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THE CANON OF HOLY SCRIPTURE

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Our Bible is a wonderful book!

Consider its form. It contains two large divisions: the Old and New Testaments. Each of those main divisions consists of several sub-divisions, books. There are 39 Old Testament books and 27 New Testament books, for a total of 66; and yet they form one Bible, with one central message, the Word of God, the God of our salvation, in Christ.

Study its historical origin. It was written by many different men, some of whom are mentioned by name, but some of whom are not mentioned and remain entirely unknown. It was written in various periods of history, over a total period of some 1500 years, from Moses to the Apostle John. Further, the writers lived in many different places and wrote under diverse circumstances, sometimes very unfavorable circumstances. They wrote in the desert of Sin and Sinai. They wrote in various places in the land of Canaan. They wrote in Babylon and Persia, in Caesarea and in Rome and points between. Some of the writers were men of education. Others were uneducated Galileans. Among them were prophets and priests, kings, choir leaders, shepherds, herdsmen, and fishermen. They wrote while guiding their flock, while sitting on a royal throne, while living in the courts of world emperors, and while they were imprisoned by such rulers. Often these men wrote being unaware of one

another's writings. They wrote without being conscious of the fact that they were collaborating to produce one great and unified literary product. There was as little outward and mechanical unity among the writers as is conceivable. They had no master plan to follow, as, for example, when **The Standard Bearer** or **Beacon Lights** plans an issue and makes assignments to various writers. (There was a "master plan," of course, — God's plan; and He executed that plan, too.) Moses did not write the Pentateuch with a view to what others might add later. David had no idea that his psalms (written behind a flock or while a fugitive from Saul or Absalom) would become part of one beautiful volume. Even the apostles and evangelists did not write their gospel narratives and their epistles with the conscious purpose in view to complete the Bible and to have their writings incorporated into one Book along with the Old Testament.

Yet our Bible is characterized by most beautiful inner harmony and coherence, in spite of this most complete lack of outward unity. There is both unity and progress in the successive books of the Bible. There is one great subject, one Great Figure presented in many ways and in manifold riches of beauty: the God of our salvation in Christ, the Immanuel, the Anointed of God, the Head of the covenant. Christ is undeniably the center of all the Scriptures and

pervades the whole of the Bible. The Old Testament leads us towards Him as a long shadow, cast over many centuries of history, guiding us to the body, the reality. The New Testament is the fulness of light streaming from His blessed countenance through the ages to come until the final day, the day of the consummation of all things. Together those Scriptures point us to the final day, the day of the Lord, the day of the perfecting of God's covenant and kingdom in the new heavens and the new earth, when His tabernacle shall be spread over all things.

That Bible is called the "canon" of Holy Scripture, and the books of the Bible are called the "canonical books."

There are three articles in our Confession of Faith which speak of this canon in one way or another. (Look them up and read them: Article 4, 5 and 6. I will only summarize them.) Article 4 teaches that "the Holy Scriptures are contained in two books, namely, the Old and New Testament, **which are canonical, against which nothing can be alleged.**" (emphasis added) It then goes on to name all the books of both the Old and New Testament. Article 5 states that "We receive all these books, and these only, **as holy and canonical**, for the regulation, foundation, and confirmation of our faith; believing without any doubt, all things contained in them. . . ." (emphasis added) And then it goes on to tell **why**. And Article 6 speaks about the difference between the canonical and the apocryphal books, emphasizing the unique character and authority of the sixty-six books of Holy Scripture.

What is meant by **canon** and **canonical**?

The term is of Greek origin, and it denotes a rod or wood measuring rule.

From this it gets the idea of a standard, or rule, according to which our life is measured, a norm. It is used this way, for example, in Galatians 6:16: "And as many as walk according to this rule (**canon** is the literal term here), peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God." And so by **canon** in connection with the Bible is meant a certain rule, measure, norm, of faith and life. By canonical books is meant that collection of inspired writings which the church accepts and believes as the Word of God, and therefore as the only infallible rule, or norm, for the faith and life of believers.

For us today this implies that the canon is a **finished**, or closed, collection. Nothing can be or need be added. The Bible is complete. This is also our Confession of Faith: "We receive all these books, and these only, as holy and canonical. . . ."

This was not always true. When the five books of Moses were completed, those books were canonical; but the Old Testament was not by any means complete. And when the Old Testament was finished long before the birth of Christ, the Scriptures were not completed and the canon was not closed. All that could be said—and this was true, as we shall see—was that the Old Testament canon was closed. But the entire New Testament was still to be added.

But today the canon is complete. It is a finished collection of inspired writings constituting the one, whole, written record of the Word of God in Christ. The question has sometimes been raised: what would be the attitude of the church if another of the writings of the apostles would be discovered? Would such a book, should a copy of it be discovered, be added to the present

Bible and also be considered canonical? The question is, of course, hypothetical. But the answer would have to be No. The canon is closed. And it is closed in such a way that it cannot be opened. Nothing need be, nor can be, added to the canonical books. They form one whole, one Bible. It cannot be alleged against the Bible that it is incomplete.

Against these canonical books, our Confessions say, "nothing can be alleged."

This is implied in the very idea of a canon. A canon is a rule or standard; it is normative. The canon of Scripture is the only infallible rule for faith and life. Now if you could allege something against the canon, it would not be trustworthy; it would not even be worthy of being acknowledged as a canon, a rule, norm. This is true in everyday life. If a carpenter had a measuring rule that measured only eleven inches to the foot, or of which it could be claimed that its markings are not regular or are not clear, such a measuring rule would be absolutely

untrustworthy. So it is with the Bible. If anything could be alleged, rightfully claimed, against the canonical books, they would not be trustworthy and would not be fit to serve as a norm for our faith and life. Suppose that one of the sixty-six books was not genuine and did not belong in the Bible: that would spoil the whole Bible and make it untrustworthy. Or suppose that there were errors in one of the books—something closely related to the preceding idea—then it could not be said of it that nothing could be alleged against the contents of that book. But again, as long as such a book would be included among the canonical books, that would spoil the entire canon, so that it could not be trusted as the only infallible rule of faith and life.

This, then is the idea of the canonical books and of the canon of Holy Scripture.

We must still answer the question: how and when was the canon formed? But this will have to wait for a later article.

The Pastor is called to feed the sheep, even if the sheep do not want to be fed. He is certainly not to become an entertainer of goats. Let goats entertain goats, and let them do it out in goatland.

- William Still

Nothing is more precious to God than that worship which He has commanded.

- John Calvin (on Ezekiel 5)

THE REFINER'S FIRE

There is not an ingot of silver in heaven's treasury which has not been in the furnace on earth, and been purified seven times; there is not a gem which the Divine Jeweller has not exposed to every sort of test; there is not an atom of gold in the Redeemer's crown which has not been molten among the hottest coals to rid it of its alloy. It is universal to every child of God. If you are a servant of the Lord, you must be tried as gold is tried.

- Spurgeon

THE BELIEVER'S PERFECT RIGHTEOUSNESS

by Rev. John A. Heys

Last time, young people, we considered the wisdom of God in choosing Christ as our Saviour in the way of His cross, so that we might be lifted to the highest glory that is possible for the creature. And undoubtedly you remember that we are considering the five points that Paul presents in I Corinthians 1:30, 31. There he wrote, "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, Who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let Him glory in the Lord."

This time we are going to consider that second element, namely, righteousness. And we do well to notice that Paul mentions God's wisdom first and then righteousness, sanctification and redemption. For it was God's wisdom that prepared this perfect righteousness for us, this sanctification and redemption. And as we consider this righteousness - and later the sanctification and redemption - we will more fully appreciate that wisdom of God at which we looked last time.

Now to be righteous means to be right with God in a legal sense. It means then to be without any guilt of any kind or to any degree. We have no marks of sin against us. In God's book there is not one sinful thought, desire or act recorded against us. Yes, it means that we are as free from the

guilt of sin as God is Himself. For it means that we are like Christ, His Son. Just look once at II Corinthians 5:21. There we read, "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, Who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

Now when Paul says that Christ was made to be sin for us, he does not mean that Christ became a sinner. It means that He came to represent sinners, take their punishment upon Himself so that He could make us perfectly righteous before God. Paul puts it very emphatically when he says that we are made to be the righteousness of God in Christ. A more complete, a more perfect righteousness there just cannot be.

Let us put it this way: If someone asks you, "Are you right with God?" Then you say, "Yes". To be righteous means that you can say in answer to this question, "Right? Yes!" To be righteous is to be able to say, "Right? Yes!" It is to be legally right before God.

Bear in mind this truth, and then it is plain that you see the wisdom of God in sending His Son as the tool whereby He set out to make us righteous. As pointed out last time Christ is the only man Who is sinless since the fall of Adam in the beginning of history. But remember also that Christ, though He is one Person, has a divine and a

human nature. And both of these are absolutely essential for our righteousness. Only as a sinless man can He suffer what sinful men deserve. He must be a man in order to represent man. An angel cannot do that, nor surely can a beast of the field. Lambs and bullocks were pictures and types of Christ in their sacrifices and in the shedding of their blood; but they cannot represent man, nor suffer the punishment that man's sin demands. That is even true of angels. They cannot represent man, nor suffer the punishment man must in body and soul. The fallen angels will be cast into the lake of fire; but their punishment will not be exactly and in every sense like that of man. For one thing they never lose bodies, never have our diseases and never know the misery of bereavement.

Still more, to make us righteous Christ must bring to an end an **everlasting** death, an endless torment in hell! Yes, He must have a perfect life to offer up to God. He must bring to God all the works of love that we did not bring to Him. But consider carefully the fact that the penalty for our sins is an everlasting punishment. What mere man could bring that to an end? And God did not choose a mere man to do this impossible thing. In His wisdom He sent His own eternal Son Who could in a life of 33½ years perform a work that had infinite, everlasting value. He could cry out on His cross, "It is finished." That explains our righteousness. He brought to God a perfect work of the obedience of love, and He suffered fully the torments of hell to blot out all the guilt of all the elect children of God.

What a tremendous work that was! Consider once that in Psalm 90:10 the

days of man are threescore and ten and by reason of strength may be fourscore years. And now take that lower figure of seventy years and multiply it by three hundred and sixty five days in each year. Be very conservative and say that we sin only once a day. That still is 25,550 sins in a life time! But we have to add more sins and multiply each day by twenty four, for surely we sin every hour of every day. What is more, even if we take literally the one hundred and forty four thousand saints of Revelation 7:4, we must multiply that times the number of hours in the life of a man; and then we see what a tremendous work Christ performed on His cross to make all those people righteous. And that is putting it mildly, for there is an innumerable host that is made righteous; and their sins are not an average of one every hour, but far closer to one every minute or second. We walk, we live in sin, as we are by nature. What a righteousness God in His wisdom wrought!

What is more, young people, take hold here too of that beautiful truth of the Reformed Faith, and in that second of the Five Points of Calvinism. There is unconditional election that decided for whom Christ died and whom He made righteous. It was eternally decided for whom He would go to hell, and for whom He would fulfill the law of God. Man does not decide for God whom Christ will represent. Election is eternal. As Paul writes in Ephesians 1:4, we were chosen in Christ "before the foundation of the world." And that is also why in the third point of those Five Points of Calvinism we believe in a limited, that is, a particular atonement. The atonement realized on that cross was not of limited power or value. It was limited to a certain number of

people. And that is why it is better to call it a particular atonement. And it is exactly because we were chosen in Christ before we even existed, and before Adam was created, and we belonged then already to Christ, it is because of this that God could send His Son to pay for our sins. Eternally He represented us in God's counsel; and let no one tell you that our righteousness is an afterthought of God to undo what Satan had spoiled. That is an unrighteous thought and makes God dependent upon man, and limited by what Satan can do. God did NOT send Christ to make it possible for all men in the world to have a chance at being made righteous. By nature we are all guilty with trillions of sins. And that they are all gone and we are right with God is because He sovereignly planned it that way before there was any sin in the world, in fact before there was a world.

Now the question is whether you have evidence in your life that God chose you eternally and sent His Son in His wisdom to realize righteousness for you. The question is not whether you have lived a sinless life. We have an answer to that question. Yes, there are men who are mentioned in the Scriptures as children of God of whom not one sin is listed. Of Abel and Enoch we do not read of one sin. Children sometimes die before they are born and never broke one of the ten commandments. But do not forget that, as Paul wrote in Romans 5:18, "Therefore as

by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of One the free gift came upon all men to justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous." The whole human race became guilty in Adam its head; and the elect are made righteous when Christ, their Head, fulfilled God's law for them and brought their everlasting punishment to an end.

But whether Christ made you righteous or not will be evident in your walk of life. You will not earn righteousness by walking in love to God; but such a walk will reveal that because you are made righteous in Christ, God has begun the work of salvation in you. In fact He has already caused you to be born again with that sinless life which is that highest good that He chose for you.

We plan next time to get into that when we deal with the third point that Paul presents in I Corinthians 1:30, 31, namely, sanctification. But at the moment take hold of that truth that righteousness will manifest itself in sanctification. These two, namely, righteousness and sanctification go hand in hand. They are two sides of one picture. You NEVER have only one of them. And sanctification will reveal righteousness, or, if you want to call it such, justification. Justification makes us righteous. But, the Lord willing, we will talk about that matter next time.

Truly wonderful and monstrous is the extravagance of our pride. God requires of us nothing more severe than that we most religiously observe His Sabbath, by resting from our own works; but there is nothing which we find more difficult, or to which we are more reluctant, than to bid farewell to our own works, in order to give the works of God their proper place.

- John Calvin

Current Events and Comments

WHERE IS YOUR TREASURE?

by David Rau

Matt. 6:19-21. Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Young people, I ask you, where is your treasure? One of the greatest problems we face today is worldlimindedness. Worldlimindedness is seeking after earthly treasures and not the heavenly treasures. It is also a certain symptom of hypocrisy. We live in the world. We listen to the world's music, go to the world's movies, we drink and dance with the world, and we even let the world into our homes through the T.V. One could say we try to imitate the world. Do we really love the things of this world? Are they the treasures we are seeking after?

This passage speaks of treasures; both earthly and heavenly. What are these treasures? A treasure is something that we, at least in our own life, consider very precious and valuable. We think about it, we long for it, we desire it, we plan our very lives around obtaining it. Material possessions can be a treasure. Popularity, a good stereo, a boat, a house, or even a date can be treasures. Listen to what the

word of God says about these treasures: "Where moth and rust doth corrupt and where thieves break through and steal." Not only will these treasures corrupt themselves and pass away; they will corrupt your soul in the process. If we are seeking earthly treasures, our heart is upon earthly things. We become worldliminded.

Worldlimindedness is a terrible sin. Earlier I mentioned that it is a sure sign of hypocrisy. A hypocrite outwardly seems like a Christian. He regularly attends church, and goes to a Christian school. He puts on a show. Inside of him, Christ and Christian living mean absolutely nothing. Worldlimindedness is very similar. We make a casual outward show of Christianity, but God's wonderful gift of salvation and Christian living seldom enter our thoughts. We desire instead, the things of this world. How horrible to seek after earthly treasures!

Again I ask You, where are your treasures? What do you seek after? Do you spend more time shooting hoops, or studying God's Word? There is nothing wrong with shooting hoops, but, WHERE ARE YOUR PRIORITIES? Can you spend all evening watching T.V., and then sink into bed so exhausted that you skip personal devotions? Are you being a good witness when you go out to the movies or drinking? Where are your thoughts

over the day, do you ever think about God and His wondrous gift of salvation; or is that the farthest thing from your mind? That is plain and simple - earthly treasures - worldli-mindedness. God's Word says "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven." Sometimes I think we say to ourselves that our salvation is sure, it is not dependent on our works, therefore we can do anything we want. We can walk in the most terrible sins and it does not matter. Get that notion out of your head. Our works surely do not earn us our salvation, but with that goes answer 64 of the Heidelberg Catechism "for it is **impossible** that those, who are implanted into Christ by a true faith should not bring forth fruits of thankfulness." Part of these "fruits of thankfulness" are laying up for your-

selves treasures in heaven. These heavenly treasures will not rot or decay. You don't have to worry about having someone steal them. You don't have to park them diagonally in two parking spaces so no one nicks them. No one can ever take these treasures away from you. These treasures offer true happiness, peace, and contentment for your soul. A part of these treasures are good works and the giving of alms. We can amass these treasures through devotions and prayer. Scripture tells us to pray without ceasing: then our thoughts and desires will be turned to the Lord. Then His word will be precious and valuable to us. We will yearn and long to go to His House. We will be truly wealthy when we earnestly and sincerely seek after God. Where is your Treasure?

"When you think, when you speak, when you read, when you write,
When you sing, when you walk, when you seek for delight,
To be kept from all wrong at home or abroad,
Live always as under the eyes of the Lord!

What ever you think, never think what you feel
You would blush in the presence of God to reveal;
Whatever you speak, in a whisper or clear,
Say nothing that you would not like Jesus to hear!

Whatever you write, though in haste or in heed,
Write nothing you would not like Jesus to read;
Whatever you sing, in the midst of your glees,
Sing nothing His listening ear would displease.

Wherever you go, never go where you fear,
Lest the great God should ask you, 'How camest thou here?'
Turn away from each pleasure you'd shrink from pursuing,
If God should look down and say, 'What are you doing?'

Truth Vs. Error

APOSTASY IN THE LAST DAYS

14. Apostates, Dry, Withered, Dead, Uprooted

by Rev. Robert C. Harbach

“These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear; clouds are they without water, carried about of winds, trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots;”—Jude 12.

“These are [treacherous] reefs in your love-feasts, boldly feeding themselves, feasting gluttonously along with you, waterless, wind-driven clouds, barren, late-autumn trees, having died off twice, having been uprooted.”

—Translation.

In the former verse Jude describes apostates by examples, here he does so by figures of speech. In II Pet. 2:13, the word **spots** is used. Here a different word appears, meaning **reefs**. “These (apostates) are (treacherous) **reefs** (causing **rifts**, I Cor. 11:21) in your love-feasts.” These feasts were fellowship suppers provided in connection with, though not necessarily part of, the Lord’s Supper. The pastor and office bearers with the members were present, an elder presiding with reading of Scripture, the singing of a psalm and prayer. At the close of the feast, a thank offering was collected for widows and orphans, the poor, prisoners, or for any of the members in need of financial

aid. “These love-feasts, during the first three centuries, were held in the church without scandal or offence;” but later the heathen guests and the crypto-libertines corrupted them. So measures of reform were taken, (1) to omit the kiss of charity between the different sexes and (2) to abandon the use of the ancient recliner-couches at the tables. [**Buck’s Theological Dictionary**, Art., Agapae]. Paul had opposed serious abuses arising at these agapae: I Cor. 11:21. John Gill says that some of these abuses came in through the early judaizers who in these feasts introduced Jewish imitations of the passover. Lenski says, “They were eventually dropped and were never revived; the Lord’s Supper was celebrated at the public Sunday services without a meal preceding” (or following, RCH).

These sensuous, seductive apostates were like treacherous reefs which caused divisions (schisms) in love-feasts in the church, making shipwreck of decent, proper conduct. Jude uses this word **reefs**. Peter describes them, “Spots are they and blemishes,” taking his figure evidently from Moses in Deut. 32:5, “They have corrupted themselves; their spot is not the spot of His children.” They do not bear the mark of Christians, but the image of

the devil. "These are not the children of God." They must not be tolerated in the church or they will turn the company of saints into a pack of "adulterers and adulteresses" (Jas. 4:4).

"They feast with you, feeding themselves without fear," or, "boldly feeding (shepherdizing) **themselves**" and not the flock. "Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? . . .neither did My shepherds search for My flock; but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not My flock" (Ezek. 34:2, 8). ". . .feasting gluttonously along with you." They debased the charity feast into a gourmet luxury banquet. They developed paunches at the expense of the church. "They. . .serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly" (Rom. 16:18). So that their "god is their belly" (Phil. 3:19). They worship a belly god. One of these is Buddha, often depicted as nearly all belly. ("They that make them are like unto them.") At many a banquet the devil shows up with his own dish. He dishes out gossip, slander, barbed humor, salacious jesting. This is done **aph'obos**, "without fear," that is, without fear of God. Do we sometimes eat our meals without a real thought of God? These "slow bellies" as they wolfed down their food did not think of God. They hardly thought even of the food they were eating. Like those who eat while watching television, they ate with their mouths full, their stomachs packed tight and their heads empty. But "when thou hast eaten and art full, beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God" (Deut. 8:10, 11).

Libertines live to eat and deaden conscience. To them, to accomplish

that is to attain perfection. Their idea of perfection is preciseness in sinning, choking conscience with lusts and carnal delights and to become so inebriated with pleasure as to fear no penalty. Christians must learn to eat to live, taking their food as medicine, to strengthen and repair the body, not to weaken and sicken it. The throat is so slippery a canal that filthy man drinks iniquity like water (Job 15:16).

"Clouds are they without water," or, waterless, arid clouds. Jude has just pointed out that these false shepherds are of the "me first" society (Matt. 8:21), out only for themselves. Now he shows that they are of no benefit to others. It is not that they keep all refreshing moisture to themselves, but that like empty clouds in drought they have not a drop for themselves or anyone. Their teaching of "common grace", which is said to be "a non-saving grace," is a cloud without water, that is a "blessing" without grace, really a "grace" without grace. An arid cloud is a contradiction; so is "common grace." The true evangelical doctrine is not to be found at all in the theory of common grace. For what **the evangel** necessarily requires and complements is the general proclamation of a particular gospel. So this theory looks like clouds promising rain, boasting of gospel light and knowledge, while being destitute of such mercy-drops. "Common grace" is a waterless cloud. "He that boasteth of a false gift (which exactly describes "common grace") is like clouds and wind without rain" (Prov. 25:14). But pure grace soaks to the heart to freshen, nourish and make it fruitful - three things "common grace" never does. For it is the very opposite with genuine grace, as the Lord Himself taught, "When ye see a

cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, 'There cometh a shower,' and so it is." (Lk. 12:54). There are many local Protestant churches which are like clouds without water. Refreshing spiritual "showers of blessing" are no more to be found in them than in the worthless stagings of Roman Catholic masses. Christian Science and Mormonism pretend to great heights of discovery, promising translation to the third heaven, but their prophets never get anyone off the ground, except in fantasy. But Jehovah's "doctrine shall distil like the dew, and My speech like the small rain" (Deut. 32:2).

"Clouds are they without water, carried about of winds." These winds must not be allowed to blow from our pulpits and across our congregations. Some of these winds of doctrine, against which our doctrinal standards warn us, are sacerdotalism (priestcraft; baptized humanism), autosoterism (salvation by self-effort), free-willism, universalism, Pelagianism, Arianism, Arminianism, Romanism (low Arminianism), Wesleyanism (high Arminianism), to name a few. The winds of the deistic colleges and atheistic universities originate spiritual tornadoes to sweep away souls easily moved in the first place. But ye, "be no more children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine" (Eph. 4:14).

"Trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit," or, "late autumn trees, barren." Trees in late autumn, at harvest time, are expected to have been laden with fruit, but these harvest trees are barren, incapable of bearing fruit! They are even bare of sere and yellow leaves. Therefore the ax is set to the roots. This is in keeping with the final apostasy yet to come in the

autumn of these last days before the winter of judgment. From this we learn that hypocritical apostate teachers do not last long and shall not stand in the judgment. Professing Christ and His truth while being barren and unfruitful is a reeking hypocrisy. Our profession must be sound and orthodox, or we expose the way of the Lord to suspicion; yet at the same time we must "bring forth fruits worthy of repentance" (Matt. 3:8), lest there be no marked difference between us and the apostates. They are in the church and they are corrupt, but the church is not to be judged by the occasional discovery and exposure of false brethren any more than a beautiful street is to be condemned because it has gutters and sewers. The city of Geneva was a beautiful, well-ordered city, adorned with godliness, enjoying the freedom of the gospel under Calvin; yet its peace was often disturbed by the pestilential libertines. They infiltrate church and state today, disrupting both spheres with their insatiable lusts and infectious, incurable diseases.

"Trees . . . without fruit, twice dead!" These barren trees withered and died, then were uprooted; so they "died off twice." The unregenerate sinner not only died with all mankind in the Fall of Adam, but is also dead in trespasses and sins, that is, dead in a false, fruitless profession of religion, having a name that he lives, but is dead while he lives. (I Tim. 3:6; Rev. 3:1).

These dead trees are also "plucked by the roots." This shows that it is hopeless with them, that their apostasy is incurable and that they are not of God, for "every plant which My heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up" (Matt. 15:13). For

“every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away. . . (and it) is cast forth (“It is a dreadful thing to be cast out of the true church.”) as a branch (“for unbelief they were broken off,” Rom. 11:20) and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned” (Jn. 15:2, 6).

What will ever preserve us from the apostasy of a Joash or a Judas? There are no insurance companies that insure character. No one could afford

the payments anyway. Besides, what company would take such a risk on mere man? But our Mediator, true God and true man, has paid the price, Himself the sacrifice to redeem us with His own blood and righteousness from all the power of the devil. Believing this with all my regenerated heart, I can say I am “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time” (I Pet. 1:5).

The Scholarship Fund Committee is taking applications for future teachers/ministers for the 1987-88 school year. If you are interested, please contact Mike Rau, 4165 Jenison St., Grandville, MI 49418, for application forms. An essay of 300 words or more is also required on the topic “The calling of a minister/teacher to instruct in light of Hosea 4:6”. Deadline for applications to be received is June 1, 1987.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR WELLINGTON

Recently there was a report in the Standard Bearer that \$15,000.00 was collected for the Protestant Reformed Church of Wellington, New Zealand. It gives us great gratitude to witness the gracious support of our people for this cause. Many of you gave these monies even though you had other pressing financial responsibilities. These gifts are evidence of your love of God and His Work. The principle of a free-will offering is healthy and well in our churches.

The Contact Committee has informed the Congregation of Wellington that they are now to proceed to call one of our ministers. In addition, we have also made some recommendations to our Synod of 1987, which, if adopted, will define and govern the situation when one of our ministers accepts the call for help in the preaching of the Word in Wellington.

Finally, we would remind our people and readership that more monies are needed for this work. We are not finished. We have been asked to help support the ministry of the Word in Wellington for five years. We must raise a total of approximately \$65,000.00, of which only \$15,000.00 has been gathered. Let our consistories continue to take these offerings.

May the Lord give us grace that we may joyfully do His Work.

Sincerely,
For the Contact Committee
Rev. Marvin Kamps

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

by Nancy Van Baren

THE LORD BLESSED:

- Mr. and Mrs. John Kalsbeek of Faith with a son, Ethan Lane.
- Mr. and Mrs. Marv Van Maanen of Hull with a daughter.
- Mr. and Mrs. Jim Jabaay of Hope (Redlands) with a son, Matthew Alan.
- Rev. and Mrs. K. Hanko of Bluebell with a son, David Gerald.
- Mr. and Mrs. Randy Looyenga of Southwest with a daughter, Kristin Joy.
- Mr. and Mrs. Tom DeVries of Hope (Walker) with a son, Jeffery Thomas.
- Mr. and Mrs. Larry Van Overloop of Hope (Walker) with a daughter, Lynelle Jean.
- Mr. and Mrs. Jim Huizenga of Hope (Walker) with a daughter, Laura Dale.
- Mr. and Mrs. Paul Scholten of Holland with a daughter, Heidi Jean.

MEMBERSHIP TRANSFERS:

- The baptismal papers of Miss Cynthia Feenstra were received by Hope (Walker) from Hope (Redlands).
- The membership papers of Mrs. William (Karen) Langerak were received

by Hope (Walker) from Hudsonville.

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH:

- John Moore of Loveland made public confession of faith on Nov. 9.
- Sara Besselsen, Paul Kamps, and Jeff Terpstra of Hope (Walker) made public confession of faith on Nov. 16.
- Becky Bleyenbergh and LaRae Huisken of Hope (Redlands) made public confession of faith on Nov. 30.
- Amy Alsum of Loveland made public confession of faith on Jan. 11.
- Doug and Scott Bonzalaar of Holland, confessed their faith on Nov. 30.
- Steve Lotterman of Hope (Walker) confessed his faith on Feb. 1.
- Marv Gritters, Mary Hoekstra, Jackie Hoksbergen, Phil Jansma and David Kooiker of Hull confessed their faith on Feb. 1.
- Janice Elzinga, of Holland, made public confession of faith on Jan. 4.
- Bennett Kamps, Cal Dykstra, Randy Dykstra and Jill Miedema of Hudsonville made public confession of faith on Jan. 25.

To bless the earth Thou sendest
from Thy abundant store
the waters of the spring-time,
enriching it once more.
The seed by Thee provided
is sown o'er hill and plain,
and Thou with gentle showers
dost bless the springing grain.
Psalter 171:2

47th ANNUAL P.R.Y.P.'s CONVENTION

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