to faith. In I,15, by contrast, what is called "reprobation" includes the sentence of condemnation: From eternity God has decided that he who sins shall perish unless his sins are atoned for and forgiven.

—p. 373: Our question now is this: Does Boer hold that there is no decision of God from eternity to grant the gift of faith to some *but not to all*, and is this at the bottom of his protest? Alternatively, does he hold that there is no decision of God from eternity that he who sins shall perish unless his sins are atoned for and forgiven, and is this at the bottom of his protest? (Note: I consider these questions facetious. If either of the above were the teaching of the Canons, I submit that Boer's Gravamen would never have seen the light of day. HCH)

—p. 385: 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.

—p. 396: The other aspect of the doctrine (of repro-

bation, HCH), understood in its broader sense, is commonly called *condemnation*—that is, that God condemns and punishes forever all those who remain in their sin and unbelief. Your committee not only believes that, according to Scripture, God will condemn such people; it also believes that God has decided from eternity, or, to use a biblical phrase, from before the foundation of the world, to condemn such people. The basis for that condemnation, however, is to be found solely in the persistent unbelief and sin of those so condemned.

The above quotations are only a few of many which could be made, but they will suffice to give you the flavor of the report.

What is at the root of this evident inability and unwillingness of the Study Committee to maintain and defend the Canons and to refute the Boer Gravamen?

The answer is: 1924!

Although it is mentioned almost in passing and only a couple of times, the specter of the First Point of 1924 and its "well-meant offer" looms in the background of this entire report. What was implicitly denied in 1924 is now explicitly denied, both by Dr. Boer and by the Study Committee. Neither wants the Reformed doctrine of reprobation. Again, however, if I had to choose, I would choose Boer's position: he is forthright to the point of bluntness. The Study Committee puts on a show of adhering to the Canons, and its position is for that reason deceitful.

Christian Reformed Reactions to the Study Report on the Boer Gravamen

As noted earlier, this is written before the Christian Reformed Synod convenes, and thus before there is any decision concerning the Boer Gravamen. At this writing, however, it almost seems as though there might be but little disagreement at the Synod concerning the Study Report. Conceivably Dr. Boer and those who agree with him might disagree with the Study Report; then again, however, he might swallow his disagreement, on the basis that the Study Report *essentially* agrees with his position and denies sovereign reprobation. Thus

far, I have read no fundamentally negative reactions to the report.

First of all, Editor Peter De Jong (*The Outlook*, June, 1980, p. 9) expresses approval of the Study Report. If this is representative of the "conservative" attitude in the CRC, the cause of the doctrine of sovereign reprobation (and with it, sovereign election) is a lost cause in the CRC. Here is what Rev. De Jong writes:

...The committee points out that the Canons do *not* teach what Dr. Boer misrepresents them as teaching,

that the doctrine of reprobation is a decree which makes God the cause of man's unbelief and which condemns men without merit or demerit on their part. Therefore it recommends that the synod do not accede to Dr. Boer's request to take this doctrine out of the creed or make it non-binding. *The committee's case is in general competently argued and its conclusion invites approval.* (italics added)

Editor De Jong has more remarks on this subject, but the above quoted comments obviously express his basic (and favorable) evaluation.

The same issue of **The Outlook**, p. 24, contains a notice and summary of a pamphlet by Dr. Edwin H. Palmer, **Twelve Theses On Reprobation**. Proposition No. 6 of this pamphlet is very telling: "Reprobation as preterition is unconditional *and as condemnation is conditional.*" (italics added) This is evidently in agreement with the position of the Study Report, therefore.

A third reaction may be found in the editorial columns of **The Banner**, May 30, 1980, p. 7. The author is Dr. James A. DeJong of Dordt College, but the article is placed with evident approval by Dr. De Koster, Editor of **The Banner**. This article is too long to quote here, but it is high in its praise of the Study Report.

Finally, we mention the fact that in "Voices," (**The Banner**, June 6, 1980, pp. 24, 25) there appears a reaction from Dr. Boer. He does not comment on the contents of the Study Report, but proposes that it would be proper to submit the Study Report to the Churches for study and evaluation, and that synodical action be deferred until 1981. Who knows? Perhaps that will be the direction the Christian Reformed Synod will follow. Time will tell.

Whatever happens, however, the doctrine of sovereign reprobation is a lost cause in the CRC.

TRANSLATED TREASURES

A Pamphlet Concerning the Reformation of the Church

Dr. A. Kuyper

(In the last two paragraphs Dr. Kuyper has discussed the functioning of the office of all believers in the church and has made some remarks concerning the church's material possessions. He now continues with the discussion of the government of the church.)

28. Through Which Gathering the Church Is Governed.

The government of the churches is exercised by the consistories which in a wider sense are composed of preachers, elders, and deacons, but in the narrow sense of the word are composed of as many as are entrusted with the exercise of the second key of the kingdom of heaven, i.e., only preachers and elders. The deacons form a separate group for the ministration of the tables. Although in smaller churches the deacons also take part in the rule of the church in the narrower sense, this is a concession to necessity and does not proceed from principle. Decisions are, out of principle, the responsibility of the full council of the church in

which deacons as well as preachers and elders have a place in all cases where neither the exercise of the keys nor the ministration of tables is treated but where the common interests of the church are discussed and decided. Those concerns of a common character include the calling of ministers, the appointment of elders and deacons, the representation of the church with the magistrate, the care of the church's possessions, etc. In the broad consistory as well as in the consistory which meets for the exercise of the keys, the preachers preside, but they are always on a par with the elders and deacons as far as their authority is concerned. This consistory ought itself to dispose of the matters coming before it in good order and must never appoint others to do the work except for the carrying out of a specific task. It ought to receive into its meetings the members of the church who desire to do this. And it keeps the best contact with the church by granting to believers opportunity to be present at the gather-

ings as listeners. Although, naturally, the exception would be when a consistory is gathered in closed session when the nature of the work requires this.

The ministers of the Word can form for themselves a gathering for the discussion of their activities. And in the same way the ruling elders can organize their own circle to discuss the division of the work. But this so-called ministerial gathering, or this gathering of elders never possesses might, right, or competency and was not recognized in former times in our Reformed churches. The deacons possess a distinct ministry and form for that reason a separate group. But teaching and ruling elders are members of the same group, bound together by the ministry of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and cannot, also according to the language of our Formula of Subscription, form another group or fellowship which would possess power or legal competency different from the common consistory in which they function with an equal vote and the same competency.

29. Concerning the Administration Of the Means Of Grace.

The means of grace of the church are the treasures which are laid away in Christ for the elect and which are presented to us in the Word and sealed by the sacraments. Word and sacrament are therefore rightly named the two means of grace of the church. These means of grace are now administered through the church and received by the members. Hence the sacrament is bound to Presbyterian service because no one can receive a sacrament unless there is an administration.¹ On the other hand, it is different with the Word. This can be received without administration, be it in a less rich way. The means of grace of the Word is therefore only bound to the office for its exposition and application, understanding with this that the office of believers administers this means of grace to everyone who will hear the admonition.² The priestly office of the father in his house administers the Word in his own household. The office of the ministry of the Word administers it publicly to the

whole congregation. This administration of the Word bears a twofold character, according as milk must be administered or solid food. The administration of milk is the administration of the Word through catechetical instruction. The administration of solid food is the administration of this means of grace through the exposition and application of the Word. In the distribution of this milk the minister of the Word is officially mandated for public and private instruction; the father or also the mother, within the family; and each believer, for such children for whom neither the parents nor the relatives nor the church perform their obligation. The administration of the solid food, on the other hand, takes place officially only by the father as priest in the home, and, in the midst of the congregation, by the minister of the Word. It is in both cases an exercise of the first key of the kingdom of heaven, not as the so-called proclamation of the gospel, but as a speech in the name of the Lord and with power. It can, only in the way of transfer, be passed over to the ruling elders. And it takes place only in a subordinate way in the so-called prophets or by the common church members in default of office bearers. Further, however, the obligation rest on the ministers of the Word to bring this means of grace also to the homes of the church members: in family visitation before every Lord's Supper; in sickness and sorrow to the oppressed; and in connection with the approaching danger of death to the dying. Only faith is mighty to preserve and there is no other means of grace than the Word to arouse faith and to maintain it in a lively way.

The sacrament seals the Word, and by this strengthens faith in the church as a whole as well as in each one who becomes a partaker of faith. Just as every seal to be a seal must have a public character, so it is also with the administration of the sacraments. They must be administered in conformity with their public character and are, for that reason, bound to the public worship of the church. They are, on that account, administered by the church to the church under the guidance of the consistory and under the application of the service of the shepherds. Only in the church, under the guidance of the consistory, administered by the pastors, are the sacraments sacramental seals. Being seals of the Word they then must also not be separated from the ministry of the Word and they are best administered after the preaching is concluded. Thus baptism and the Lord's Supper never take place independently.

Every member of the church has the right to the administration of both means of grace — as well to that of the Word as to that of the sacraments. But the reception and use of them is an obligation for both means of grace. From this it follows that not

¹ It is interesting to note that Dr. Kuyper emphasizes here the administration of the sacraments. The church world of today is slipping away from this emphasis. A very common expression used in the churches today is the expression, "the celebration of the sacraments." But this emphasis on celebration rather than administration is not Reformed. The Reformed view is that the sacraments are *administered*. And this is Reformed because Christ is the one who dispenses the means of grace within the church.

² In this remark, and in the remarks which follow, Kuyper seems to place the office of believers on a par with these special offices in the church. This is a mistake. It has always been the teaching of the Reformed Churches to make the office of believers dependent upon the church. The believer, functioning in his office, is dependent upon the administration of the Word and the sacraments within the church institute.

adult baptism, but infant baptism is the rule, and no one must be denied baptism who in any way is to be considered as a member of the church. The Word and the sacraments of the Lord's Supper must be given already to the smallest children in case these are ready for it. On the other hand, if this is impossible, the child receives first the right to the Word when he can hear, and then the right to the Lord's Supper when he can make confession. He who is no member of the church or comes from elsewhere out of churches which are not recognized must not be permitted to come to the sacraments, just as, in the same way, all who through error or evil are under discipline must be shut out or excluded from the sacraments.

But even so, and vice-versa, each church member is obligated to use the sacraments. Each is obligated to present his child for baptism and, likewise, each believer stands under the obligation, as often as the Lord's Supper is administered, to receive the sacrament. This is not because his salvation hangs on the sacrament. There is no good Christian who does not know better. But also there is no good Christian who, because God is free and can save him without the sacrament, repays the Lord God for His mercy with contempt for His holy sacrament.

30. Concerning the Exercise of Christian Discipline.

The administration of the means of grace must be kept holy and the church of God ruled with a spiritual polity. The exercise of christian discipline which is bound to the official authority in the church has a twofold purpose. Therefore this discipline is exercised, 1) by each and every believer in the way of warning when one sees his brother fall; 2) by each and every believer to a lesser degree in connection with personal offenses; 3) by all the believers together at the time of excommunication or readmittance of those who misbehave, when the believers express agreement with the decision of the consistory or oppose that decision; and, finally, 4) in the most principle way by the consistory over the members of the congregation and by the classis over erring churches.

This discipline is not a brotherly warning of love,

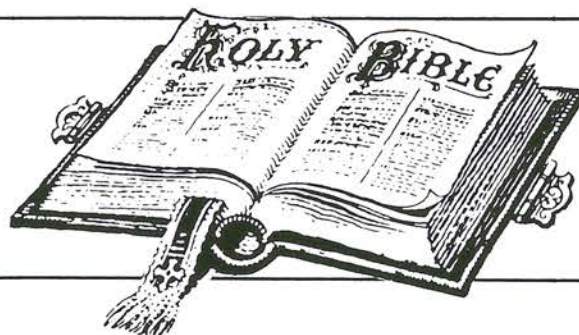
but a spiritual right of punishment which is exercised authoritatively in the name of King Jesus. This right of punishment does not aim at the state of the heart or the motive of the heart. (*de intimis non judicat ecclesia*: the church refrains from passing judgment on the hidden things.) Nor is it *inquisitorial*. It does not search out transgression which takes place within the home. It is exclusively directed to public transgression, i.e., which is either committed publicly, or privately, but has become publicly known. This discipline is concerned with confession and walk and that without respect of persons. It is exercised over the ministers of the Word and magistrates as well as over the forgotten citizen.

It follows a regulated procedure which properly ought to produce a guarantee that only the guilty will be condemned. It proceeds along definite steps to final excommunication from the congregation, but it retraces its steps as soon as there is evidence of contrition. And when this happens no trace of infamy continues to rest upon the contrite saint.

It checks the working of the means of grace because the means of grace are only for believers; and through the application of discipline the status of a disciplined person as a believer is made doubtful even in an ecclesiastical way. Anyone who is under discipline can be worked with by the Word, but the Word comes to him just as it comes to others who are outside the church, i.e., to judge him and to urge him to repentance, but not to comfort him with God's promises. And in a yet narrower sense, the sacrament is checked because the church can no longer seal the promises to anyone whose faith is in doubt church politically. Only in connection with holy baptism is this not applicable because a newly born baby cannot wander or transgress, and the notion of punishing the child for the transgression of the parents, while it can and does happen from God's side, never results in the exercise of punishment because the church possesses no power for this.

It does not belong here to treat of the discipline in the family because the authority of the father is civil and not ecclesiastical in character.

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ALL AROUND US

Rev. G. Van Baren

What of the Hostages?

You have heard it again and again, in newspaper, magazine, on television and radio—Iran continues to hold hostage some 53 Americans. They have done this for over 200 days. Daily we are reminded about the fact. The rescue attempt which failed has been analyzed in detail. The whole sad event has proved frustrating and irritating. How can someone do that to our country? Perhaps each of us experiences a bit of the frustration too—since we are citizens of the United States. Nor can we condone that which was done.

Yet one can not help but think of the hypocrisy of it all. Fifty-three lives become the deep concern of the whole nation. The security of fifty-three people is of pressing concern. Dire threats are spoken against the nation should any harm come to the hostages. But can this country claim such concern about the safety and preservation of lives? All who are so concerned about 53 lives, where is the same concern for those million plus lives that are arbitrarily and evilly snuffed out each year? If 53 lives are so valuable, what of the more than a million which are simply destroyed at the whim of man? I speak of the evil of abortion. Voices are raised, but little is done. Mass murder is being practiced by our "Christian" nation—while Iran is threatened that should it hurt one of the 53 lives of the people imprisoned there, dire consequences will follow.

There is also growing concern in this country about another evil becoming more prevalent: legalized euthanasia. The *Outlook*, June, 1980, presents an article on this disturbing subject by E.L. Hubden Taylor. He quotes a case where a man in Massachusetts (78 years old) was ordered

"removed from the dialysis treatment, medication, and special diet necessary to his survival—so that he might 'die with dignity.'" This, in spite of the fact that the man did not want to "die with dignity." Only after a great amount of national and international pressure, was this decision reversed. The article maintains, however, that many elderly and sick are compelled to "die with dignity" in this country. How many? The author claims "probably as many Americans as have been aborted as yet unborn." the writer quotes from a book written by Dr. Koop:

Our society, having lost its understanding of the sanctity of human life, is pushing the medical profession into assuming one of God's prerogatives, namely deciding what life shall be born and when life shall end.... If there is not to be a Judeo-Christian ethic in the preservation of life in matters pertaining to euthanasia, what does the future hold? The day may come when a death selection committee may objectively consider my life not to be worth much.... Certainly the rights of individuals will disappear: depersonalization and dehumanization will reign.... Once the human-value ethic becomes weakened or tarnished, it doesn't take long for human experimentation on human bodies to take place. Auschwitz could be in the offing.

So: perhaps a million and a half abortions a year; perhaps another million and a half quasi-legal "mercy-killings." But woe to Iran if it dares to touch one of the 53 lives of United States citizens held hostage! What kind of country are we becoming? What ought we to do and do? How can all this be condoned? And: are we beginning to see even now the terrible judgments of God upon this country because of these awful and growing crimes?

"An Ounce of Mother"

The Presbyterian Journal, May 14, 1980, in an article by Dick Hillis, makes some interesting comments about mothers. Some of the things recorded in the article need saying. I quote just the first and last part of the article:

"An ounce of mother can be worth more than a ton of clergy." I don't know the author of this quote but I am sure his purpose was not to down-grade the clergy but rather to promote true Christian motherhood.

We know that most of the men ministering in for-

eign lands and in the pulpits of America come from Christian homes. Our missionaries speak of a deep sense of God's direction in their lives. They tell of the inescapable conviction that they should serve Him abroad. They mention their awareness of the terrible lostness of men. These things influenced them to go to foreign lands as ambassadors of Jesus Christ. But they do not stop there. They readily acknowledge the deep influence of a godly mother....

Yes, "an ounce of mother" if that mother is a godly one, is of far more worth than a ton of jewels. So if you feel your duties as a busy Christian mother are preventing you from doing many of the things you would like to do for the Lord outside the home, remember that motherhood and your ministry in the home are very important to the Lord.

A woman once wrote the great evangelist, Gypsy Smith, and told him she had been converted in one of his campaigns. She said, "I believe the Lord wants me

to preach the Gospel, but the trouble is that I have twelve children to raise. What shall I do?"

The loving Gypsy wrote, "My dear lady, I am happy to hear that you have been saved and feel called to preach. But I am even more delighted to know that God has already provided you with a congregation of twelve." The mother got the point.

When did you last stop and thank God for the high calling of motherhood?

The point is, of course, that Mother has an extremely important place in the home. How foolish when some seem to think that it were better to be engaged in daily work, along with the father, in order to gain a bit more of the earthly possessions which so many esteem. How silly to regard this important position as "degrading" and "demeaning." True it is, that if this "ounce of mother" is gone, then the "ton of clergy" will serve but poorly as well.

"State-Owned Children"

In an editorial in the **Christian News**, April 14, 1980, the editor reminds us of the direction the world and our country is headed with respect to the care and training of children. He writes:

The International Year of the Child has ended, but there will be no doubt repercussions of its influence for years to come. Certainly permissiveness and children's rights have been given further impetus.

In April, 1979, the Swedish Parliament, by an overwhelming vote, passed a law prohibiting parents from striking their children or treating them in any "humiliating" way. The law which went into effect July 1, clearly prohibits punishment as slapping, whacking or spanking children, but the area of "humiliating treatment" is more vague, possibly including such actions as sending them to bed without supper.

In American a number of legal actions have leaned in the same direction so that possibly in the near future similar laws may be enacted here.

The doctrine of state-owned children has in fact been with us for some time but in a subtle form. Compulsory education, a form of conscription, has for years been accepted as a fact of life, but there is good reason to believe that it would not stand the constitutional test if it were ever to be tested before the U.S. Supreme Court.

This editor sat in the witness chair in a Seward County, Nebraska court room on January 19 in behalf of a young student, Ronald Troyer, who is being

charged with truancy because he is attending a Christian Day School which employs teachers who are not certified by the state. Forty-four of the states do not require accreditation of teachers in private schools but Nebraska happens to be one of the six that does. There have been similar suits in several other cases involving Christian schools.

It was part of my testimony to point out that children are not owned by the state but by the parents who have been given this prerogative by God. It was the doctrine of state-owned children that prevailed in Hitler's Germany and in Mussolini's Italy in their totalitarian regimes. It is a dangerous doctrine with wide ramifications, and by all indications, considering present trends, there may be some real tensions ahead for us between the state and the home in regard to child control. The Bible seems to predict such a time when children will rise up against parents in defense of their so-called rights.

The above editorial points out what we have long emphasized. The time may be at hand that parents are not allowed to instruct their own children. The "rights" of children would then be compromised. Children, so it will be said, have the right to determine for themselves if they will worship God—and how. No parent may impress his own religious views, at home or school or church, upon his children. We are rapidly headed in this direction of "rights" for the child.

The GKN and the Homosexual

In the **Banner**, April 25, 1980, Rev. Haverkamp presents his translation of the decision of the Reformed Church in the Netherlands (GKN) with respect to the homosexual. I quote only the most pertinent part of that decision:

To direct a communication to the churches with the call to officebearers and church members to:

- a. let the mutual bond and service to one another also in the relationship between homosexual and heterosexual church members ever anew proceed from the acceptance of one another under the authority of the proclaimed gospel of grace and of service to the Lord Jesus;
- b. also in the presence of the differing view of the Scriptural data involved, to keep in mind that—in reverence for one another's life-secret, with respect for the individual responsibility over against God and in the light of God's justification of the humanity of us all—it is not for us to condemn fellowmen in their homosexual disposition and the practice thereof; since the last word also concerning this belongs to the Lord.
- c. to let the mutual faith-bond in Christ between homosexual and heterosexual Christians again and again receive inspiring form in the united experience of the worship service, through administration and reminder of baptism, via participation in the Holy Supper.
- d. so to use the gifts unto service, also in the office granted to all, homosexuals and heterosexuals, that they function to the upbuilding of the congregation.
- e. to promote mutual discussion between homosexual and heterosexual church members locally.
- f. to make use in this discussion of the report "concerning people who are homosexual", which was brought to the attention of the church by the Synod of Dordrecht 1971/1972.
- g. to signalize the disdaining and slighting of the homosexual person in society and to help conquer these.

Haverkamp concludes that "the time has come to take steps to sever the existing relationship with the Gereformeerde Kerken in the Netherlands."

PRE-SEMINARY GRADUATION ADDRESS

In Pursuit of Excellence

Prof. Robert D. Decker

Congratulations and God's blessing! A significant accomplishment has been made by you who graduate by the grace of God. Virtually no one takes note of this accomplishment. But you may be sure that God does. What has been accomplished is of great significance for our churches and the cause of Jesus Christ in the world. You have completed your college education, your pre-seminary work. That is the first and necessary step in your training for the ministry of the Word. You have studied many and varied courses as preparation and background for your work in theology. You have acquired a working knowledge of the original languages of the Scriptures. In every sense of the word your education has been pre-seminary. We (your wives, parents, professors, and friends) are grateful to God for making this possible.

But graduation is also commencement, a beginning. Not only do we look back with thanks on what has been accomplished, but we also look forward. That you graduate from the pre-seminary course means you are about to embark on the final leg of your educational journey. Graduation means the beginning of your seminary career.

It is from that point of view that I wish to speak. In all of your work from this point on, in the seminary and, the Lord willing, in the ministry of the Gospel in our churches, you must be doing just one thing: you must be pursuing excellence. That excellence is the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord. That knowledge is revealed in the inspired, infallible, holy Scriptures. That you must pursue with all that is in you. You must strive to acquire it

and grow in that knowledge, now and for the rest of your lives. You must make everything in your lives subservient to that. In a real sense of the word the pursuit of that excellence must be a total life commitment. That was the commitment and confession of one of the greatest preachers who ever lived. The Apostle Paul tells the Philippians and us: "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ" (Phil. 3:8). This must be your confession as you graduate. Unless it is, you cannot be a Preacher of the Word and a Pastor of God's people.

The excellence you must pursue is this: "the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." That is the knowledge of the Saviour. It is the knowledge of Christ and as Christ the Saviour is God's anointed. Christ is ordained from eternity to be the Mediator and Saviour of the elect. As the anointed One He is the officebearer in God's kingdom. Christ is our prophet Who makes known the will of God to us. He is our merciful High Priest Who sacrificed Himself on the cross for our sins and Who constantly and perfectly prays for us before the throne of grace. Christ is our King, and as King He has pre-eminence in all things. Christ is Head over all things to the Church which is His body. Him, the Christ of God, you must know.

It is the knowledge of Jesus you must acquire. He is named Jesus by God, "...for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). As Jesus He is Jehovah salvation. You must pursue the knowledge of Jesus.

It is the knowledge of our Lord. Christ is Lord of lords and King of kings. All power in heaven and on earth has been given to Christ. Christ rules all things in such a way that nothing can be against us. All things are for us. In our Lord we are more than conquerors. That knowledge you must pursue.

That knowledge has content, and the content is found in the holy Scriptures. Scripture is all about the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is on every page and in every passage of the Bible. Scripture reveals Christ in Whom God determined to reveal His glory. Scripture reveals Christ in Whom God elected His people before the foundations of the world; Christ by Whom and for Whom all things were made; Christ Who redeemed us by His suffering and death from sin and death; Christ, raised and exalted, Who has the pre-eminence in all things. And in Christ the God of our salvation is revealed in all His sovereignty and almighty power, in all His glory as the ever blessed God. The knowledge of the Scriptures, therefore, you must pursue if you are going to know the Lord Jesus Christ.

That knowledge is set forth in our creeds. The Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, and the Canons of the great Synod of Dordrecht (1618-1619) contain that excellent knowledge. In a truly marvelous and eloquent way these creeds systematize the truth of the Word of God. They are a beautiful summary of the truth of Scripture. What I am saying is that this knowledge is the Reformed Faith. The Reformed Faith preaches but one theme: the absolute sovereignty of God! That theme proclaims the total depravity of man, his guilt and corruption and inability to do any good apart from grace. This faith proclaims the absolute sovereignty of God's grace in Christ by which the elect are saved apart from works, and the calling of the redeemed to live in thankfulness to God. That knowledge is what is taught in our Seminary and preached in our churches. This knowledge must be maintained at all costs.

This knowledge is not merely theoretical. It does not consist of some dry, abstract dogmas. Nor is it mere intellectual, theological theory. Yes, of course you need to know what the Bible teaches. You need to learn Reformed theology. This is a must. Without a thorough knowledge of the teaching of the Word of God no one can preach. But that must be the knowledge of experience. It must be the fruit of the work of the Holy Spirit applying the Word in our hearts. Then we know our sins and sinful natures. We know the forgiveness of our sins through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. We know God in Jesus Christ as the God of our salvation Who turns all things to our profit. It is that knowledge which is life eternal. This excellent knowledge is the foundation of our lives. It motivates us in all of our activity and governs us in all our way.

That knowledge you must pursue. This means very simply that you must strive to acquire this knowledge. And that means in one word, study. A wonderful privilege is yours for the next three years. Day after day you will be taught the doctrines of the Word of God. You will learn how to mine the truth out of the Scriptures. You will learn the lessons of the church of the past. You will be taught how to construct a sermon and preach. You will learn how to pastor God's flock. Do not abuse that privilege. Seize it! Grow in the knowledge of Christ Jesus your Lord. If that knowledge is not in your mind and in your heart you can never be a minister of the Gospel.

Understand, and understand it well, this pursuit involves your all! This is true of the next three years. Seminary must not be something incidental to your lives. It must in a real sense *be* your lives! The same is true of the ministry. The ministry is not just a forty-hour-per-week job. Nor is the ministry merely a profession among other professions. The

ministry involves the totality of one's life! You must be in pursuit of that knowledge for the rest of your lives. This is your calling all your life long. There is no end to it; you must always grow in the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus your Lord. One of our Protestant Reformed fathers remarked near the end of his life: "I preached nearly fifty years. If the Lord gave me another fifty years I still would only scratch the surface." That's true! The riches of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord are unfathomable.

Be assured too that knowledge is excellent. The Apostle Paul did some reckoning. "I count," he said. This means the Apostle did some considering, comparing, and evaluating. He compared all things on the one hand: his circumcision, his being a Hebrew of the Hebrews and a Pharisee. Paul could have gone places humanly speaking. His was an excellent pedigree, and He had a good education.

Paul could have been a doctor of the law. He evaluates all of that over against the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord. And his conclusion? I count all those things loss, of no value whatsoever. Not only that I count all things loss, but dung compared with the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. That is the Apostle's confession.

May that be your confession as you graduate and commence your seminary career. The knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord is of inestimable, incomparable value. In fact, it is life eternal! It is worth living for and working for. That knowledge is worth dying for! Nothing can equal or surpass it. All things—wealth, pleasure, a name in this world—all things without exception are loss, but dung. Pursue that knowledge for God's sake and the churches'. May God richly bless you in that pursuit.

QUESTION BOX

About the Origin of the Soul

Rev. C. Hanko

From Lynden, Washington we received the following questions concerning the origin of the soul:

"Do we receive or inherit our souls from our natural parents? If so, from father, or mother, or both? That would seem to pose some difficulties. If not, is each individual soul an immediate creative act of God? Consequently, is God still creating?

Allow me, first of all, to apologize for the delay in answering this and other questions that have been sent in to the Question Box. Various other duties, such as spending nine weeks in Bradenton, Florida, have kept me occupied, so that the questions had to wait. I appreciate the patience of those who sent in questions and assure you that, D.V., I will answer the questions on hand in the near future.

The question that is raised about the origin of the soul is, indeed, interesting. The individual who sent the question mentioned in his letter that he was acquainted with the terms Creationism and Traducianism. To refresh our memories, the term Creationism has been used ever since Aristotle and the early church to designate the theory that God cre-

ates the soul of every individual at the time of conception. It was used in the latter part of the 19th century to oppose the evolution theory. As the questioner remarks, this would be an on-going creation. In that case, the human body comes from the parents, but the soul in each instance is created by God. Traducianism is the theory that the soul as well as the body comes from the parents. As is evident from the liberal theology of our day, that raises the question whether man evolves from a lower animal, or even whether God has anything at all to do with the origin of the soul, or if this is merely a natural process.

The first question that must be answered is, what do we understand by the "soul"? Does man consist of two separate parts, soul and body? Did God create man's body from the dust of the earth, and then add a soul, or a spirit? Or is the soul an integral part of man's being, so that soul and body are intimately related and essentially one?

In Genesis 2:7 we are told, "And the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and

breathed into his nostrils the breath of life: and man became a living soul." Obviously, this is not two separate creative acts, as if God first formed a human body and then added a soul. But this is two aspects of one divinely creative act. God made man a human being, with a nature that is different from that of the animals. This human nature has a physical and a psychical, or spiritual side. Man came forth from the hand of the Creator as a rational, moral creature, capable of thinking, willing, speaking, and acting. He is a natural being of the earth earthy, yet at the same time he is a spiritual being who stands as an accountable creature before the living God. According to his creation, he was an image bearer of God, with a mind that was capable of knowing God, a heart that was capable of loving God, and a will that could direct his entire being in the service of God. He stood in relationship to God as God's friend-servant to devote himself in covenant fellowship to the living God.

Man's "soul" therefore also has a twofold aspect. On the one hand, man is capable of seeing, hearing, feeling, speaking, thinking, willing, planning, and carrying out a conscious, deliberate work. On the other hand, man's soul stands in relation to God as knowing that God is God, aware that God's law is the rule of life, and that he is responsible to God for all his desires, thoughts, words, and deeds. He can never lose that spiritual, moral consciousness, even

after the fall. Therefore also at death his "soul" from that spiritual aspect (or spirit, as Scripture refers to it), leaves the body to enter into eternity, either in heaven or in hell.

What helps us to understand the origin of the soul is the wonder of the incarnation. The person of the Son of God joined His complete divine nature to a complete human nature which He took from the virgin Mary. Christ had a complete, yet impersonal human nature, for the divine person of the Son of God took on our flesh, completely God and at the same time completely flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone, both as to body and soul.

This gives us certain definite directives as to the origin of the human soul. At conception not merely the body is called into existence, but a personal being, consisting of body and soul. God creates a new individual, a new person with individual gifts and talents. Therefore, the soul and body are brought into existence from the parents, the *person* is from God. God brings about each conception, creating at the moment of conception a new person which must serve his or her unique purpose with the particular gifts and talents, personality and character traits, as God has determined from eternity.

I hope that this may be of some help to understand the origin of the soul.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

Fearful Jacob Meets Fearsome Esau

Rev. John A. Heys

For Jacob the inevitable meeting with Esau could not have come at a worse time. Physically the man was in no shape for this ordeal. For he had spent a sleepless night in a bone-wearying wrestling match with God Himself. He was left physically exhausted. And, what is more, he was now a cripple who was in no condition to do any more wrestling with men. Yet he must go and meet the brother who threatened to take his life away as soon as their father was dead.

And now, if you please, we are about to have the most unusual meeting that can be desired. This exhausted cripple with a tremendous herd of

sheep, with kine in abundance, not to speak of camels, and with unarmed servants and four wives and twelve children, the oldest of which cannot be more than thirteen years old, and one of them is a daughter, must meet, and is on a collision course with, an advertised murderer who has no fewer than four hundred armed men with him. Jacob had just gone through a similar ordeal with his father-in-law, Laban, when his life and that of his family were threatened with harm. One must, therefore, consider that there is also a psychological element to be borne in mind. We certainly can pity the man, and before we take a pharisaical attitude of thanking God that we are not like Jacob, we had better

try to understand his position, and then look at what we do in situations less tense. Jacob's sins and weakness of faith and its works must not be minimized or lauded; but we had better remember that God has these matters recorded for our instruction. And to ignore Jacob's weaknesses and sins as recorded in God's Word is to ignore what God is saying to us on these pages of Holy Writ.

There is also, therefore, that element that must be kept in mind, namely, that the tricky one now is about to meet the one whom he cheated out of the birthright blessing by his trickery. This is not simply a meeting between twin brothers who have not seen each other—and perhaps not even heard about each other—for twenty years. On the part of both of them there is an element of uncertainty as to what to expect. Esau comes with four hundred armed men not knowing how many Jacob has, not even knowing Jacob's purpose in coming back. He may have surmised, because of past history, that Jacob is coming now to claim the birthright blessing and take all of his father's possessions, perhaps even by force. Esau's band of men seems to suggest that. Jacob does not know how wealthy Esau is, and how much resentment he still holds. Neither one is expecting a joyful family reunion.

One truth needs to be kept in mind, and that is that a believer is coming to meet an unbeliever. One whom God loves is meeting one whom God hates. And no amount of philosophizing will change Romans 9:13 that, "Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated." That word hate is hate and not "love less." Never, and I say *never*, in Scripture does that word have the meaning of containing a bit of love. It is the same word that we find in I John 3:15, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer, and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." And murderers do not kill because they love less. They kill because they hate.

Now two believers walking in their faith would on meeting only create an atmosphere of "How pleasant it is, for brethren to dwell together in unity" (Psalm 133:1). How delightful this meeting would have been, if both Jacob and Esau had met as fellow believers after a separation of twenty years, even if the separation was caused by the sin of one of them. In forgiveness, in meeting in the shadow of the cross of Christ, in confession of past evil, and in mutual rejoicing in God's pardoning grace and mercy, we could say of it, as the Psalmist continues to do, "There the Lord commands His blessing." That we do not have now; and such a meeting is not to be expected, for these are not men with the same spiritual life bestowed upon them. No, Esau does not understand Jacob, and cannot be expected to understand him. When, therefore, Jacob speaks those words of faith in answer to Esau's question,

"Who are these with thee?"—and he had reference to the wives and children of Jacob—Jacob's words go unanswered. Jacob replied to Esau, "The children which God hath graciously given thy servant." Esau has no reply, because he cannot understand such language.

Jacob, on the other hand, in addition to possessing the new man in Christ has his old man of sin, and can therefore understand his brother. And his old man of sin knows how to handle the man of sin of Esau as well. Let it be noted that the child of God has an *old* man of sin, because in his rebirth he obtains another and a new man. The unbeliever has only a man of sin, just one, and therefore it cannot be called an old man. But this does give the child of God an advantage which must not be abused. It pleases God to use men with a new life and an old life to preach the gospel to those yet in unbelief. And having that old flesh, knowing the very motions of sin in his own flesh, the preacher of today is able to understand the ways of the unbeliever and his needs.

Jacob is to be commended for his language of faith here when he confesses God in His grace as the answer to the question as to who these wives and children are. God graciously gives them to us—our wives as well as our children, and our children through our wives. No room for boasting is there; nor for that matter is there room for complaint and resentment when God gives another child. That is not the language of faith or the speech of the new man in Christ. Jacob does approach Esau as a believer is called to witness before the unbeliever. He does manifest his faith here; and in this we ought to rejoice.

But there is much of Jacob's old man of sin here as well. And for that we ought to weep, and from it we ought to learn the lesson which Paul teaches us in Romans 7, that when we would do good, evil is present. This explains—although it does not excuse—the works of Jacob that did not proceed from faith. They did embrace, kiss each other and weep, because those natural, blood ties were still there. Not only were they brothers according to the flesh, but they were twin brothers. Not only did they live together in one family from birth, but before they were born they were together as womb mates, Jacob even having his little chubby hand around Esau's heel when he was born.

It may be argued that it was the oriental custom of the day for men to bow, and call each other lord. That kissing and weeping also may be attributed to the emotional character of certain peoples of that day. But what is true of the world and its man of sin, need not be and often should not be what the child of God with his new man in Christ ought to

have attributed to him. And that Jacob wanted to give his brother a gift need not be an evil deed and one that is lacking in faith. Faith will cause the believer to give to the poor unbeliever. Is not that the point of Jesus' parable about the Merciful Samaritan? He did not ask whether that wounded man was believer or unbeliever. He asked himself the question, "Whose neighbour am I?" The wicked Jews asked Jesus who their neighbour was. Jesus in the parable taught them and us that this is not the question, but that we should always ask, "Whose neighbour am I?" The question concerns those whom God has caused to cross our path in order that we might help, show mercy, assist with spiritual as well as material gifts. We cannot fault Jacob for giving his brother a gift, if indeed it was intended to show his love for his brother. And let it even be stated that Jacob did not know at that moment what Esau revealed later, "I have enough, my brother, keep that thou hast unto thyself." If his conscience bothers him now about what did not touch him twenty years before, namely, that he by trickery had gotten his blind father to bless him while thinking it was Esau, let him now make amends and bestow upon his brother a goodly gift. Let him repay what he took away. Let him make amends and plead for forgiveness.

You do not find that plea for forgiveness here. Jacob wants reconciliation—even before he knows that Esau comes with four hundred men—and being sent back by God, he knows that he must live near Esau, but in vain do you find a suggestion of such confession on Jacob's part.

It is true that he had a right to all the goods which he had. It is also true that he had a right to the birth-right blessing, not in himself, but because God gave it to him through his blind father. But all this does not excuse him from his calling to confess before Esau his works of deceit. The meek shall inherit the earth. All things are ours for Christ's sake. But this does not mean that we may deceive, steal, cheat, and take by force from the neighbour, and having done so to take the position that we owe them no apology, no confession, and we need not have sorrow in our souls for sin.

This lack of one word of confession on Jacob's part means that Jacob's old man is at work in this gift, in the bowing seven times before he comes to Esau, and his act of calling him lord. In that light also must be seen his insistence that Esau keep that

gift, even after he said that he had enough. This failure of Jacob to say one word of being sorry for his sin colours the work of his hands when he gives such an overwhelming gift and insists on Esau receiving it even after he has stated that he has enough. Here, too, it may be stated by some that this refusing was the custom of the day and the oriental way of politeness. But that addition of Esau that he has enough explains his refusal to accept as being other than the fact that it was the way of the day not to appear too anxious and eager to get a gift. Jacob is trying to buy his way into the good graces of Esau by his gift instead of confessing his sin before him.

How true that even "the holiest men, while in this life, have only a small beginning of this obedience," as the Heidelberg Catechism so correctly states it. We have only a beginning, and with Paul must say that we have not yet attained (Philippians 3:12) and are not already perfect. And even that beginning is a small beginning; and we have far to go and stand in need of much until the day of our death, when God graciously takes from us that whole old man of sin.

And let it be pointed out that Esau is more honourable here than Jacob. Jacob, instead of all that bowing from a distance, should have run up to Esau with a confession on his lips. Instead it is Esau who runs up to Jacob and embraces and kisses him. Esau showed a far more forgiving nature than Jacob showed a penitent one. Had Jacob run up with a confession, Esau would have understood that great gift of Jacob. Now he is puzzled and must ask what it means.

The question does arise, "Did Jacob really learn his lesson that he must wrestle with God in prayer and not with men in the arm of flesh or with trickery?" The answer is that he did. But we must not expect Jacob to be perfect. How wonderful it would be if, having learned a lesson in the preaching of the gospel, we would walk always in that way and never go back to our former sins. But the flesh is there and asserts itself. And this underscores not only that we have great need to wrestle with God in prayer for the grace that will keep us in the narrow way, but also that we are saved by grace. In heavenly glory we will look back on this life and realize that we do not deserve to be there, and that we are in this glory only by God's grace.

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

SIGNS OF THE TIME

Environmental Pollution

Rev. K. Koole

Over the last few years man has become increasingly alarmed about pollution. In our day and age, when man talks about pollution he is not talking about the pollution of his soul; he is talking about the pollution of his soil and of his air and water. Man's alarm is understandable. When you talk about the earth and threats to its environment you are talking about man's very existence. Man lives not only on the earth, but out of the earth. God made man a creature whose very physical existence is dependent upon the means only planet earth can provide. Earth's clean air, fresh water, and nourishing food are vital. Foul air, contaminated water, and poisoned food spell disaster. Every other planet in the vast universe is alien to man. What happens when the earth itself becomes alien to man, so that even it poisons man? Then death is multiplied upon death. It does not take a scientist to tell us this; common sense is sufficient. The human race, however, is not particularly renowned for the last mentioned quality. So mankind continues to abuse earth in an astounding manner and to lay it waste at an alarming rate.

The evidence of man's negligence, waste, and abuse of this creation is everywhere. Man himself can no longer ignore it. Over the last decade, and the last few years especially, the threat of man to his environment has been vividly shown. Incidents have occurred which threaten the environment with such widespread damage that prophets of doom have arisen in man's own midst—prophets whose concern is purely earthly and man centered, but who see that the greatest threat to man is man himself. He is always the cause of his own misery.

We do not have to search very far to find causes of man's alarm. There has been the "Three Mile Island" incident with its lingering threat of nuclear, radio-active pollution. If such an accident can occur in one nuclear energy plant, what is to prevent it from happening to others? There has been the rampaging oil well in the Gulf of Mexico, its oil gushing out into the open sea for over half a year, fouling the coast up into Texas. There has been the poisoning of a large part of the Bay of San Francisco, killing much of its life. The Japanese have had to contend with mercury poisoning

among their people because of contaminated fish. The Great Lakes themselves are continual objects of deep concern because of pollution from the large industrial cities on their shores. So the list goes on and on—smog, pesticides, oil tanker sinkings, etc. Newsweek Magazine, Oct. 29, 1979 carried this ominous news:

In a field near Louisville, Ky., a rusty jumble of 17,000 metal drums is leaking a witch's brew of unidentified chemicals into a tributary of the Ohio River. In Harde-man County, Tenn., at least a dozen dangerous pesticides oozed out of a dump site into the local water supply. In Denver, cancer-causing radon waste from long-abandoned radium mines is seeping into buildings and under city streets. And in Elizabeth, N.J., 40,000 barrels of toxic, flammable and explosive wastes are piled precariously close to giant propane and natural-gas storage tanks a quarter mile away.

How to dispose of dangerous chemical wastes is fast becoming the nation's No. 1 environmental problem.

Every major, national magazine regularly carries similar articles. The magazine "U.S. News & World Report" recently has published a book entitled "Our Poisoned Planet: Can We Save It?" Man recognizes that things are reaching a critical point in the environment. There is an undercurrent of fear among us. Who wants to die the slow, painful death of poisoning?

Now, when man writes books about *saving* this poisoned planet, he is, of course, considering salvation in a wholly earthly sense. He is talking about salvation through the means of water and soap, rather than about salvation by blood and the Spirit. Unbelieving man is no more interested in the true world-saving power of Christ's blood than he is in the soul's pollution. Those who do talk about Christ's blood in connection with the poisoned environment do so out of a desire to enlist its power to realize their dreams of an enduring kingdom on this earth. What unbelieving man desires is a living earth that is self-perpetuating, and which can, therefore, nurture and support mankind indefinitely. The only poison in this planet that man is concerned about is the *chemical* kind. From the chemical concoctions that man himself has brewed up, man wants to save himself. Man wants to reverse

the accelerating progress of death in and to this creation. It is a vain hope. Man's vision of paradise regained under man's benevolent and wise direction and patient care is not to be. And the reason man is not going to succeed in cleaning up this polluted environment with water and soap (be it with or without phosphates) is because of a deeper, more fundamental pollution, the pollution man does not reckon with, the pollution of man's own soul. The two are inseparably related. The filth of man's soul reflects itself in creation. You might say that the filth of man's soul rubs off on the earth. Man leaves his mark behind. As long as polluted man walks on the earth, pollution of creation will continue to increase.

Polluted man has two formidable obstacles standing between himself and his visions of a paradise regained, namely, the curse, and his own insatiable greed. The curse strikes a breach between creation and man. The curse means that essentially man is an alien in what was once his homeland. Now the creation itself opposes man. It is true that man has been able to eke a living out of the earth, and has in some instances even prospered; but for that living, man has had to pay a price. From the time of Adam that price has been, in part, the sweat of the brow, unceasing labor, and weariness. The earth will not support man except she be forced to do so. When man was pure, the earth yielded to him as her Lord-given lord, bountifully and spontaneously. Now the only thing the earth will yield to man voluntarily in abundance is weeds. Instead of the fruit tree comes the thorn; instead of the vineyard comes the brier patch; instead of wheat comes the thistle. Creation does not recognize man as her king any more; he is a usurper. And she yields to man in subjection only after man by tyrannical strength overpowers her and strips from her her increase. The earth is more hospitable to the hordes of insects than to man. And the insects together with the weeds compete with man for his harvest. So man can not relax his vigilance if he is to prevent the weeds and bugs from getting the upper hand. If the land is going to support society's ever growing population, man must use every available means. High production depends on applying highly potent chemicals. Nothing else is adequate for our society, at least not as judged by standards of profit and production. In a society in which the ratio of consumer to food producer is over 50 - 1 it is not feasible to depend on man power; machinery is needed. And for machinery you need industry, and for industry you need fuel for energy, and with fuel comes pollution. Forests are laid waste, hills are leveled, and man drills beneath the depths of the sea. Fuel is spilled, and fuel is burned. The waters turn black and red, the air becomes brown. Death is

multiplied upon death. Creation's deterioration is hastened, and man works his own misery and death. In a cursed creation in which the earth is estranged from man and opposed to him, such a situation is inevitable. Man is never going to reverse the realization of the curse.

The other obstacle to a paradise regained, or to a saving of our planet's environment, is man's own greed. The environmentalists hope to escape the consequences of the curse thru education, which means alerting man to his danger and pleading with him to use wisdom in caring for his environment. They hope that technology will enable man to produce and to consume without polluting in the future. They plead with man to be content to do without things until that day comes so that mankind is not poisoned before the man-made paradise can dawn tomorrow. But how futile! Give greedy man the choice between living at a high level today and endangering life tomorrow, or making sacrifices today in order to protect the world of the future, and what do you think the choice of greedy man is going to be? Why should the world be well off tomorrow at my expense today? Let tomorrow's generation take care of itself. Let us take care of ourselves today. Such is their attitude. The environmentalists who want to regulate greedy man's mad rush to fill his carnal appetite must feel a bit like the steward of the King of Israel who stood at the gates of Samaria during the time of Elisha and tried to regulate the starving Israelites as they poured through the city gates to get down to the empty camp of the Assyrians. The heedless mob simply trampled the foolish fellow under foot and he died. So the environmentalists are involved in a losing battle. They can not scrub man's soul clean, and being unable to remove the true source of all poison in creation they can never succeed in saving creation in any sense.

Pessimistic, you say? No, realistic—as realistic as Scripture. In Revelation you read of the development of the manifestation of the curse in this old creation, from the seals in chapter 6, to the trumpets in chapter 8, to the emptying of the vials in chapter 16. One reads there of creation becoming increasingly inhospitable to man, working death in increasing measure. These chapters speak of the signs of the intensification of God's wrath as time nears its end, of signs of judgment that appear in creation. And God exactly works His wrath through the foolishness of greedy men, so that they bring wrath upon themselves in all its forms. As we see creation becoming more polluted and poisoned and ever more instrumental in working suffering and death, we know that the end must soon come. The creation groans to be delivered. To us that groan speaks of hope and of Christ's coming. Man

imagines that he might die at his own hands through self-inflicted environmental poisoning. And humanly speaking, if man continues polluting as he is at the present rate, this could happen. But that is not to happen, for God will not allow the human race to die off of itself. Before that point is reached Christ will come in judgment and salvation. And it does not seem as though that time can be far off.

Today, everywhere we look, we see the evidence of man's greed and of the curse. In creation we see

the signs and workings of judgment, workings by which we also are affected. But do we despair? No, we place our faith and trust in the one Savior, Who, having redeemed the world with His precious blood, is now coming to cleanse it from its filth with a refiner's fire. We do not despair, for our hearts are not fixed on the things here below, but on the things that shall be, the new heavens and the new earth, which shall be free from all pollution, and in which we too shall be pure, not only in principle, but in our entirety.

Book Review

ON YOUR WAY REJOICING, by Louis M. Tamminga; Paideia Press, 1979; \$4.95 (paper), \$6.95 (hard cover). (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko)

Paideia Press has given a sampling in this book of what are, for the most part readings, similar to the old and familiar Daily Manna Readings which were once found in so many homes. Each page gives a daily reading founded on a particular passage in the

Bible. Each brief meditation is concluded with a brief prayer. The readings are not very exegetically based, do not emphasize sharply the Scriptural doctrines of sovereign grace, and are not the kind of meditative readings which have appeal to this reviewer. But those who once enjoyed the Daily Manna readings might also enjoy this book. It should be read, however, with care and should never be a substitute for personal Bible study.

IN MEMORIAM

It was the good pleasure of our heavenly Father to take unto Himself our beloved husband, father, grandfather, and brother, GEORGE POSTMA, at the age of 72 years, that he might join the saints who now stand before the King robed in the glorious white robes of salvation, on the twentieth of May, nineteen hundred and eighty.

"My flesh and heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever." (Ps. 73:26).

His loving wife,

Gertrude Postma (Haak)

His dear children,

Albert and Jenny Huizenga

Doede and Marge Postma

John and Betty Postma

George Jr., and Faye Postma

and his 14 grandchildren

and 4 great grandchildren

He is survived by four sisters and one brother in the Netherlands.

The Rev. D. Kuiper conducted the funeral service and he was put to rest in the Monument Cemetery in Lynden, Washington on May 23, 1980.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The members of the Adult Bible Study Society of The Southeast Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, extend heartfelt and sincere Christian sympathy to their fellow members, Mr. and Mrs. Donald Hauck, in the loss of his father, MR. ENOCH HAUCK.

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

Rev. M. Schipper, Pres.
Mrs. S. Vander Wal, Vice Sec'y.

NOTICE!!!

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in Pella, Iowa, on Wednesday, September 3, 1980, the Lord willing.

Material for the Agenda must be in the hands of the Stated Clerk thirty days before Classis convenes. Delegates in need of transportation from the airport or lodging should inform the clerk of the Pella Consistory.

Rev. David Engelsma, Stated Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Faith, Hope and Love Society of the South Holland Protestant Reformed Church expresses sincere sympathy to several of its members, Thressa Haak, Dora Haak, Jeanette Van Baren, Pat Haak and Marilyn De Jong in the passing of a brother-in-law and uncle, MR. GEORGE POSTMA.

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God." (Romans 8:28).

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

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies Society of the South Holland Protestant Reformed Church wishes to express its heartfelt sympathy to Mrs. Peter Poortinga, Mrs. Ernest Medema, Mrs. Don Haak, Mrs. Peter Poortinga, Jr., and Mrs. Dewey Vander Noord in the recent loss of their sister-in-law and aunt, MRS. HELEN IPEMA.

"I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress; my God; in Him will I trust." (Psalm 91:2).

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

REPORT OF CLASSIS EAST

May 14, 1980
Southeast Prot. Ref. Church

Classis East met in regular session on May 14, 1980 at Southeast Church. With the exception of Kalamazoo, the churches were each represented by two delegates. Rev. R. Hanko had his initiation as chairman.

Hope and Holland requested classical appointments. The following schedules were approved: HOPE: June 1 - Bruinsma, June 15 (eve) - Haak, June 22 (eve) - Haak, June 29 (both) - Joostens, July 13 (eve) - Bruinsma, July 20 (eve) - Bruinsma, August 3 (both) - Haak, August 17 (both) - Van Baren, August 31 (both) - Joostens; HOLLAND: June 8 - DeVries, June 22 - R. Hanko, July 6 - Van Baren, July 20 - DeVries, August 3 - R. Hanko, August 17 - Bruinsma, August 31 - DeVries, September 14 - Haak.

The report of the church visitors was given. The report began with the words, "It was extremely gratifying to find peace, harmony, and unity prevail in all of our churches," and ended with this prayer,

"May God continue to bless our churches and spur us on to stand for the truth entrusted to us, and zealously strive to grow in sanctification to His glory."

The Stated Clerk brought two proposals which were adopted by the Classis: 1) that the rule of classis that material be in the hands of the Stated Clerk ten days prior to the convening of the meeting be changed to read that material must be in the hands of the Stated Clerk at least *three weeks* prior to the meeting. 2) that the classical archives be microfilmed at an approximate cost of \$1500.00.

It was noted that this would be the last time that Rev. Heys would serve in official capacity as a delegate to classis. The chairman expressed thanks to Rev. Heys for the years of service which he has given both to the classis and to the churches.

Classis will meet next at First Church on September 10, 1980.

Respectfully submitted,
Jon Huisken
Stated Clerk

News From Our Churches

Hope Church in Walker, Michigan extended a call to Rev. Gise Van Baren which he subsequently declined. Their trio also included Professor Homer Hoeksema and Rev. Bernard Woudenberg.

Our Holland, Michigan congregation extended a call to Rev. David Engelsma. Their trio also included Professor Herman Hanko and Rev. Woudenberg.

Redlands, California elected to call Rev. James Slopsema from a trio which included Rev. Marvin Kamps and Rev. Dale Kuiper. Rev. Van Baren had declined a call from Redlands previous to their extending a call to Rev. Slopsema. Rev. M. Schipper spent several weeks in Redlands preaching there. He concluded his work there on Sunday, June 1. Professor Robert Decker plans to preach in Redlands for the six Sundays beginning June 15.

Everett Buitter, Barry Gritters, and Ken Hanko graduated from the pre-seminary department of our Theological School on Friday, May 23.

The new address of Rev. Robert C. Harbach is 3409 Goodman Ave. S.W., Wyoming, Michigan 49509.

Our church in South Holland, Illinois has been charged with the oversight of the Mission work being conducted in Birmingham, Alabama, by Rev. Ronald Van Overloop. In line with that responsibility, the South Holland Council sent their pastor, Rev. Engelsma, and elder Vroom to Birmingham in early May. Rev. Engelsma preached there on Sunday, May 11, and also preached along with Rev. Van Overloop at a two day Sovereign Grace Conference. The two evenings of meetings consisted of a speech (sermon), a short break, and another speech. Even though this format required a good deal of sitting and listening on the part of the audience (neither Rev. Engelsma nor Rev. Van Overloop are noted for their brevity) Rev. Van Overloop reported that the meetings were quite well received.

K.G.V.