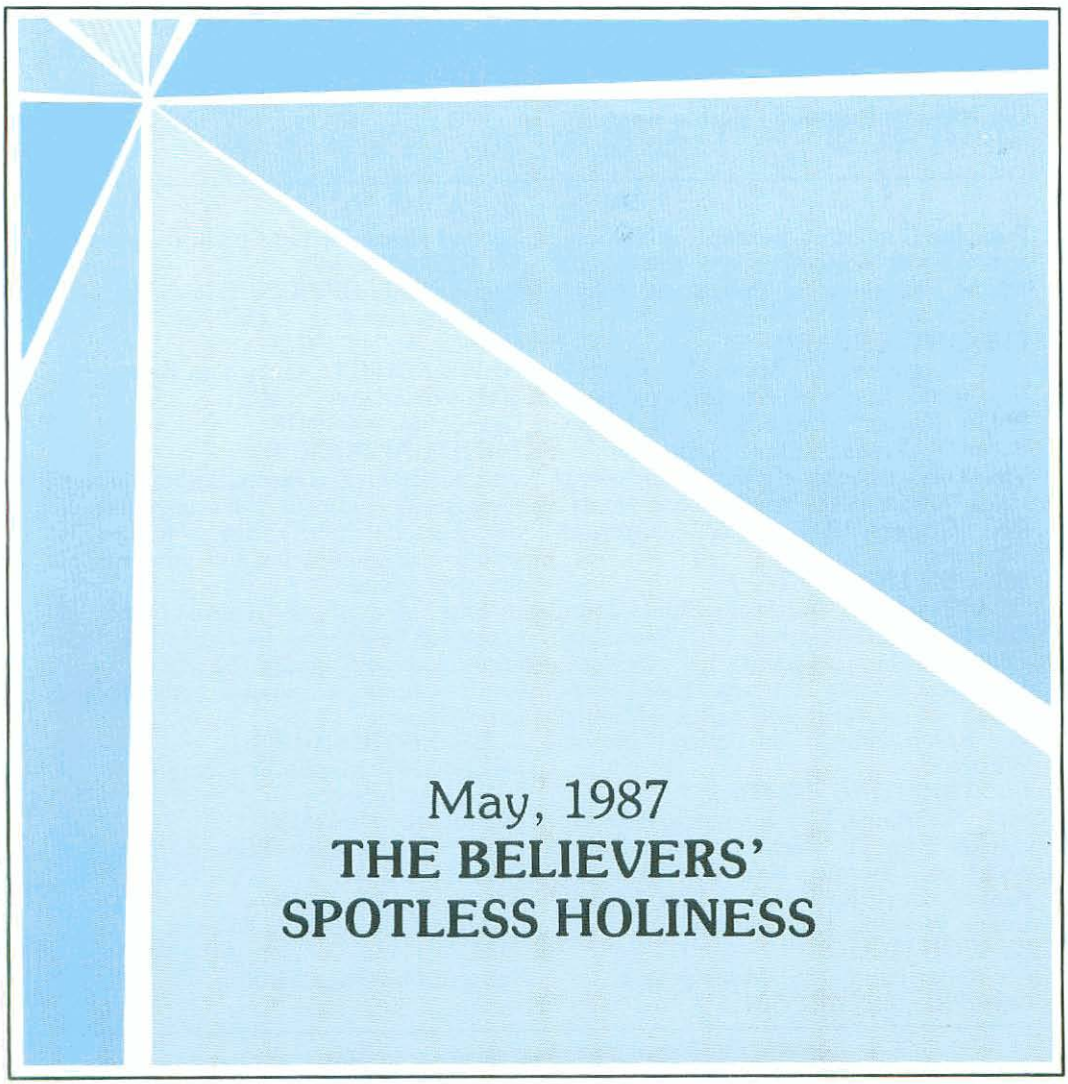
BEACON LIGHTS

FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH

VOLUME XLVI NUMBER 5



May, 1987

THE BELIEVERS' SPOTLESS HOLINESS

Contents

TRUTH VS. ERROR - Apostasy In The Last Days
15. Apostates' Error and End Declared - Rev. R. C. Harbach 1
The Believer's Spotless Holiness - Rev. J. A. Heys 4
FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY
Gems From The Scripture - Rev. C. Hanko 7
The Canon of Holy Scripture (2) - Prof. H. C. Hoeksema 10
CRITIQUE
Opinions - Mitch Dick 13
Book Review - Rev. G. Lubbers 16
Our Readers Respond - Bernie Kamps 17

Published monthly (except June-July and August-September are combined) by the Federation of Protestant Reformed Young People's Societies.

EXECUTIVE BOARD

Dirk Westra - Pres.; Bryan Van Baren - Vice-Pres.; Lisa Van Koevering - Sec.; Robin Kuiper - Vice-Sec.; Phil Van Baren - Treas.; Steve Lotterman - Vice-Treas.; Karen Kuiper - Librarian; Hank Vander Wal - Youth Coordinator; Rev. Gritters, Rev. Haak - Spiritual Advisors

BEACON LIGHTS STAFF

David Harbach - Editor-in-Chief; John Faber, Ed Lotterman - Associate Editors; Doug Dykstra - Finance Manager; Brenda Holstege, Carol Kortering - Secretary, Mike Rau, Marcia Van Baren, Nancy Van Baren, Thelma Westra

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Mrs. H. Brands, Ken Feenstra, Rev. C. Hanko, Rev. R. Harbach, John Kalsbeek Jr., Bernie Kamps, Rev. D. Kuiper, Dave Rau, Nancy Van Baren, Deane Wassink, Ben Wigger

BEACON LIGHTS
c/o Roger King, 1651 Moelker Ave.
Grand Rapids, MI 49504

Second Class Postage paid at Jenison, MI (USPS 046-840)

EDITORIAL OFFICE: David Harbach
4930 Ivanrest Ave. S.W., Apt. B
Grandville, MI 49418

NEWS EDITOR: Nancy Van Baren
6066 Wilson Ave. S.W.,
Grandville, MI 49418

EDITORIAL POLICY

The articles of **Beacon Lights** do not necessarily indicate the viewpoint of the Editorial Staff. Every author is solely responsible for the contents of his own article.

If any material of **Beacon Lights** is reprinted by another periodical, we will appreciate your giving the source.

Contributions of general interest are very welcome.

SUBSCRIPTION DUES:

MICHIGAN: Marcia Van Baren
6066 Wilson S.W.,
Grandville, MI 49418

OUTSIDE Michigan: Brenda Holstege
7663 Bliss Court
Grandville, MI 49418

COLLECTIONS: Doug Dykstra
7928 Parklane, Jenison, MI 49428

Subscription Price $5.00

Truth vs. Error
APOSTASY IN THE LAST DAYS
15. Apostates' Error and End Declared

by Rev. Robert C. Harbach

"Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever." —Jude 13

Here, as the title indicates, Jude further describes, in two comparisons, the malignant error of heretics and apostates, and their dreadful end. He continues with what these hypocrites had pretended to be: rain clouds, but actually waterless clouds; trees, but actually barren, rotted, uprooted trees; sea swells, but breaking in foam, froth and scum; stars, but destined to be extinguished.

"Raging (literally, **wild**) waves of the sea." These sea swells represent false prophets inflated with pride in their claims to a divine anti- (in the place of) Christ, a divine book regarded as superior to Scripture and the divinity of man ("Man is the Christ, The I Am"—Unity; "man has no other point of reference than himself; he is God"—Baha'ism). "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." (Isa. 57:20). One day at the seashore (August 1984), the troubled, wild sea had cast up on the beach a long, wide belt of mussels. Then the sun had burst and baked these into an unwelcome "cook-out" of noisome disaster, littering the white sand with reeking revulsion—a fitting picture of what these sons of Belial in their wicked works produce and of the false doctrines oozing up out of the morass of their putrid minds and fetid mouths. So, as never before, wild waves of filth smash against the Church to sweep it away in destruction. The waves subside for another attack while the Church remains standing against continually renewed onslaughts. The Church sheds its inextinguishable light over a dark, troubled sea of raging waves which cast themselves against the truth. But nothing can be done against the truth. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but the Church with the means of grace continues to the end of the world, until Christ comes (Matt. 28:19, 20; I Cor. 11:26). We read in scripture, "there was no more sea" (Rev. 21:1); nowhere in Scripture do we read, "there was no more Church."

"...foaming out their own shame." The waves of the sea often leave on the shore an ugly film of foamy, frothy scum. Not surprisingly, in this day of serious ocean pollution, the sea will vomit up on the beach mire and dirt which includes balls, lumps, even slabs of black gummy oil, rotten sea weed, battered, dead jelly fish, whole garbage dumps of horseshoe crabs and other sea-slops. Let this represent evil seducers in the church (and in the world) and of their doctrines, opinions

and abominable life-styles. Errors come into the church as though they were gold, silver and precious stones, but soon they prove to be a deluge dashing against the rock on which the church is built to splinter in smithereens of wood, hay and stubble. (I Cor. 3:13). But all apostates, heretics and false prophets do only spit into the wind to be splattered in the face with their own drivel. What began as proud contempt for the truth is soon revealed in religious deceits and swindles which Scripture denounces as "their shames" (plural), that is, their disgraces. Ten minutes of reading up on Hinduism will reveal the worst of heathen shames and disgraces.

"Wandering stars..." These are not so much the planets, much less, meteors, but falling stars ("shooting stars") which momentarily blaze up in bright light with energy and zeal, putting on a great show of flame, fame and reputation. They begin in a ball of fire, but end a black cinder. So the heretical cult members wander from door to door, town to town, from one nation to another, with the falling failing "light." ("If the light in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!") They never fell from grace and true knowledge, which they never had but from once professing the truth (of faith in the Light of the world) into error and from a seemingly godly life into the profane worldliness found anywhere and everywhere.

These wandering stars are an indecisive crowd who profess to believe all the old creeds of the church, yet understand not what they say, nor what they confidently assert (I Tim. 1:7). They profess, with all the church, to be in the faith, but lightly dismiss all self-examination to search for any evidence of this. They wander, out of their natural orbit, over to the Lord's Table, where they have no right to be. For they partake of that heavenly Bread while, like the lost son, feeding on the husks of this pig-sty world. Others of them, saying masses, profess to administer the sacrament while really crucifying Christ afresh. They profess every article of the faith and deny any charge of sin justly made against them. But they lie in their teeth. Unlike the steady North Star, they are unreliable, deceptive, wandering, leading themselves, and others, in multitudes astray.

In another sense, a star, we know, is one who excels in performance in the field of sports or acting or entertainment. Jude is expressing himself about stars in the religious (entertainment) field. In the **Plains Baptist Challenger**, August 1984, there was a news item about one of these lofty shooting stars, Oral Roberts, who has a $285,000 home in Palm Springs, a $2.4 million dollar home in Beverly Hills, his exclusive house (whatever that means) in Tulsa, and a $35,000 country club membership. The light of this star seems to be that of a falling star, for the same publication reports that The Oral Roberts Organization would lay off 334 employees, including 244 from the City of Faith hospital and 90 from the Oral Roberts Evangelistic Association. Roberts further added, "Without a miracle, very, very soon we literally cannot survive." Like falling stars invading our atmosphere from outer space, they are seemingly a burning and shining light, only to fizzle out and become extinct.

"...to (for) whom is reserved (has been kept) the blackness of darkness forever." So these falling stars, which

for a while shine the brightest in the heavens, burn out to jet off unseen into permanent darkness. Hell is "the blackness of darkness forever" (v. 13), "chains of everlasting darkness" (v. 6), torment in the flame of "eternal fire" (v.7). This is where the punishment of "their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched" (Mk 9:44) is suffered. Why is hell so severe that it is no less than eternal punishment? The answer is that the sin committed and punished is sin against the most high majesty of God. There is no little sin because committed against a great God. We, being finite creatures, cannot possibly judge of the nature of a sin against an infinite God. The divine Lawgiver best knows what sin, which is the transgression of the law, deserves. There is no act of sin in hell; only the endless enduring of the punishment for sin. But there sin is always remembered. (Lk. 16:25), always working in the guilty gnawing of the conscience of the damned day and night. They are haunted forever by their own guilt and God's wrath inflicted on them.

The blackness of darkness in hell is **reserved** for them. Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people. (Matt. 25:34; Rom. 9:23). Hell is a prepared place, a **kept** place for an unprepared people. (Rom. 9:22). So hell is a **place**, not a mere state of being; it is called **a place of torment** (Lk. 16:28), and Judas went to that place, spoken of as "his own **place**" (Acts 1:25). Therefore it is a place of darkness. Peter says "the mist of darkness is reserved forever for them" (II Pet. 2:17). These souls in hell had loved darkness, **not** light; they had hated the light (Jn. 3:19, 20). Now the mist of darkness and the blackness of darkness is kept forever for them. In the previous verse they are observed appearing in the love-feasts of the church. Next, they are swept away because fruitless, then uprooted because dead. After death they suffer shame and everlasting contempt in being cast into outer darkness (Matt. 25:30). This, a darkness like the darkness enshrouding plagued Egypt, is a darkness that could be felt, and which is not in the least illumined by the fire of hell. For just as in that flame of torment not a drop of water may be given to cool the tongues of the damned, so not a spark of light shines in that pit of darkness. In hell there are no glimmerings of natural light. Hell is the everlasting irretrievable loss of Heaven's light and of Christ, the Light of glory. **Hell** and **destruction** are terms both signifying the same thing, the second one explaining the first. The pit of destruction is the place where both body and soul are destroyed with everlasting destruction in unquenchable fire (Matt. 3:12).

Hell is a lasting monument erected to the horror of God's eternal veracity and justice. "Let God be true and every man a liar!. . .that God may be just!" (Rom. 3:4, 26). If God did not have an eternal hell, He would not be doing justice to Himself; He would not be doing justice to the glory of His majesty; He would be denying Himself (something impossible for Him to do!); His perfections (attributes) would clash in disharmony. Therefore sin not purged by the blood of Christ leaves an indelible, ineradicable blot on the soul which justice demands be punished with everlasting punishment. Take blasphemy and adultery, for example, if not atoned for by Christ's sacrifice, then the sins remain, not as still committed in hell, for that is not so, but

as still bearing the wrath of God against sin for ever. Sin, by the righteous judgment of God, deserves temporal and eternal punishment; and God will have His justice satisfied, either in the condemned sinner making this full satisfaction Himself by personally suffering eternally in hell, or by Another taking his place in substitutionary sacrifice in the death of the Cross. (Heidelberg Catechism, Ques. and Ans. 12).

In contrast, the elect are not treacherous reefs, but living stones (I Pet. 2:5); not arid clouds, but fountains of living water (Jn. 7:35); not withered dead, uprooted trees, but "trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord" (Isa. 61:3); not wild waves, but their peace like a river and their righteousness as the waves of the sea (Isa. 48:18); not wandering stars, but destined to shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever (Dan. 12:3).

THE BELIEVER'S SPOTLESS HOLINESS

by Rev. John A. Heys

There is a very important part of our salvation, young people, that is usually brushed aside. It is a part that so-called evangelists, who want to be very enthusiastic about their philosophy that God loves everybody and wants to save them all, will seldom even mention as part of our salvation. That part is the third element Paul mentions in I Corinthians 1:30, namely, sanctification. In that verse Paul writes, "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

Even in what are called Reformed circles that work of God is often hidden behind all the glowing words of salvation from the punishment of sin and the future glory that is promised us. And, let us be honest about it, we all find that so often we are more interested in the aspect of salvation that saves us from misery and pain. And to be saved from the power of sin does not concern us the way it should. So we do well to take a good look at sanctification.

Now sanctification is that work of God whereby He, on the basis of the righteousness, or justification, which He realized for us in His Son and His cross, makes us ethically and morally perfect. Or, if you will, it is that work of God whereby He, because He through the blood of Christ delivered us from the punishment of sin, also delivers us from the power and act of sin. If you will, it is that work of God's grace whereby He frees us completely from Satan's power, so that we love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.

There is so much stress laid on the salvation from the punishment of sin, that salvation from performing sinful deeds that call for punishemnt, is covered up and treated as a minor gift from God. Therefore I like to treat it in this third article on the five points that Paul presents in I Corinthians 1:30, 31.

The importance of this matter of sanctification received its proper and powerful emphasis by God Himself in

His first work of evangelism. This He did in the mother promise of Genesis 3:15. There He did not quickly rush over to fallen man, who knew his guilt and was trying to hide from the impending punishment which he knew he deserved, with the truth that He loved these sinners whom He had chosen in Christ. He did not come first with His promise of deliverance from that punishment. He came with the promise of sanctification. For He promised to bring about enmity between the woman and Satan, and between the woman's seed and Satan's. And that He would make some hate sin means that He makes them love God and His commandments. He promised enmity, that is, hatred toward sin and victory over it. God came first with the truth about sin itself rather than about the punishment of sin.

Do not overlook that, young people. Indeed God will save us from the punishment of sin which we deserve; and He speaks profusely of that in Scripture. That, the Lord willing, we will treat next time. But God begins with the work of sanctification. He lays great emphasis upon it and promises it first. It is not an afterthought on His part.

What I already suggested should, therefore, be considered and treated more fully. For when God preached that first sermon to fallen man and promised enmity between the woman and her seed toward Satan and his seed, He made it clearly known that He does not love everybody. He speaks of a world that He divides into two groups of people. He says, "I will put enmity" between seed and seed. He does not say that it is going to happen, and that He will then try to correct it. And if He really loved everybody in the world, how could He make some of the human race that He loves be hated by another part of that race that He also loves? Is there such confusion in God? What kind of love would it be for Him to make those whom He loves to be hated by others whom He loves?

Bear in mind that to make holy is to cut off, to separate. Therefore sanctification, which is holy-making, is that work of God's grace whereby He separates those whom He loves from the act of sin by separating them from Satan, who led man into sin and has power over man to keep him walking in sin. Holy people do not sin; and there are holy angels who never committed one sin in thought, word or deed. And the minute that a believer dies all sin is ended. He is separated completely from sin, and never sins again. That is the blessing of death for the child of God. O yes, death is a blessing for the believer. Paul in Philippians 1:21-23 states that for him to die is **gain**! He states that to be with Christ is far better than staying here below where his sinful flesh is bothering him all day long. And when his body is raised in the day of Christ, it comes out of the grave without that old man of sin; and he stands in heaven in spotless holiness.

We have a beginning of that holiness now. We have it from the moment that we are born again. Then the new principle of an holy life is implanted in us. Just look up I John 3:9. There we read, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." Therefore our sanctification means that we begin now already to live apart from sin and to walk in love toward God.

Now remember that Christ is made

unto us sanctification as well as wisdom and righteousness. And that means that God sanctifies us through His Son. This work is not performed directly through the cross of Christ, even though it would be impossible without that cross. That cross blots out our guilt and makes us worthy of receiving the work of sanctification. But directly God sanctifies us through the Spirit of Christ. Just turn to John 15:16, where Jesus promises to send the Comforter, Who is the Holy Spirit. And now note verse 19 of John 17, "And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." It is not through the cross that we are directly sanctified, but by the Spirit as He applies to us the truth of God's word.

This brings us to another truth which we must understand and take hold of to appreciate our sanctification. Holiness has holy works! By His Spirit Christ makes us love God and therefore love His law. Those who brush sanctification aside, and are only interested in talking about the escape from punishment and entrance into the glories of heaven, fail to bring to the attention of God's people that because God loves us, He makes us love Him. And to love God means to love His commandments, for only by walking in them are we exercising love to God.

Let us not lose sight of the fact then that if all Christ did for us was to make us righteous, we could not go to God's house of many mansions and enjoy all the blessings that are there. If our guilt is removed, we are kept from going to the lake of fire. Christ bore all our punishments, and God in His holiness and faithfulness will not punish us, when that everlasting punishment has already been borne in full. Look once at Revelation 21 and 22. What a beautiful picture we have in these chapters of where the righteous will go. But look closely at Revelation 22:14. There we read, "Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

Even if our sins are paid for in full, sinners cannot enter into that new Jerusalem. God cannot have before His face those who still commit sins. Go back in Revelation 22:14. Those who do His commandments, that is, those who love God may enter through the gates into the city and eat of the tree of life. God cannot stand to have sinners before His face. That is also taught in Psalm 15:1, 2 where we read, "Lord, who shall abide in Thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in Thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart." We must be legally right before God and have no guilt; but we must also "work righteousness"; and only such shall enter in through the gates of the city. Only those who love God and walk in love before Him may be there in God's presence. We must be as guiltless as Christ is, but also as holy as He is.

You see then how important sanctification is. Without it there simply are no blessings for us. And our good works do not earn a place in that glory; but they, as gifts of God unto us, do make us fit for dwelling with the holy God. Christ in making us righteous takes something away from us, namely our guilt. He also gives something to us by sanctifying us, namely, holiness. For by His Spirit He gives us love for God and for His commandments.

From the Pastor's Study
GEMS FROM THE SCRIPTURE

by Rev. C. Hanko

"And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold."
Matthew 24:12

The Man of Sin is rapidly approaching with heavy tread.

His coming is revealed to us in the Scriptures. That He is coming in the very new future is evident from the "Signs of the Times" as revealed to us in Scripture.

He is given many names whereby we can recognize him even in his wicked deception. He is called "The Man of Sin", "The Son of Perdition", "The Abomination that Works Desolation", "The Antichrist", and "The Beast". The first name mentioned is actually, according to the original, "The Man of Lawlessness". And the word that is translated in the text mentioned above, "And because iniquity will abound, the love of many shall wax cold", the word for iniquity is again "lawlessness". Jesus warns us of the **lawlessness** that will fill up, even until the cup of lawlessness is full. The idea is that lawlessness has always been in the world, has always characterized the works of evil men, but at the end of the ages sin will have developed to a point where lawlessness takes over, lawlessness characterizes all that people say and do.

It was Tuesday of the Passion week, just three days before Jesus surrendered His life on the cross, when these words were spoken. Our Lord had spent the entire day teaching the people for the last time in the temple. He had pronounced His woe upon the chief priests and rulers, and when He had finished He was ready to shake, as it were, the dust of the Holy City from His feet by crying out: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets... . Behold, your house is left unto you desolate!"

The twelve disciples, who had accompanied Jesus out of Jerusalem, and were now sitting with Him on the Mount of Olives overlooking the city could not help but admire all the costly buildings that graced the city. When they asked Jesus about them, they were told that not one stone would be left upon the other. That brought to the minds of the disciples the final judgment that would come upon the earth. With that they associated the return of Christ, so that they ask Jesus: "When shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?"

It was in answer to those questions that Jesus spoke of the signs of the times at the return of the Son of Man at the end of the ages.

Jesus spoke of wars, famines, pestilences and earthquakes in various places. All these are intensified as the end of the ages approaches. Just take one example. Pestilences have always been present on the earth since the fall

of man in paradise. Plagues have wiped out whole communities. Today the fatal onslaught of AIDS runs rampant, spreading uncontrolled over the whole world so rapidly that it is feared that this plague will soon reach such epidemic proportions over the world, that it will be worse than the Black Plague or any other plague that has ever taken its toll of mankind.

Jesus speaks also of false prophets who shall deceive many. False prophets have always been the handy tool of Satan in his attempt to deceive and wipe out the church. They have attacked every truth, every doctrine in the Scriptures. They have introduced every conceivable lie to deceive many. But today the devil is working to undermine the very foundation upon which the church stands. The attack is now directly upon the Word of God itself. This Word of God is the chief means whereby God bestows His grace upon His people. It is the means used by the Holy Spirit as a power unto salvation. It is the foundation of truth. If that is taken away, what do we have left? Yet today the infallible, inerrant, authoritative Word of God, God's Self-revelation, is being attacked. These false teachers like to point out that God used ordinary, fallible, sinful men to write His Word. These men gathered their material from tradition, folk lore, or even old wives' tales. Therefore there are many mistakes, inaccuracies in the Bible, even contradictions. Anyone who studies the Bible must be able to distil the truth of the lie. The Bible is no longer the Word of God, so they say, but the Word of God must be sought in the Bible. And that, mind you, in the face of the fact that God Himself says that "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God (is inbreathed) and that **holy men** of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit!"

These false teachers are men-pleasers rather than servants of God. They do their utmost to keep their name blazoned before the public eye, they strive to attract large audiences with their public appeal, and will go to utmost extremes to keep millions of dollars flowing into their pockets. Well did Jesus warn us: "Take heed that no man deceive you."

It is in this connection that Jesus informs us that iniquity (lawlessness) shall abound.

The lawlessness that has always been upon the earth will take over and become the common, daily practice of all mankind. That which formerly shocked people as blatant wickedness, causing them to cry out for the shame of it, will simply be taken for granted. Sinners readily become hardened in their sins, so that that which once seemed to them to be evil is condoned and even justified. "Everybody does it," becomes an easy slogan. Scripture speaks of degenerating from lawlessness to lawlessness. Rom. 6:9. Jesus condemns the lawlessness of His day, as manifested by the Pharisees, saying, "Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity (lawlessness)"! This continues until the measure of lawlessness is full according to the righteous judgment of God. Then comes the end.

Lawlessness is the opposite of righteousness. Righteousness is harmony and compliance with God's law, and obedience to it. Lawlessness is the violation of God's law. The divine law, as summarized in the ten commandments, is the perfect standard for our

life and walk upon the earth. God says: "This is the way, walk therein." The man who walks in that way is blessed, for that pathway leads to glory! But the sinner hates God's law, feels himself stymied by it, scorns it, hates it, and deliberately opposes it with bitter defiance.

Consider the fifth commandment. There was a time when respect was still shown for parents in the home, for ministers and office bearers of the church, for teachers in the school, and for the magistrate, as well as for the defenders of the law. Today small children, and especially teen-agers, defy the authority of the home, of the school, of the law and of the church. All kinds of illicit deeds are committed, like experimenting with liquor and drugs, taking a keen delight in "getting away with it". Many parents are as much to blame, for they often do not know where their children are or what they are doing. There is no proper curfew at night, because they are confident, "My child would not do anything like that." As a result, teachers in the school are unable to give proper instruction, because of total lack of discipline. Ministers and their office are scorned. The defenders of the law are mocked. The God-given authority is cast aside, even as in the days of the Judges, every man does what is right in his own eyes. Chaos results.

Or consider the sixth commandment. Jesus tells us that when lawlessness abounds the love of many will wax cold. How evident that is in our day. Human life is cheap these days. It is true that, on the one hand, every effort is put forth to preserve life. The government has programs for the poor, the aged and the infirm. Doctors, hospitals, clinics, medicines are made available to care for the sick and mentally disturbed. Yet, on the other hand, the world has become a slaughter house for unborn babes, husbands kill their wives, wives murder their husbands, parents dispose of their children and children make away with their parents. One grabs a gun and wipes out a life at the slightest provocation. Many more are killed through recklessness. Even so we have said nothing about the human hatred that desires to kill!

Or take a glance at the seventh commandment. Love, Scripture tells us, is the bond that unites two perfect persons in a bond of oneness and closest intimacy. Love, says the world, is sex, and sex is lust or passion. Repeatedly it is said, "We love each other" as a sufficient reason for two people to ruin their lives by giving in to their carnal lust. Homosexuals have the perfect right to live together and practice their lust simply because "they were born that way". From this must necessarily follow that a person conceived and born in sin can live as he pleases, and no one has the right to interfere. Men and women live together without bothering about a marriage license or a proper wedding ceremony. This serves as a big advantage when they weary of each other and want to go their separate ways. Sex is not only the popular subject, but also seems to be foremost in most people's minds. Sexual indulgence is commonly practiced in all circles of society, the evil is not condemned, but the undesired result of pregnancy or social diseases is to be avoided. Publicly all sorts of preventives for these undesired results are advertised and encouraged. The cause is ignored.

But behind all this looms a far greater evil. Sin is no longer considered SIN. God's law is ignored or deliberately trodden under foot. GOD is not in all their thoughts! God and His Christ are being banished from the earth!

Even in the churches there is a strong emphasis on a god of love, but God's justice and holiness are not mentioned. But the living God, Who rules the world in strictest justice, and maintains the honor of His glorious Name, will soon appear as Judge of heaven and earth!

Jesus once said, "When the Son of man returns, will He find faith on the earth?" Lawlessness is constantly increasing, the Man of lawlessness is already present among us, soon to put forth every effort to banish God's church and witness from his sight. The cup of iniquity is rapidly filling up. It will soon be full. One often marvels that the holy, righteous God endures such wickedness for so long. Yet we know that He, and He alone determines when the measure is full, when He will deliver His church and avenge His Name upon the earth. Our assurance is "Vengeance is mine," saith the Lord. "I will recompence!"

Blessed is that people for whom Christ was delivered into lawless hands (Acts 2:23) to save us from our sins, and to deliver us from this present evil world. God says both to young and old: "Come ye out from among them! Be ye not unequally yoked with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness (lawlessness) and what communion has light with darkness?" II Cor. 6:14; Gal 6:7, 9.

The Canon of Holy Scripture [2]

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

How and when was the Canon formed and completed?

As far as the Old Testament is concerned, we have the testimony of Scripture itself in the New Testament record of the words of Christ and His apostles. This testimony proves two things:

1) It proves that at the time of Christ and the apostles there was already a recognized canon of the Old Testament, a fixed set of Old Testament Scriptures which was recognized not only by Christ Himself and by His apostles, but **commonly** recognized by the Jews and by the church of that day. When anyone at that time spoke of the Scriptures, everyone understood what was meant by this. You did not have to explain, "By the Scriptures I mean these and these and these books," no more than today you have to explain that by the "Bible" you mean the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments.

2) This testimony of Christ and the apostles proves and seals beyond any question the **authority** of that Old Testament canon.

Let us take a look at some New Testament passages which make this very clear.

First of all, there are many references in the New Testament to individual books of the Old Testament. Already in the first two chapters of the

Gospel according to Matthew there are four of the prophets quoted, and only one of them by name. This in itself is proof already not only of the authority of the books quoted, but also of the fact that these authoritative books were so well-known and generally recognized and acknowledged as authoritative that it was not even necessary to mention a prophet by name. One only had to say "the prophet." Such examples can be multiplied; watch for this when you read your Bible. In fact, if we remember that the twelve Minor Prophets were commonly considered one book, we may say that only five of the Old Testament books are not quoted from and used directly in the New Testament.

In the second place, there is a large number of general references to an Old Testament canon which show beyond any question that there was a commonly recognized set of Scriptures which we now call the Old Testament. You could say that the existence of that Old Testament canon was simply taken for granted among the people of God at that time. Everyone knew what was meant when these Scriptures were referred to. Let me point to a few such passages.

In Matthew 5:17, 18 we read: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." Notice that in verse 17 Jesus refers to **the law and the prophets.** But notice that in verse 18 this same set of writings become simply **the law**. In Matthew 7:12 we find the well-known words of the Golden Rule, followed by: "for this is the law and the prophets." When our Lord talks about John the Baptist in Matthew 11, He says, "For all **the prophets and the law** prophesied until John" vs. 13 (emphasis added). In Luke 24 we find several references which are significant. First of all, Jesus rebukes the two disciples on the way to Emmaus as follows: "O fools, and slow of heart to believe **all that the prophets have spoken**," vs. 25. This is followed by the statement of verse 27: "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself." Notice here that Moses and all the prophets are equated with "all the scriptures." And thus it was in the minds of the two disciples also: for they "said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" The same chapter of Luke records the appearance of the risen Lord to His disciples at Jerusalem, as follows: "And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved the Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day."

You will find this same recognition and acknowledgement of a set of writings known as the Scriptures (referring to the Old Testament) by the apostles. They quote various prophets as authoritative. They recognize and acknowledge the Scripture. For example, Paul persuades the Jews concerning Jesus "both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from

morning till evening," Acts 28:23. And to Timothy, a Grecian Jew, he writes: "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given bv inspiration of God. . . ." (II Timothy 3:15, 16)

Now we must not misunderstand such terms as **the law** and **the law and the prophets**. These terms do not merely refer to various divisions of the Old Testament, but they are used very generally to designate the entire Old Testament canon. It is true, of course, that the Jews, probably around the 4th century after Christ, classified the Old Testament Scriptures into three sections: the law, the prophets, and the writings. We sometimes follow the same classification. Or sometimes we speak of historical books. But in the usage of Jesus and the apostles there was no rigid classification of this kind. Sometimes the general term **scriptures** is used, referring to the entire Old Testament. Sometimes those scriptures are called **the law and the prophets**. Sometimes those same scriptures are simply **the law**. Elsewhere those same scriptures are simply designated as the word of **the prophets**. In one instance (Luke 24:44) you find the expression "the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms."

But the proof that there was no rigid division of the Old Testament canon is clear in Scripture. David is recognized as a prophet in the New Testament, although his psalms belong to the poetical books or are classified with "the writings." (cf. Acts 2:25-30) Besides, Jesus refers to a psalm of David as belonging to the law: "Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods?" John 10:34, Psalm 82:6. Hence, it cannot be claimed that the New Testament recognizes only parts of the Old Testament canon. But very definitely, though it does not mention all the books of the Old Testament, and though it does not even directly quote all the books of the Old Testament, it assumes throughout that there was a very definite set of **scriptures**, known and acknowledged by the church of that time. Not only so, but the New Testament attaches **supreme authority** to that Old Testament canon. It does so not only implicitly by all its references, but also very explicitly. Paul writes to Timothy that the holy scriptures are able to make him wise unto salvation, II Timothy 3:15. Jesus insists, in His argument with the Jews, that "the scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). And in John 5:39, ff. the Lord speaks in unmistakable language concerning the authority of those Old Testament Scriptures, as follows: "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. . . . Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?"

It is plain, therefore, that there was in Jesus' time a fixed canon of the Old Testament, to which Jesus Himself attributes such unique authority that one who does not believe Moses (and the entire Old Testament) does not believe Jesus; and one who does not believe in Jesus does not and cannot believe Moses and the Old Testament.

(to be continued)

Critique

OPINIONS

by Mitch Dick

Take note, if you will, of these two statements:

"I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth."

"I believe that the Lord will come again in my life-time to judge the world."

The two statements have this in common: they are statements of belief concerning God. However, we must make a distinction between the two statements.

For the first statement, which we make with the church of all ages, is our conviction. Not one person, not even your own self, and no so called 'evidence', not even the greatest findings of modern science, can alter the facts of this statement. God is. He is the Father. He is Almighty. He is the creator of heaven and earth. And this is our unchangeable conviction.

The second statement, however, is a matter of opinion. Indeed all of us who believe in the God of His Word believe the truth that the Lord will come again to judge the world. This is plain from the Bible (I Peter 4:5; Hebrews 12:23). But the Bible nowhere states **when** the Lord will come again. On the contrary, the Bible states that no one, not even the Son of man, nor the angels in heaven know the hour of His coming (Matthew 25:13; Mark 13:32).

In this critique and in others also I would like to talk about statements of the second sort given above—opinions. Mom talks about the groceries on sale; Sally giggles and comments about the giraffe she saw at the zoo; Tom declares that a Camaro has a Porsche out-classed by far; two men will debate over the merits of the new president; certain Singaporeans think that certain of us ought to have more delight in the snow; and some believe that the Lord Jesus will come to judge the world in their life-times. These things are our opinions. And as long as the world turns to meet the sun we will either keep these opinions in our heads or say them, change them day after day or keep them for years, regret we had some of them, be glad we had others, almost be convinced that certain of our opinions are true, have grave doubts about others. Whatever they be and whatever we do with them, the millions of opinions we have and which the world has will follow us and them wherever we go.

Hold it a minute. Why, we ask, is it important that we discuss and take inventory of these many thoughts and statements we have or make? Why take the time and make the effort to study our opinions, seeing that opinions are not our Christian convictions, may change from day to day, and are opinions that even unbelievers can have with us? It needs only be said at the outset that since "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matthew 12:34), that also opinions, as well as convictions, can be

signs to us of where our hearts are; the fruit of one's lips, whether it be opinion or conviction, will indicate what is the root, the heart of a person.

To all believers opinions are like signs which tell us how we are to take heed unto ourselves in order that we might see if our hearts are right with God. And the signs will point us not only to ourselves, but to the doctrine of the Bible which we have been taught (I Timothy 4:16). This is truly important! It concerns nothing less than our salvation!

I have already given an example of an opinion and that in distinction from a conviction. After elaboration a bit more in this article on the difference between opinions in general and convictions in general (especially Christian convictions), in the future articles I would like, with you to hear the Word of God answer questions like: What opinions ought we to have? What opinions may we not even entertain for a minute? Should we have opinions on everything? When should we state our opinion and when should we keep them to ourselves? To whom should we voice our opinion? **How** should we hold them and make them known? Are there any opinions we can have about Scripture?

• • • • • • •

We start by defining what an opinion is not. And an opinion is **not** a conviction.

A conviction is a belief held by someone who is sure the belief is true. From the Latin root of the word we can see that something has been conquered (the Latin past participle of the verb "vincere", "to conquer", is "victum", or, "conquered") in order for one to have a **conviction**. That something conquered is DOUBT. The jury must be certain "beyond the shadow of a doubt" before it convicts a criminal suspect. Beyond a shadow of a doubt we are convicted of certain things.

The wonderful thing about being convicted as Christians is that we are convinced, we are certain beyond a shadow of a doubt (this is our **undoubted** Christian faith) **of God.** This means three things.

Number one, that we are convicted of God means that we have been convicted **by** God Himself and by Him alone. Our conviction of God is not a man-made conviction. Nor is it a God-man coordinated conviction. God and God alone has drawn us to Himself by His Spirit (John 6:44). He has conquered all of our doubts (cf. John 20:19-29). And HE is the great author and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2).

In the second place we can say that our conviction is **complete**. That is to say that when convicted **of** God **by** God Himself we are convicted heart, mind, strength, and soul. The convicted sinner has been **converted**. A once dead stalk on dry and barren land has been uprooted and planted together with all believers in the likeness of our Saviour's death, and also in His resurrection (Romans 6:5). We are no longer double-minded, unstable in all our ways. DOUBT is completely subdued. Our conviction is not mere head knowledge. Nor is it mere emotion. Nor does Christian conviction have anything to do with half-heartedness and whimsical wills. Converted, and so, convicted, we now have a single and certain faith and knowledge of the living God (Lord's Day 7).

In the third place, that we are convicted of God means that we are convinced that God is Who He says He is. Let every man be a liar, but God is

true. Let every man be a weakling, but God is All-Powerful. Let the world be confused in the babble of its different languages and in its language of unbelief, but God is manifest to all. Let every one be against us, but God is for us. Let each of us change all the time, but God is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

We believe God is all these things. And so are our convictions themselves of Him. They are true (read Romans 8:16; John 16:13 - individually, and as His church, we are led into all truth). They are powerful (Isaiah 55:11—never return empty!) They are plainly understood by all who hear them. They are profitable for us as we build one another up in the faith (Ephesians 5:15-19). And as God is unchangeable so our convictions of Him will never change, for we are **kept** in that conviction by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time (I Peter 1:5).

• • • • • • •

But besides convictions, there are opinions too. "These," to come near to a definition offered by Webster's Dictionary, "apply to a conclusion or judgment which **seems** true or probable **to one's own mind**, but which remain open to dispute; opinions are beliefs **not** based on absolute certainty or positive knowledge" (my underlining). There are many opinions which go by the above definition but which do not exist besides or **beside** Christian conviction. Rather, they are **against** our convictions. They are, therefore, against the infallible Word of God. In direct antithesis to convictions of God these blasphemous opinions are not true, they are powerless, they are confusing, are not profitable, but poison, and they are always changing. They are made boastfully by people who may be ever learning but who are also never coming to a knowledge of the truth, whose god is their belly, and whose end is everlasting destruction unless God should give them repentance. We must sharply disagree with such people and with such of their opinions as, for example, the opinion that we have evolved from apes. Opinionators of this sort are liars; opinions of this sort are lies.

Both believers and unbelievers can, however, share certain opinions as "opinion" is defined above by Webster. Mom, for example, can agree with the ungodly woman next to her in the store aisle that the price of flour this week is reasonable. Their evaluation seems true, to their minds, but there is room for debate. And both Sally and a little Moslem girl can agree or disagree about the most beautiful color of the peacock's tail they see at the zoo. Neither of them would be "right" or "wrong" about her opinion. In fact each would probably change her mind soon enough. That is the nature of us "opinion-makers", and of opinions themselves.

Ready to take inventory of some of **your** opinions? If we find that by doing such reflection on what we think and say leads us more to take stock, by faith, in our **convictions** of the teachings of God's Word, and to see where our hearts are in light of that Word, then the time spent will have been profitable. Then we will have increased in the faith of the God Who conquers all of His enemies, including our doubt, and Who comforts His beloved people for Jesus' sake with assurance of eternal salvation.

BOOK REVIEW

by Rev. G. Lubbers

STUDIES IN THE BOOK OF GENESIS BY Rev. Robert C. Harbach. 934 pages. Hard covered, tastefully bound. Price $19.75. The book can be obtained by writing Mr. Dennis J. Dykstra, 3228 Chestnut S.W., Grandville, Michigan 49418. Telephone 1-616-532-6024.

Here is a book which is of such a kind as one would expect from this author, Rev. Robert C. Harbach. It is full of beautiful insights into the history of Christ's church from Adam till the time of Israel in Egyptland.

In the judgment of this reviewer this book is exactly what the title indicates. The book is, strictly speaking, not a commentary of Genesis, but it contains "studies" in the book of Genesis. These studies are not long and ponderous, nor are they "stories" for children, but they are that which a reflective and somewhat matured mind can thoroughly enjoy; they are written for a spiritual and mental treat.

Under seven of the Chapters the author lists and raises a great variety of questions. These are meant to provoke thoughts and insights of a more dogmatical and critical nature. And incidentally, these questions demonstrate clearly the Reformed-Calvinistic convictions of the writer. They prove that he is staunchly and confessionally Reformed. The questions are found under Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 20, 22, 23 only.

If one has a taste for the poetical and will allow to the author a bit of "poetic liberty" he will see that the writer finds a few similar sentiments on a purely natural level in such writers as Milton, Tennyson, and in the Elegy of Gray. However, the real **spiritual** profundity of the poetical we see where the writer cites the poetry of the Song Of Solomon, as well as in the versified Psalms in the Psalter.

Rev. Harbach writes very consonantly with the evil days which have fallen upon the church of Christ in the world, and many winds of strange and heretical doctrines. Before his pen, wielding the Word as sword of the Spirit such errors as Common Grace, Pelagianism, Arminianism, Premillenial Dispensationalism, Rationalism, as well as the cults lick the dust.

Needless to say that here is a book which is not only for the average thoughtful Christian, but here is also food for thought for college students, teachers, ministers and professors. The book is a veritable tome, which when studied, will widen thought and life horizons. This does not mean that this reviewer does not have some questions of an exegetical nature here and there. No book is on a level with the inspired Scriptures, all sanctified studies of Bible scholars are at best still fallible, including those of this reviewer himself.

The price of this book sounds high, but is correctly and soberly viewed only commensurate with the size of the book. Furthermore, no money is ever too much for a good book which never loses its value on a spiritual level. This book is Rev. Harbach's **opus magnum,** to be sure. It is worthwhile and a

respectable book to add to the growing library of our children and grandchildren — a good gift at any time and occasion: birthdays, weddings, graduation!

The author has furnished us with a good book. He has performed his task well. He has proved himself a workman which needs not be ashamed.

OUR READERS RESPOND

by Bernie Kamps

One of our readers asks a timely and pertinent question. This question was asked between special society meetings at Covenant Christian High School. I surely hope some of our readers answer this from both sides of the aisle. Recently a compromise was found and passed allowing teachers from outside our churches to teach, if none can be found inside.

"I'm a high school student and I have a question on my mind. I've been wondering if the decision, that Christian Reformed teachers are not allowed to teach in Covenant, is right? In a couple of years the high school will be expanding. There are not that many students going to college to be teachers. What will the situation be when the school is expanded beyond the number of teachers?"

Grandville, Michigan

"I have a problem regarding our lack of students in our seminary. How are we to view this?"

"Must we be content with this way in which God leads? Should we not be aggressive in recruiting students? Or is recruiting students a wrong thing to do because of the unique character of the calling to be a preacher?"

"Or is this to be viewed as a type of judgment of God upon us? Why?"

"Could you or other of your readers help answer some of these questions?"

Byron Center, Michigan

Surely many of you have comments. Your opinions are vital to this portion of the **Beacon Lights** and are most encouraging. Write tomorrow c/o:
Bernie Kamps
6035 Barry St.
Hudsonville, MI 49426

1987 YOUNG PEOPLE'S CONVENTION

AUGUST 10-14, 1987

PLACE: Scenic Estes Park YMCA Camp
In The Rocky Mountains

THEME

"Lessons From The Life of David"

SPEECHES

I. David and Goliath
- Rev. R. Hanko

II. David and Bathsheba
- Rev. K. Koole

III. David and Absalom
- Rev. W. Bekkering

COME JOIN US FOR
THE FUN AND FELLOWSHIP!!