

THE STANDARD

Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

VOLUME XXII

March 15, 1946 — Grand Rapids, Michigan

NUMBER 12

MEDITATION

Sovereign Love

Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

I John 4:10.

Wondrous cross of the Son of God!

Gleaming brightly with the light of the love of God, in the universal darkness of our night of sin and death!

For this is the meaning of the cross: it is the revelation of the love of God to sinners that are hopelessly lost in death and condemnation, and that could never know that God loved them were it not for the light of love shining from the face of the crucified Christ.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life, John 3:16. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us, Rom. 5:8. And in this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him, I John 4:9. And thus, in the words above this meditation, herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins.

Nowhere else, in this world of sin, can this light of divine love be found.

All about us, and within us, there is darkness; and that, too, darkness of wrath and condemnation. In spite of all that philosophy may babble about the love of God that is too weak to execute righteousness and judgment upon the workers of iniquity; in spite, too, of the philosophy of those who imagine that they discover glimmers of grace in the things of this present time, apart from that one revelation of the love of God in the cross of His Son, the fact remains that our pre-

sent night is a revelation of the wrath of God. In sin bearing more sin, in corruption advancing to deeper corruption, in death giving birth to eternal desolation, in debasement upon debasement, in slippery places on which men hasten to destruction, we behold and are crushed under the burden of God's holy and terrible anger against sin. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness, Rom. 1:18.

And in this darkness of wrath and death and desolation there shines the one light of divine love, penetrating the universal gloom, swallowing it up, reaching down into our very hearts: the cross of the Son of God!

O, to be sure, it speaks, too, of His own love, of the love of Jesus, my Saviour.

He, the Son of God in the flesh, loved His brethren; and He loved them even unto the end, even to the bitter and shameful death of the accursed tree.

Yet, His love is not the last word of the cross.

In and through the love of the dying Christ, shedding His lifeblood as a propitiation for our sins, we behold the love of God!

For the death of Christ is the death of the Son of God. Deny this, and the cross is made vain, lowered to the level of any other cross.

And the death of the Son of God is the realization of a mission.

God sent His Son into the world!

And by this mission He commended His love toward us!

O, blessed cross of Jesus!

Sovereign love of God!

For precisely this it is that, according to the words of I John 4:10, is revealed in the cross of Christ.

It speaks of a love that is sovereign, that is free, that is independent, that has its source in itself. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us! . . .

No, the Word of God here does not simply mean to impress upon us that there was, indeed, love in the mission of the Son of God to be a propitiation for our sins. It emphasizes a very particular truth. It rather intends to call our attention to the nature, the essence, the source and operation of all true love: herein is love. Love, it declares, true love, wherever you find it, whatever form it may assume, whether you know it as the love of God to you, or as your love to God, or as your love to the brethren, — love always consists in this, not that we love God, but that He loves us. And this is clearly and indubitably revealed in that one great act of the love of God, that He sent His Son to be a propitiation for our sins. Therein you taste and see, not only that God loved us, but that His love is sovereign and free, self-existent and independent. . . .

Love is a bond.

It is the union between *persons*. Strictly speaking, love does not exist between inanimate creatures, nor between brute creatures. One abuses that noble word *love* when he speaks of loving his dog, or when *she* exclaims that she loves your new hat. Love is a bond between person and person. It exists only between rational, moral beings.

Moreover, it is a spiritual bond.

There is, indeed, a kind of love that operates on a lower level, and that is an image of the higher love of which our text speaks, a bond that is based on and rooted in the natural affinity of our race. A young man loves the maiden of his choice; a mother loves her suckling child. This "natural love" is found even among animals. Even the robin loves and cares for its young.

Yet, all this does not compare with, cannot reach up to the love in that highest sense which Scripture defines as the bond of perfectness. It is not a mere affinity that has its source in the blood, in physical likeness and adaptation: it is spiritual. It is a bond between soul and soul, between spirit and spirit, between mind and mind, between will and will; it is a spiritual power of attraction that knits being to being in the bond of perfect knowledge.

For, and this, too, must be emphasized, love is the bond of perfectness. It is a spiritual bond that is established and functions only in the sphere of moral perfection. Not in darkness, but in the light; not in the sphere of the lie, but in the truth; not in iniquity, but in righteousness; not in corruption, but in holiness; — in a word, solely in the sphere of ethical perfection does the fire of love burn, does the light of love shine, does the bond of love knit being to being. The wicked do not love, whatever other bond there may be between them. Love is the bond of perfection.

It is the attraction of person to person in the sphere of the light.

It is the longing of spirit for spirit, a seeking and

finding of each other, a living into each other's life, a giving wholly of each to the other, a complete possession of the other, a seeking of each other's good, the will to please each other, a perfect delight in each other, — all in the sphere of ethical perfection.

Herein is love. . . .

Not that we loved God, but that He loved us!

How impossible it would be to make a statement of this kind, thus to describe and characterize the bond of love between two human beings! Between them, love is, and must needs be, bilateral, two-sided, mutual. The love of the one is incapable of kindling love in the other. The bond of love can only be established between them when the love of each meets and mingles with the love of the other; and it can be maintained only as long as, constantly, each continues to meet the love of the other with his own.

Not so the love of God!

It is strictly unilateral, not only in origin, but also in its continued operation. It does not consist in this that we love God, and that because of our manifest love He now loves us. Nor is the nature of love such that, simultaneously, we, God and we, bring our love to each other. It dare not even be said that love is established between God and us by Christ's position between Him and us, so that Christ causes God to love us, and kindles the flame of the love of God in us. Love is of God! Before we loved Him, He loves. Before Christ was sent into the world to be a propitiation for our sins, He loved us. O, to be sure, we love Him, too; but even then, love is of God. His love is the great, the eternal, the unquenchable fire that kindles all our love, and that lights all the candles of our love. Even as in the firmament, the light is of the sun, and this light of the sun is reflected a thousandfold in the twinkling stars, so love is of God, and our love is never more than the reflection of His love. Herein is love. . . .

He is attracted to us and draws us. He longs for us, and makes us long for Him; He is delighted in us, and causes us to have our delight in Him.

He seeks us, and we are found, and seek Him!

He does not rest till He possesses us, and gives Himself that we may possess Him!

Love is the living current that has its source in the triune God, touches us, and takes us up in its stream of delight.

Out of Him it runs through our hearts to return to Him.

Of Him, and through Him, and unto Him is love!

Sovereign is the love of God!

O, blessed cross!

For therein know we that wondrous love of God!

Therein behold we the love as sovereign, free, eter-

nal, absolutely self-existent, and, therefore, as a love that is a fire which the floods of many waters are unable to quench.

How otherwise, pray, could He have sent His only begotten Son to be a propitiation for our sins?

Does not this mean that, on our part, there was no love? Does it not reveal that, both in time and logically, the love of God was prior to any manifestation of love as far as we were concerned? Nay more, does it not imply that we exerted ourselves, with all that is within us, to quench the fire of divine love by the miry, stinking flood-waters of our iniquities, and that now the flame of His unquenchable love penetrated through those miry waters, victoriously, licking them up, and consuming them completely?

Propitiation for our sins!

O, it means that we were enemies of God, dead through trespasses, standing in proud and wanton rebellion against the living God. It means that we were guilty, worthy of damnation, objects of the wrath of God, and that, in His justice, He could only inflict the punishment of eternal desolation upon us. It means that there was absolutely no way for the love of God to reach us but through the perfect satisfaction of His justice, that is, through the very depth of hell. It means that we could, nor would, ever travel this way of hell in perfect obedience of love, as we were required to do in order to make this satisfaction, and become the objects of God's love and favor. . . .

As far as we were concerned the situation was hopeless!

Propitiation for sins!

It means that there is a covering for all our iniquities; not a covering in the sense that now our sins are hid from before the face of God, though they still are there; but in the sense of complete coverage. The damage done by our sins is completely covered. It is paid for. The justice of God is satisfied. The way through hell has been travelled in perfect obedience of love, for us, in our stead, in our behalf. . . .

But by whom?

God sent His Son!

O, mystery of mysteries: God sent His Son to be a propitiation for our sins!

He sent Him, His Son, God of God, Light of Light, the everlasting darling of His bosom, in Whom is the Father, and in Whom is the Spirit. . . . *Himself!*

He, the triune God sent Him: the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit, sent the Son!

He sent Him in eternity, for in His eternal good pleasure He ordained Him to be the head of the Church, the firstborn among many brethren. He sent Him in the fulness of time, in our flesh and in our blood, in the likeness of sinful flesh, that He might be like unto His brethren in all things, sin excepted. He sent Him all the way of His humiliation and suffering. He sent

Him, loaded with our iniquities to the place of judgment, and into the shameful death of the accursed tree. He sent Him into the depth of hell to pay the price, to respond with His perfect *Yes*, instead of our wicked and wanton *No*, to the unchangeable justice of our God. . . .

To be a propitiation for our sins!

What does it all mean?

O, to be sure, it declares unto us the love of God, amazing, unfathomable, adorable. . . .

Yes, but this is the point that is all important: it is the revelation of *first*, of sovereign, of independent, and, therefore, of unquenchable love!

For not the work of Christ evokes and kindles the love of God: herein is love, that before Christ died God loved us!

His mission, His cross is the revelation of love!

O, glorious cross of Jesus!

Herein is love. . . .

Glorious revelation of the God of our salvation!

For, by faith, looking at the wondrous cross of the Son of God, we may have confidence that all our sins cannot quench His love. Our sins may be as scarlet, floods of iniquity may rise up against us, and our transgressions may be more than the hairs of our head; our conscience may accuse us that we have sinned, and do sin daily, and that we have kept none of His commandments, yet, trusting in that free and sovereign love revealed in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, we know that we may come to Him, and that, if we confess our sins, He will burn them all away in that mighty fire of His love, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness!

That is the meaning of the cross!

It is the revelation of a love such as sinners need to inspire them with confidence to come to the throne of grace.

Again, surveying that wondrous cross, and its revelation of sovereign and independent, never ceasing love of God, we know that we may, that we do love Him, and that His love will be perfected in us. No, the truth that He loved us sovereignly does not make us careless and profane. It does not induce us to say: let us sin that His love may abound. On the contrary, it is exactly the mighty power of that love that draws us, the unquenchable flame of that love that kindles its own response in our hearts, and will do so, until we shall forever dwell with Him in love!

And nothing can separate us from that love, because love is all of God!

Herein is love: He loved us!

Blessed revelation!

H. H.

The Standard Bearer

Semi-Monthly, except Monthly in July and August

Published by

The Reformed Free Publishing Association
1463 Ardmore St., S. E.

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(Subscription price \$2.50 per year)

Entered as Second Class mail at Grand Rapids, Michigan.

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EDITORIALS

The Liberated Churches In The Netherlands

We wish to conclude our discussion of this part of the decisions of the Synod of Utrecht, first, by reiterating what we stated at the beginning, that it is deplorable that, before attempting to formulate official declarations concerning the seed of the covenant, and the efficacy of infant baptism, the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands did not squarely face the question concerning the idea of the covenant itself; and, secondly, by briefly outlining our own conception of the covenant of God.

As to the first, it appears to me, that, if the Synod of Utrecht had attempted to establish what it meant by the covenant, the schism might have been avoided, and the whole matter might have been left to further discussion by the spoken word and the printed page.

Certain it is that, when the leaders of the Liberated Churches insist that all the baptized children of believers are *really* in the covenant, while the Synodicals insist that only the elect are *really* covenant children, they are not referring to the same conception of the covenant. The result is that the discussion is never distinct and clear cut. There is still considerable misunderstanding between the two groups. And under such circumstances it is deplorable that the Synod so narrowed the denominational walls that within them there is room only for those that subscribe to the view of certain theologians to the exclusion of all others.

For, let it be emphasized once again, to date there is no clearly defined, officially adopted conception of the covenant that can lay claim to the name Reformed.

The editor of *The Banner* does not hesitate to write articles under the heading "The Reformed View Of The Covenant," but what he presents is, most probably, simply the view proposed by Prof. L. Berkhof in his Dogmatics or Systematic Theology. What right the editor has to denominate that view as "The Reformed View," if, at least, he means by "Reformed" that which is officially adopted by the Reformed Churches, is difficult to see.

Nowhere in our Reformed Standards is the idea of the covenant defined.

Nowhere in those Standards is the distinction made between an internal and external covenant.

Nowhere do we, in those Standards, find the distinction which Berkhof makes between the covenant as

a relation of friendship and as judicial relation or obligation.

Nowhere do our Standards speak or even suggest the very generally current notion of a covenant of works.

Nowhere is there mention in our Confessions of the Covenant of Redemption.

Fact is that all these conceptions were developed considerably later than the time when our Confessions were composed.

What right, then, has the editor of *The Banner* to coin a particular view as "The Reformed View Of The Covenant"? It is by such methods that certain individual views become "current views," and that, gradually, these "current views" are considered to be officially Reformed, that all free discussion of extra confessional problems is smothered, and denominational walls are built high and narrow.

This, to my mind, is exactly what happened in 1924 when the Christian Reformed Churches (Church, according to Kuiper) officially adopted certain propositions on "common grace".

And, in my opinion, the same tactics were followed by the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands, when, in 1936, they took hold of certain "current opinions" and "differences of opinion" (meenings-geschillen), even without any overture or request from the Churches, and thus attempted to smother the free discussion about those problems by official declarations.

The saddest thing of all is that in this way the Church is split because certain theologians use the institute of the Church, and that, too, conceived hierarchically, to impose their own notions upon all the rest.

And the cause of the truth is not served, but put into a theologians' strait jacket.

As to our own conception of the matter, the following brief outline may suffice.

1. The idea of the covenant is neither that of a pact or agreement, nor that of the promise, nor that of a way of salvation; but it is the eternal and living fellowship of friendship between God and His people in Christ, according to which He is their Sovereign-friend, and they are His friend-servants.

2. By friendship we mean a bond of most intimate fellowship, based on the highest possible likeness of nature by personal distinction.

3. The deepest ground of this covenant relation is the life of the triune God Himself, of which it is the highest revelation.

4. This covenant is established with Christ, as the Servant of Jehovah *par excellence*, and with the elect in and through Him.

5. Historically this covenant is realized in the line of the continued generations of believers. These generations receive the sign of the covenant, circumcision in the old, baptism in the new dispensation, and, in general, are addressed and treated as the real covenant people of God; yet, God's election and reprobation cut right through these generations, and "God is merciful to whom He will be merciful, and whom He will He hardens."

6. This covenant of God is eternal, and will be realized in its heavenly perfection in the new creation, when the tabernacle of God will be with men.

With respect to the rest of the decisions of Utrecht 1942 concerning the Covenant of Grace, we may be brief, considering that there is little or no controversy about them.

Point 4 reads: "That the Church must conceive of and deal with the members that are admitted to the Lord's table, according to the same judgment of love."

We may accept this as true without further discussion. The matter was hardly in need of a synodical declaration. What is expressed here was always the opinion of the Church, and is uniformly brought into practice. Members that are admitted to the Lord's table are those who, in their walk and confession, reveal themselves as believers. The judgment of love accepts them as such. *De intimis non judicat ecclesia*, i.e. the Church does not judge the hidden things of the heart. Hence, those whose confession and walk give no occasion to fear or judge the contrary are accepted as true believers. To do otherwise, and to judge one another, to weigh and measure one another according to different standards, is a dangerous method to follow.

Point 5 reads: "That it is in conflict with the veracity of God to accept such a duplicity in Scripture that, in regard to the same matter, it says yes and no; and teaches, on the one hand, the perseverance of the saints, and, on the other hand, the possibility that the regenerated fall away and be lost."

Here, too, we may express agreement. One can only be surprised that a Reformed man could teach such a self-contradictory view as is condemned here. It appears that the statement is directed against the solitary view of one minister, the Rev. De Wolff of Enschede, now with the Liberated Churches, who, however, let it be said in all fairness to the brother, had recanted his view openly and publicly long before the Synod adopted the above declaration. In view of all which, it may be considered somewhat strange that the Synod, nevertheless, took pains to condemn this view by an official statement.

In the meantime, the statement "that it is in con-

flict with the veracity of God to accept such a duplicity in Scripture that, in regard to the same matter, it says yes and no," is worthy of notice.

In some circles they would brand this as rationalism.

They rather make it a principle that there are "apparent" contradictions in Scripture. And they consider it a sign of true faith and true piety and reverence for the Word of God, simply to accept such contradictions.

"Mysteries" they call them.

We are thankful that the Synod of Utrecht repudiated this stand, fatal to the development of all Reformed theology.

It is announced here as a general principle. It must, therefore, be applied in all cases, also with respect to the supposed Yes and No of God with regard to the salvation of the reprobates, the two wills in God, the well-meaning offer of grace to those whom God will not save, and similar contradictions.

Finally, the sixth point reads as follows:

"That it is no less erroneous to make a false contrast between an eternal covenant and a covenant-dispensation in time; and when Scripture calls the members of the Church as a whole believers, to understand this as meaning that all church-members are indeed believers, yet only 'believers in time' and not necessarily in the counsel of God; which is in conflict with Scripture which addresses the members of the Church in common as 'elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father (1 Pet. 1:2; Cf. Col. 3:12; Eph. 1:4, 5)."

Concerning this point we may remark the following:

1. As the declaration stands there, it must, of course, be accepted as correct. For, first of all, it needs no synodical declaration to establish that it is erroneous to make a *false* contrast. This is always wrong. That one cannot distinguish between God's eternal covenant and its dispensation in time is a different matter. If that should be the meaning of the above declaration, we would not be ready to subscribe to it.

2. We may also accept the statement that it is erroneous to make a distinction between "believers in time" and "believers in the counsel of God." One cannot help but wonder how a Reformed man could possibly entertain such strange notions.

3. This declaration is directed against a certain A. Janse, a very well known figure in the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands, formerly principal of a Christian School in Biggekerke, now retired and living in Breda. However, we have it from other sources as well as directly from himself: a. That he never had a hearing at Synod; and b. That he never entertained

or expressed such a view as is condemned in the above point 6.

As the Dutch have it: the Synod was here fighting against windmills.

And herewith we may close our discussion of the doctrinal decisions that became the chief cause of the schism in the Netherlands, those concerning the covenant of grace.

H. H.

THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

An Exposition Of The Heidelberg Catechism

Part Two.

Of Man's Redemption

LORD'S DAY XIX

1.

Our Exalted Lord. (cont.)

If, therefore, the exaltation of our Lord took place in, and affects only His human nature, it plainly follows that it does not denote a divine power, and that we must carefully distinguish between His power as the Son of God in the divine nature, and the power He exercises in and through His human nature.

The two natures of Christ, though inseparably united in the Person of the Son of God, are never fused or mixed, not even at His exaltation at the right hand of God.

The human nature did not become divine, nor was it made to share in the divine attributes.

The power and authority He has according to His divine nature is original, external, self-existent; the power which He exercises in and through His human nature is bestowed on Him: constantly He receives this power from Him that sitteth on the throne. God did not abdicate His authority, prerogative, and function as the sole Governor of the universe. It is not thus, that, before the exaltation of Christ at the right hand, God Himself, by His almighty and omnipresent power, upheld and governed heaven and earth, and all that is in them; while now, after Christ's exaltation, He resigned this power and function of providence in favor of Christ. On the contrary, God alone is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, Who upholds all things by the Word of His power. But He bestows on Christ, the Son in human nature, the wisdom and power and authority, in virtue of which He is able to occupy the

position at the pinnacle of that created and sustained and divinely governed universe. As the Catechism expresses it: "by whom the Father governs all things."

Christ is Lord over all, but as the Servant of Jehovah.

He reigns, but as the representative of God, the visible representative of the invisible Sovereign of heaven and earth.

He sways a universal sceptre, but in the name of God, and according to His will.

His position is an office, the highest office in the whole universe: He is king-priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

Hence, the power He has as the Son of God in the divine nature is infinite. The power He exercises in and through the human nature, however, is creaturely, even though it is universal: the human nature was not rendered omnipotent. It is the highest possible realization of that lordship, an image of which was seen in Adam's original position in the state of rectitude. For he, too, was lord of all the earthly creation, yet under God. Dominion was given him over all creatures, yet so, that it was his calling to function as God's priest, to consecrate all things to Him, and to reign over the works of God's hands in His name and in strict obedience of love to the Most High. But the first man fell, and became rebellious. He proposed to subject all his domain to the will of the devil, and to press them into the service of unrighteousness. God, however, will give His glory to no other. Only the servant of Jehovah may be king of the universe. For His Lordship must be revealed, even in the lordship of man. And this good pleasure of God was realized in Christ, Who in His death and descension into hell revealed Himself as the perfect Servant of the most high God, ready to do His will to the very last; and Who therefore is exalted to the highest position in the universe, and functions as Lord at the pinnacle of all created things in heaven and on earth.

And yet, although it is quite necessary so to distinguish between the power of Christ in the divine nature and the power that was bestowed upon Him in His human nature at the exaltation, the two may never be separated, no more than the two natures can ever be conceived as separated from each other.

Such supreme power as was and is bestowed upon the glorified Christ could be given only the incarnated Son of God.

It is the same Son of God, Who created all things, and Who still upholds and governs all things by the Word of His power, according to His divine nature; who has power and authority, given Him of God, to rule over all created things, as the visible representative of God's sovereign lordship.

His divine Lordship flashes through his human lordship.

All things are united under Him, and in Him to God. In and through Him, the kingdoms of the world have become the kingdom of our God!

2.

The Significance of Christ's Exaltation.

The power which Christ, as the exalted Lord, exercises, even to the time when He shall come to judge the quick and the dead, is twofold: He rules over all the world by His might, and He rules over His Church by the power of His grace. The Catechism points to this distinction in question and answer fifty-one: "What profit is this glory of Christ, our head, unto us? First, that by his Holy Spirit he pours out heavenly graces upon us his members; and then that by his power he defends and preserves us against all enemies."

It is very important that we bear this distinction in mind.

If we fail to give ourselves account of this distinction we expose ourselves to the danger of entertaining the erroneous notion that *this world* is now become the kingdom of Christ, the kingdom of God; that by the power of the exalted Lord all the various departments and domains of human life, the home and school, society and the State, will become *christianized*, or that, perhaps, it belongs to our calling thus to christianize the world and to crown Christ king over all; and that in this way the world will gradually be transformed into the perfect kingdom of God in which all will acknowledge Christ as the universal King.

The result is a very serious deception.

For it is along this line of reasoning that we present *our cause*, the cause of Man, the cause of *this world*, as if it were the cause of the Son of God. Is not Christ Lord of all? Well, then, let us make Him king! Let us crown Him lord of all! Let us make Him the supreme head of our government, the real ruler of our land, the general of our armies, the head of our associations and unions. Let us fight our wars in His name, and make Him the real president of our peace conferences and world-councils. If we do so, our cause will surely prosper, we will surely gain the victory in our battles, and create the perfect society in which all will enjoy the more abundant life, realize the four freedoms, and attain to the ideal of universal peace and the perfect world!

Thus we will make of this world the true kingdom of God!

This social gospel was and is still being proclaimed in various forms, and by men, too, who are far from believing in Christ crucified and raised, in Whom is all our salvation. And the sad thing is that some such view is not infrequently presented by those who claim

to be Reformed, and that it is preached as the highest ideal of a Calvinistic faith.

This is a very serious and pernicious error.

For, first of all, it fails to acknowledge the reality of the universal lordship of Christ, and presents the matter as if the kingship of our exalted Christ depends somehow on our efforts, on the efforts of men, for its realization. We must crown Him king! But this is exactly a denial of Christ's lordship. He *is* the Lord! He is supreme over all things, not in the sense merely that He has the *right* to reign over all things in heaven and on earth, but in actual reality. He is Lord, not in virtue of our willingness to acknowledge Him as such, but solely by the sovereign act of God whereby He raised Him to His right hand, and that, too, whether we confess Him as our Lord, or stand in rebellion over against Him. And mark you well, not only in the confession of those that believe in Him, but also in the very rebellion of those that harden their hearts against Him, it is exactly His absolutely sovereign Lordship that becomes manifest and is glorified. For that you confess and willingly bow before Him as Lord is only due to the fact that He sovereignly realized His Lordship in you: for no one can say that Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Spirit, His own Spirit. And when you rise in proud and foolish rebellion against Him, it is again a revelation of His sovereign refusal to translate you into the blessed light of His kingdom.

And, secondly, this view that would *enlist* Christ for *our cause*, and *make* Him king of *this world*, substitutes the world for the kingdom of God, and is a denial of the antithesis. For after all, the scope of the kingdom of God is strictly limited to the operation of Christ's own sovereign grace, and outside of that scope there is nothing but the kingdom of darkness. Only where, and in as far as, it pleases Christ to pour out His heavenly graces, where men are regenerated, called out of darkness into His marvellous light, so that they become poor in spirit and mourn, hunger and thirst after righteousness, become merciful, pure in heart, meek, peacemakers, the salt of the earth, the light of the world, — only in that sphere of grace there is realized the kingdom of heaven. Beyond that sphere no man is able to extend that kingdom in this world. The scope of that kingdom, therefore, is in no wise contingent upon man's efforts, it is sovereignly determined by the absolute lordship of Christ Himself. He holds the key of David. He opens and no man shuts; He shuts and no man opens. And that key He employs strictly according to the will of His Father, that is, according to the sovereign good pleasure of election and reprobation. And if it pleases Him to translate you out of the power of the world into His blessed kingdom, it is your calling, not to make of this world a kingdom of God, but to stand for the cause of the

Son of God in the midst of, and in antithetical relationship to a world that lieth in darkness.

Hence, it is important that we clearly distinguish between this twofold exercise of Christ's supreme lordship, that of His power and that of His grace.

O, to be sure, Christ is the Lord supreme!

He is king of His Church, and in and over that Church He rules by His grace, by His Spirit and Word.

Let no form of error deceive you so as to deny this blessed and glorious truth. Nor must the Church of Christ in the world allow any human power or authority to interpose itself between Him and herself.

There are many in our day that deny this kingship of Christ over His Church. Christ, say they, is the King of Israel, the Jewish nation; but He is the Head of His Church. Israel is the kingdom of Christ, the Church is His body. When His kingdom-people rejected Him, and nailed their King to the accursed tree, they were dispersed and sent into exile. However, He will yet return to them, in the end of time, and gather them as His real kingdom-people. And in the interim, while Israel is in the dispersion all over the world, He gathers another people, the Church; and this Church is His body.

They deny the kingship of Christ over His Church.

But this is an error, plainly contrary to Scripture. For God set His king upon His holy hill of Zion, Ps. 2:6. And in the new dispensation it is said to the Church: "But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels; To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect." Heb. 12:22, 23. That "church of the firstborn" is the same as mount Zion, and upon that mount Zion God has set His Anointed as king for ever. In the last part of the first chapter of the epistle to the Ephesians, the apostle writes about the glorious kingship of the exalted Christ Whom God "set at his own right hand in heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet." And then the apostle denotes the relation and position of that mightily exalted Christ with respect to the Church in the words: "and gave him to be the head over all things in the church."

To be sure, He is also the head of the Church in the organic sense of the word. The Church is His body. He lives in them, and they live through and out of Him. As the branches live in organic connection with the vine, and bear fruit in that living connection, so the believers are ingrafted into Christ, and they have their life in Him. Without Him they can do nothing.

But this does not alter the fact that Christ is also

the head of the Church in the juridical sense: He is her king. And that this is the meaning of the word in Eph. 1:22 is evident, not only from the context which speaks of Christ's exalted Lordship, but also from the fact that He is called "the head over all things" in relation to the Church. In the organic sense, He is the head of the church, and the latter is His body. In the juridical sense, He is the head over all things in the Church, and the latter is His domain.

And in this domain He rules by the power of His grace, and, therefore, through His Spirit and Word. It is there that He dwells with His brethren. There, as the Catechism expresses it, "by His Holy Spirit he pours out heavenly graces upon us his members." For this mighty Lord, when He was exalted at the right hand of God, received the promise of the Holy Ghost, Acts 2:33. And in this Spirit He returned to His Church to dwell in her, and to make her partaker of His wondrous grace. There it is that He opens and no man shuts. There He diffuses His marvellous gifts of grace, of life and faith, of love and mercy, of wisdom and knowledge, of hope and confidence, of hunger and thirst after righteousness and satisfaction with the bread and water of life, of the forgiveness of sins and sanctification, and of all the fulness of spiritual blessings He has obtained for her by His obedience even unto death, His resurrection, and exaltation at the right hand of God.

And thus He makes us, the members of His Church, His glad and willing servants, citizens of the kingdom of God.

For by nature we are but slaves of sin, enemies of God, children of our father the devil. Sin is enthroned in our hearts, and has dominion over us. Nor have we the power to liberate ourselves from this bondage.

But when He, the mighty Lord, enters into our hearts, sovereignly, by His Spirit, and calls us through the Word of the gospel, the shackles of sin are shattered, the devil dethroned, and His own throne is established in our hearts and minds.

And thus we become willing to acknowledge Him, and it becomes our only comfort in life and death that we are not our own, but belong to our faithful Saviour Jesus Christ, Who delivered us from all the power of the devil, and makes us sincerely willing henceforth to serve Him.

Then we Hear His Word, and obey and keep it.

And we represent the cause of the Son of God in the midst of this present world. For we confess that Jesus is Lord over our whole life in all its implications and relationships. He is Lord over our body and over our soul, our mind and will and all our desires, our means and possessions, our wife and children. As our Lord we are determined to acknowledge Him in our home and family-life in respect to the relation

between man and wife, parents and children; in all our relationships in the world, in society, in shop and office, as employer and employee; in Church and State. And we proclaim His Word, keep His commandments, and hold fast that which we have, that no one take our crown. All this we do in principle, to be sure. For we are never perfected in this life. The motions of sin are always operating in our members. But even so, we have a sincere desire to walk, not only according to some, but according to all His precepts.

And we are placed in an antithetical position over against the world of darkness.

Such is the revelation of Christ's mighty Lordship in the realm of grace.

And within the scope of that revelation is the kingdom of God. There Christ is gladly and willingly acknowledged as Lord of all.

However, His Lordship is not limited to this.

He is Lord over all things in the whole world. All things in creation are at His disposal, to use them for His own end. For by Him "the Father governs all things". He rules over the brute creation, as well as over all the affairs of men. He reigns over sun and moon and stars, over floods and droughts, over fruitful and barren years, over rain and sunshine. He governs and directs all matters of war and peace, of business and industry, of social and national and international relationships. He rules over the secret intents of the hearts of men, and controls all their plans and counsels. He holds the keys of death and of hell. The course of the four horsemen pictured in the book of Revelation is continually determined and controlled by Him. For it is He that was deemed worthy to open the book with its seven seals, that was on the hand of Him that sitteth on the throne. He rules over the devil and all his demons, over the wicked and all their devices.

For Christ is the Lord!

H. H.

ANNIVERSARY

1896 — 1946

On Tuesday, April 2, 1946 our beloved parents,

MR. JOHN DE BOER

and

MRS. ELIZABETH DE BOER (Fennema)

will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary, the Lord willing. We thank God that He has spared them these many years for each other and for us.

The grateful children:

Mr. and Mrs. Simon De Boer

Rev. and Mrs. Peter De Boer

Mr. and Mrs. Clarence De Boer

and 12 grandchildren

THROUGH THE AGES

The Concordat Of Worms

So had Henry IV gone through the motions of humbling himself before the pope, and so had the pope gone through the motions of absolving Henry, — gone through the motions. This is stating the matter correctly; for, as we shall now see, neither the pope had truly forgiven Henry, nor had Henry actually submitted to the pope in the matter of lay investiture. Henry, by wringing an absolution from the pope, had frustrated the attempt of the nobles of Germany to permanently rid themselves of him. But these nobles, refusing to admit that they had been outwitted by the king, and determined to rid themselves of him at any cost, assembled at Forchheim, March 13, 1077, and offered the crown of Germany to Rudolf, Duke of Swabia, after two legates of the pope, who were present, had prevailed upon the assembly to exact from Rudolf the promise that he would submit to Hildebrand (the pope) in the matter of lay investiture. On March 26 Rudolf was crowned; but the citizens of Mainz, where the crowning took place, raised such a storm, that Rudolf had to flee to Henry's enemies in Saxony. Henry now demanded of Hildebrand that he excommunicate the usurper, but the pope refused. It shows that, though he had absolved the king, he still wanted him out of the way. Germany now had two kings, Henry and Rudolf. Each would eliminate the other and the result was civil war. Though the pope wanted Rudolf to prevail, he was careful not to openly repudiate Henry while the outcome of the struggle still pended. But when on January 27, 1080 Henry was defeated by Rudolf in a decisive battle at Thuringa, the pope, concluding that Henry's star had set and that therefore he had nothing to fear from him anymore, invoked the aid of Peter and Paul, and again excommunicated Henry, deposed him as king and declared Rudolf to be Germany's lawful ruler. Henry instantly replied by an identical action. By a synod of thirty German and Italian bishops, met at Brixen, he deposed Hildebrand and elected an anti-pope under the name of Clement III. But this time the religious sentiment of the age supported Henry and not the pope. There were reasons for this. Firstly, as already has been explained, the multitude looked upon Henry's act of self-abasement in Canossa as an unheard of and wonderful humility and upon the pope's treatment of the king on that occasion as tyrannical cruelty wholly unbecoming to the spiritual father of the church. Further, the terrible civil war in Germany between the party of Rudolf and the party of Henry was still in

progress. State and church were being rent in pieces by this conflict, while Hildebrand calmly looked on and by his equivocal declarations and acts kept up the conflict. He expressed his grief at seeing so many thousand Christians fall victims to temporal and eternal death through the pride of one man, but he did not reveal whom he meant by that individual, Henry or Rudolf. Not until the arms of Rudolf met with continuous success, did the pope pass sentence of excommunication upon Henry. The partisans of Rudolf, who, in making war upon Henry, were fighting Hildebrand's battles — such was their contention — fiercely reproached the pope of prolonging the disastrous quarrel by his ambiguous conduct; and they seriously questioned the purity of his motives. It was this slowness of Hildebrand in publicly repudiating Henry that turned the pope's own party against him. And the excessive severity of the treatment he had afforded the king in Canossa, lost for him the sympathy of the multitude. There were not lacking plain indications of this. Henry again was an excommunicated and a deposed monarch and a deposer of the great Hildebrand. But this time the number that drew away from the king was small. Not now as formerly was he forsaken by his subjects almost to a man. It shows that this second ban of the pope produced little effect in Germany. Thus the death of Rudolf the same evening of the day on which he was mortally wounded on the banks of the Elster, Oct. 15, 1080, in his last battle with Henry, was generally regarded as the judgment of God against him for his infidelity to his lord, king Henry. With Rudolf in the grave, the war abruptly ended. The Hildebrandian party had lost their will to continue the conflict. Henry, knowing that he could count on the moral and physical support of his subjects, and that his position in Germany therefore was strong, decided to bring the pope to terms. Yet, in taking action against the pope he proceeded with great caution. He first sent Hildebrand overtures of peace and declared himself prepared to enter into negotiations for that purpose with the pope. But the proud pope was adamant in his refusal to incline toward Henry. He would yield nothing, though his friends warned him that in Rome all would go over to the side of Henry and that it would be vain to expect any help from his party in Germany. The pope replied that he deemed it a small thing to be forsaken of men, meaning that he put his trust in God. But as coming from Hildebrand, this was a testimony far too courageous. For, so heavily did he lean upon men that he temporarily suspended his laws against priestly marriages in order to recapture in the present crisis the good will of the clergy in Germany. It shows that an unmarried clergy was not a matter of vital principle with Hildebrand. If it was, he stands accused of compromising with his convictions in order to regain

the support of men. As to Henry, he was determined to compel the pope to incline to him his ear. In the spring of 1081 he crossed the Alps with an army and laid siege to Rome. Shall we now say with a certain historian that Hildebrand, surrounded by danger, stood firm as a rock, and refused every compromise? It is certain that we are nearer the truth in averring that Hildebrand, stubborn as a mule, refused to budge; and that therefore his saying that "I am not afraid of the threats of the wicked, and would rather sacrifice my life than consent to evil," is but another example of man's amazing capacity for self-deception.

Contrary to Henry's expectation, the Romans refused to admit him to their city. Unprepared for a long siege, he retreated for the summer to upper Italy. At Easter, 1083, he returned and in June the city was taken. But so far was Hildebrand from admitting defeat that, intrenching himself in the castle of St. Angelo, he renewed the ban upon Henry and excommunicated all his followers. Henry replied by enthroning his anti-pope, Clement III; but he also instructed the nobility of Rome to effect a peaceful settlement with Hildebrand and thereupon left the city. The following spring he returned. Being told that no force had been able to move Hildebrand to negotiate, Henry, by a synod once more deposed and excommunicated him and consecrated Clement III by whom he was subsequently crowned emperor. Thereupon he left Rome with the newly consecrated anti-pope never to return. In the meantime, Hildebrand had successfully solicited the aid of the Normans. They came, did these half-christianized heathen, thirty six thousand strong. Having liberated Hildebrand, they gave free reign to their lust of plunder and slaughter, until half the city, including many churches, was reduced to ruins and several thousand citizens were slain. And as if this was not enough, they sold several thousand more into slavery. The survivors cursed Hildebrand. To escape their wrath, he fled to Salerno, as accompanied by a few cardinals and Roman nobles. Here in Salerno the old pope, still unbroken in spirit, though broken in body, spent his last moments in hurling curses at his arch-enemy, Henry, king of Germany, the frustrater of his intention to bind the world to his throne. His last written document is a letter to the faithful in Germany, in which he exhorted them to hasten to the rescue of the church; that is, to Hildebrand, if they wished to go to heaven. And his dying words were, "I have loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore I die in exile." But the truth of the matter is, that he died in exile — and the exile of course was voluntary, self-imposed — because he stubbornly refused to come to terms with Henry regarding the matter of lay investiture. And that stubbornness had little to do with love of righteousness but it had everything to do with the pope's pride and

lust of power. This is the only justifiable appraisal of this remarkable man, considering what he wanted for himself — nothing less than the earth and its fullness — considering the place in the universe that in his imagination he had carved out for himself — in his mind he sat on the top of the world with every ruler in church and state at his feet — and considering the unsavory methods which he employed in his striving to elevate himself to that dizzy height. The use he made of his key-power is a scandal. He was aware of this. And it troubled him in his last moments. Just before he died he absolved, according to one account, all his enemies with the exception of Henry and Clement III, the anti-pope, and testified his repentance at the controversy which he had excited. But it may be questioned whether this account is true.

The death of Hildebrand could not of course terminate the war over lay investiture. The issues involved remained, awaiting settlement. So the contest was continued now between Henry IV and Hildebrand's successors in the papal throne. After Hildebrand's decease, the anti-pope Clement III continued in the possession of Rome. The cardinals faithful to Hildebrand chose Victor III, who soon died. He was succeeded by Otto, cardinal-bishop of Ostia, a Frenchman, who assumed the name of Urban II. Hildebrand's efforts to destroy Henry IV was renewed by Urban. Like Hildebrand, he paid little regard to the character of the means employed for the achievement of that purpose. Conrad Henry's eldest son, wanted to be king in his father's stead, and Urban encouraged the rebellion even to the extent of crowning Conrad king of Italy at Monza, whither the usurper fled for protection. More important for Urban's rise to power was the synod of Clermont in France, 1095. Here he captured the hearts of men by the amazing power and eloquence with which he exhorted them to unsheath their sword against the Seljuk Turks, who had possessed Jerusalem in 1071 and who were harassing the pilgrims to the holy city and desecrating the holy places. After the adjournment of the synod, Urban set out for Rome surrounded by princes and prelates. Passing through France and Italy, the company grew into a vast multitude, full of enthusiasm for their cause. Escorted by troops of crusaders, Urban entered Rome, expelled the anti-pope and took possession of the city. A few years thereafter he died, 1099, after he had pronounced the ban on all his enemies, including Henry IV. Urban was succeeded by Pascal II, who also, after the example of Hildebrand, sanctioned any means to bring about Henry's destruction. He, too, encouraged the rebellion of Henry's sons against their father. He exhorted Robert of Flanders, who had returned from the first military expedition against the Turks in Palestine, to persecute Henry, that head of all heretics and his friends, to the death; and assured him that he

could not offer to God a more acceptable sacrifice, than that of carrying on war against him — king Henry — who had rebelled against God, and sought to rob the church of its sovereignty. "By much battles," said he to Robert, "they should obtain a place in the heavenly Jerusalem." The fickle multitude hearkened unto the voice of the pope, so that Henry, with his sons in rebellion against him, was forsaken on all sides. But he still had faithful adherents in the dioceses of Liege and Cambray. Here the Christian sense of truth asserted itself in opposition to the vile fanaticism of the pope. The clergy of Liege had already accused Hildebrand of exchanging the spiritual for the secular sword. They now lodged the same objection against Pascal. They asked him to consider whether he led his sheep in the right way in promising them a place in heaven, if only they attacked and desolated the church of God. Reference here is to the laymen and clergymen still devoted to their lord Henry IV. Pascal had placed all such under the papal ban besides ordering them persecuted to the death. Why should these clergymen be excommunicated, they asked. Is it because they are faithful to their bishop, and the latter to the party of his lord the emperor? They denied the right of popes to pronounce the ban on princes. They maintained that the jurisdiction over them the King of kings, Christ the Lord, who appointed them His vicegerents on earth, had reserved in His own hands. And they were entirely correct. But Pascal no more than Hildebrand would allow himself to be instructed. He continued to make relentless war against Henry. Finally the king was compelled to abdicate. The following year he died, August 7, 1106, under the papal ban, in misery at Liege, and was succeeded by the eldest of his rebellious sons, Henry V. Such at this time was the spirit operative in the papacy as it became flesh and blood in Hildebrand and in these Hildebrandian popes. It was the spirit from the abyss. Yet glorious things have been said of this Hildebrand. "His dying words," writes one historian, "reveal the fundamental basis of his character, which was great and manly. To this grand spirit, a character almost without equal, belongs a place among the rulers of the earth, men who have moved the world by a violent yet salutary influence." The religious element, however, raises him to a far higher sphere than that to which secular monarchs belong."

Pascal reaped the reward of his own iniquity in fomenting and encouraging the rebellion of Henry the Fifth against his own father. For no sooner had he come into power, than he revived the old issue regarding lay investiture. He insisted that the right to appoint and instal bishops belonged to him exclusively. But Pascal thought otherwise. So Henry V marched upon Rome in force and had the pope cast into prison. Pascal now was ready to negotiate. For he lacked

Hildebrand's unbending will. Pascal and Henry now reached a remarkable agreement. The bishops should abdicate as temporal rulers to function in their respective domains as spiritual rulers only, and thus allow their vast estates to pass under the direct, temporal jurisdiction of the emperor and the smaller lay rulers. The agreement was good. It was the only solution for the abuse of simony. But it was too revolutionary for general adoption. Human nature being what it is, it asked far too much. It asked that the hierarchy, definitely the papacy, allow the emperor to take over, possess, and exercise a direct temporal rule over, the vast estates of the church and thus allow the bishops to continue on there estates only as spiritual shepherds. To be sure, had the hierarchy agreed to this, the emperor would have been quite willing to waive his right to appointing and installing the bishops. And the office of bishop would have ceased to be the coveted prize of unprincipled men. But the Roman hierarchy, from the pope down to the bishops, had its affections too firmly set upon these properties to even think of parting with them. Had this agreement gone into effect, the Roman hierarchy would have been deprived of its independent source of income and pope and bishops would have been brought under the necessity of living by the free gifts of the people. For with these vast estates under the direct temporal rule of the emperor and his vassals, the yield of the lands of these estates would have gone to the temporal rulers, and thus not to the church.

Now the pope and his bishops were greatly in need of those vast estates as from them they derived the means for the maintenance of their magnificent courts. Yet that compact between Henry V and Pascal was signed provisionally and the pope crowned Henry emperor of the Romans. But no sooner had Henry returned to Germany, than a synod in Rome rejected the agreement, and Pascal was taken severely to task for the concession. In obedience to the command of the synod, he confessed that he had done wrong and in addition subscribed anew to the decrees of Hildebrand and Urban II against lay-investiture. Pascal died, January 21, 1118. The papacy and emperor were weary of the long war of fifty years. A compromise was reached, known in history as the Concordat of Worms. It was signed September 23, 1122. According to the articles of this compact, the bishops, in their capacity of temporal rulers, continued in the possession of their estates but as vassals of the king and thus under his over-lordship. But an exception was made of the estates of the papacy. Of these estates the pope should be the only and sole lord. As to the common bishops, in their capacity of spiritual rulers, they should be subject solely to the Roman pontiff. Their election should be the sole task of the clergy and the people without the interference of the king, yet with the king approving the choice and with the pope con-

firming it. Thus the king waived the right of appointing and installing bishops. But he was allowed the so-called touch of the scepter in token that the bishop received from him his temporal possessions and authority. This was indeed a compromise. It did not remove the abuse of simony but only temporarily arrested it; and it continued the secularization of the hierarchy. It would not have satisfied Hildebrand, who had demanded nothing less than the complete independence of the estates of the church.

G. M. O.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

HANNAH'S PRAYER

As was said, to teach Hannah to pray, the Lord closed her womb and raised up unto her an adversary — this Peninnah, the other of Elkanah's two wives — to taunt Hannah in her childless condition. Peninnah, as was explained, was the unloved wife. To compensate her for the want of her husband's affection, the Lord opened her womb, so that she bore Elkanah several children, sons and daughters. Still she was dissatisfied and fretful, as it was only too evident to her that Elkanah's heart was with his barren wife. She wanted, besides children, her husband's love, to which she was also entitled. Had she been a God-fearing woman, she would have strengthened herself in the Lord and become reconciled to her lot and suffered in silence. Besides, she herself, was also to blame for her unhappy lot. Elkanah had married Hannah first, for her name is first mentioned in the text that tells us that Elkanah had two wives. Doubtless it was Hannah's barrenness that had finally induced Elkanah to take to himself another wife. He wanted children but not another woman to love and to cherish. Peninnah knew that she was marrying a polygamist. And she also must have known that she married a man already devoted to a wife. But Peninnah would take no blame. Neither could she become reconciled to her lot, the reason being that she was a wicked woman. This is the fundamental reason of her tormenting Hannah on account of the latter's being childless. She was a Godless woman and Hannah feared the Lord. And it was especially at Shiloh, when they ate their free-will offering, according to law, that Hannah was made miserable by the cruel taunts of the unprincipled Peninnah. For in his indiscretion Elkanah would give to Peninnah and her sons and daughters portions such as were due to them but to Hannah he

gave a double portion: for he loved her, chap. 1:4, 5. Just how Peninnah on those festive occasions, when the hearts of all true Israelites rejoiced in the Lord, behaved toward Hannah is not revealed in detail. But Hannah's song of salvation tells us something. This statement occurs, "Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of thine mouth: for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. chap. 2: 3. Reference here in the first instance is to Peninnah, to the proud and boasting speech that came out of her mouth. Doubtless she boasted of her fruitfulness which she interpreted as an indication of the Lord's favor over her, discoursed on the dreadful meaning and implication of maternal barrenness that Hannah might hear anew that God was against her for reasons known best to Hannah. This is certain, "her adversary provoked her sore, for to make her fret." And this had been going on for several years. For we read, "And so he did year by year;" namely, year by year Elkanah made an open show of his preference for Hannah, "from the time of her going up to the house of the Lord, she — Peninnah — provoked her; therefore she wept and did not eat." She was in bitterness of soul. She knew she was not wicked and that God was for her; yet she bore on her person the mark of God's disfavor, which exposed her to the taunts of the enemies and persecutors of God's believing people as represented in this story by Peninnah. For so this woman must be regarded, in order to have a right understanding of the sacred narrative in these first chapters of the book of Samuel. A married woman remaining childless was a real calamity in Israel, the reason being that, as has already been explained, Canaan in the Old Testament dispensation was God's country in a very peculiar sense. Canaan was heaven then for there dwelt the God and Father of Christ with His people. Hence, the one desire of every believing Israelitess was to bear children, sons and daughters, in order that in her generations, she and her house might continue to have a name and a place in God's country. When an Israelite died without an issue, his inheritance went to another and his place knew him no more. That was equivalent to his being banished from God's presence even in death. Thus a childless marriage caused bitterness of soul if those so afflicted were true children of God, as was Hannah, the mother of Samuel. Being God-fearing, it amazed and perplexed them, as it did her. The childless state of such people naturally brought them under a cloud of suspicion and they were looked askance at by their brethren, and despised and held in visible contempt by their enemies. Thus it was truly an infliction in Israel to be barren. It was an affliction for the God-fearing Hannah. And when, in her jealous rage, the malicious Peninnah would speak proudly, and mock with her plight, placing upon it the worst possible construction,

her grief would be full, and she could not eat of the offering, and spent the time weeping. That was what Peninnah wanted. She grieved her, so the text reads, uttered in her hearing cruel words, for the very purpose of wounding her soul; and that in Shiloh, God's house. Peninnah was wicked, exceedingly so. Such malice as she displayed, rises from a hatred of God's people. Her fundamental grievance against Hannah was that she was God-fearing and thus not that she was the favored wife. Though reviled, Hannah did not revile again. She did not even expose Peninnah to Elkanah. As to Elkanah, seeing his wife in tears, he was troubled. He knew why she was sad, but he either was unwilling or unable to understand why, seeing that he loved her, she could not be happy, though barren. So he said to her, "Hannah, why weepest thou? and why is thy heart grieved? am not I better to thee than ten sons?" These were foolish words as spoken to the disconsolate Hannah. They did not in the least assuage her grief. Elkanah was a poor comforter. The Lord had brought her down to the grave and the enemy rejoiced. It was God that she needed, His salvation, the token of His favor over her. As her husband, Elkanah should have interceded for her in the sanctuary before God's face. This he had never yet done, there is reason to believe. Instead, turning bigamist, he had taken himself another wife — this unprincipled Peninnah — for he needed children, and he got what he wanted but not in the way of prayer but in the way of a forbidden marriage; and all along he imagined that the whole void in Hannah's life was being filled by himself, and it vexed him to learn that she was still crying for children. His pride was hurt, it seems, "Hannah, why weepest thou? . . . Am I not better to thee than ten sons?" We do not read of Hannah replying. It would have been of no use. He would not have understood. This is what she did. After they had done eating and drinking in Shiloh, she went to the sanctuary and there poured out her heart before God, something that she had never done before, it seems. Not that it must be assumed that previously she had not been praying for a man child, but not here, in God's temple, right before His face. And never before, it must be, had she prayed so long and earnestly and in such bitterness of soul, and with such weeping. And never before had she prayed the prayer that she now uttered. It reveals, does this prayer, that her grief is full and that the lowest depth of her longing that the Lord look on her affliction has been reached. For she vows a vow, "O Lord of hosts," she said, "if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a manchild, then will I give him unto the Lord all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head." This is a prayer worthy of most careful consideration.

She wants a manchild, yet not for herself, not for her own carnal enjoyment and advantage, but that he may be wholly consecrated unto the Lord not only from his thirtieth year on but all the days of his life. She can thus vow because what she needs and prays for is not a manchild as such, but the salvation of her soul, the removal of her reproach, the token of God's favor over her, *in order that her mouth may be praising God for His salvation.* Her is a woman who truly, in that hour, sought God and Him only. But if she would have God, she must be saved. And therefore she prayed, "Look upon the affliction of thine handmaid". And if she was to be saved, she must bear. Therefore she prayed, "Give unto thine handmaid a manchild." But it was God upon whom all her affections in that moment were firmly set. So she went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no longer sad. It can only mean that she was confident that the Lord would look upon her affliction and save her out of all her troubles. And that confidence was a saving faith in His word of promise as made to dwell in her heart by God's Spirit, this word, "Offer unto God thanksgiving and pay thy vows unto the Most High: and call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." Ps. 50:14, 15. In this vein God spake to His people through all the ages of the old dispensation and through all the ages of the new. Hannah, the mother of Samuel, was in great trouble. Seizing the promise, she called upon the Lord. Certainly He would now deliver her, according to His word, deliver her by hearing her prayer for a man child, for in no other way could she be saved, girded with strength brought up, lifted up, than in the way of God's hearing her earnest petition for a man-child, the reason being that it was the dispensation of shadows. In that day earthly prosperity including the fruit of the womb was the reward of covenant fidelity, as want and pestilence and war were the reward of covenant infidelity. Deliverance from all these troubles was the reward of a return to the Lord. In Israel therefore a barren wife was under a cloud, however godly she might be. The God-fearing Hannah was under a cloud. And her grief was greatly augmented by the taunts of Peninnah. But in the way of her prayer God will save her, according to His word. He will give her a man-child. Judging from statements occurring in Hannah's song, Peninnah will be severely punished. She will wax prematurely old. Her children will die a premature death. But Hannah will continue fruitful. "The barren hath born seven; and she that hath many children is waxed feeble."

G. M. O.

Ontvang elken zegen met dankzegging en iedere beproeving met stille onderwerping.

SION'S ZANGEN

De Verbonds Psalm

(Psalm 89; Vierde Deel)

Met het twintigste vers begint een nieuw gedeelte, misschien het belangrijkste gedeelte, van dezen verbondpsalm, een gedeelte, hetwelk ons juist leert, dat wij te doen hebben met een psalm die het verbond Gods bezingt. Om dat te zien, moet ge eerst weten, dat er slechts één grondgedachte in dit gedeelte ons geopenbaard werd. Van het twintigste vers tot vers 38 gaat het over David, door God uit het volk verkoren, verhoogd en verheerlijkt. In dien David zal Gods verbond vast blijven en tot in alle eeuwigheid zal Hij Zijn zaad op den troon zien en die troon zal zijn als de dagen der hemelen en zal voor God zijn als de zon.

De naam David wordt meermalen genoemd hier, zoodat we allereerst moeten denken aan Koning David die door God verhoogd was vanuit het volk Israels om koning te zijn over Zijn erfdeel.

Als dan vers 20 spreekt van Gods sprake in een gezicht, dan gaat dat over de sprake Gods tegen Nathan den profeet. En tegen dien profeet sprak God, zeggende: Ik heb hulp besteld bij eenen held, Ik heb een verkorene uit het volk verhoogd; Ik heb David Mijnen knecht gevonden, met Mijne heilige olie heb Ik hem gezalfd.

Het zou goed zijn als ge II Samuel 7:1-17 laast, vooraleer ge verder gaat. Daar hebt ge den historischen achtergrond van dit gedeelte. In dat gedeelte hoort ge de profetie van Nathan over David. David wilde den Heere een huis bouwen. Ik zal U in dat huis doen rusten tot in eeuwigheid. Doch Uw zaad zal Mij een Huis bouwen. En van dat zaad zegt de profeet: Ik zal Hem zijn tot een vader en Hij zal Mij zijn tot een Zoon, enz. En de Heilige Geest verklaart dit laatste woord in Hebr. 1:5. Daar wordt het verklaard te zijn een profetie van Jezus Christus, onzen Heere. Dus al die schoone beloften die in dezen psalm direkt aan David verbonden worden, bedoelen eigenlijk dit, dat zij vervuld zijn in Jezus Christus, den Zoon Gods.

En dan loopt alles los. In Christus is het verbond Gods vast tot in eeuwigheid. Hij is de Koning Israels bij uitnemendheid.

Gaat nu terug naar het twintigste vers en alles wordt lieflijker, schooner, heerlijker, dan wanneer men slechts David, den historischen David ziet.

Ik heb hulp besteld bij eenen Held, Ik heb een Verkorene uit het volk verhoogd; Ik heb David, Mijnen knecht gevonden, met Mijne heilige olie heb Ik Hem gezalfd.

Hier zien we den Jezus van Nazareth

Hij is de heilige held die ter hulpe snelde.

Hulpe? Tegen wien of tegen wat?

Het antwoord kan niet moeilijk zijn, als we het verband aandachtig lezen en als we het licht van het geheele Woord van God doen schijnen op dit vers en op dit verband. Het verband spreekt van den vijand, den zoon der ongerechtigheid, de wederpartijders en die hem haten. In al die benamingen zien we den vijand Gods, den duivel en zijn trawanten. Dieper nog, zien we in al die benamingen, de machten der zonde en der ongerechtigheid die Israel benauwen, schuldig doen zijn en voorwerp doen worden van den toorn, den rechtvaardigen toorn Gods.

Daartegen is hulpe van noode. En die hulpe vinden we in dezen Held, Jezus Christus, den Zoon Gods.

Dit alles is getypeerd in den historischen David, Koning van Israel. Er waren veel vijanden rondom en in Israel. Ook daar spreekt II Sam. 7 van. De Heere herinnert koning David aan het feit, dat God hem rust gegeven had van alle zijn vijanden. Alle volken van rondom waren vernederd geworden.

Doch dat is alles type van andere toestanden. Het Israel Gods van alle eeuwen wordt benauwd van binnen en van buiten door hatelijke vijanden. Eerst is daar Satan, de vijand Gods en daarom de vijand van Gods volk. Tweedens, is daar de wereld die door Satan geïnspireerd wordt om Gods volk te benauwen. Derdens, is daar de macht der zonde te midden van Israel, welke macht haar venijn ontvangt van denzelfden Satan. Er is connectie tusschen ons hart en de hel. Later, veel later, zou Jacobus daarvan zeggen, dat onze tong ontstoken is van de hel.

Daartegen nu, heeft God hulp besteld en dat deed Hij in de gave van David. En nu heb ik het cog op den beteren David. Toch is het mooi en passend, dat Jezus zoo vaak David genoemd wordt. David beteekent letterlijk: GELIEFDE. Hij is de Geliefde Zoon van God in Wien al Gods welbehagen is.

En wat een Helper!

Hij grijpt Satan aan en vermorzelt zijn kop.

Hij veroordeelt de wereld en, naardien Hij alle macht ontving in hemel en op aarde, doet alle dingen meewerken ten gunste van Zijn Israel.

Hij werkt krachtdadiglijk in de harten van Zijn volk en brengt hen allen tot de volkomen heerlijkheid. En die heerlijkheid is, dat zij allen het beeld des Zoons ontvangen, waardoor zij, als 't ware, de spiegel zijn waarin de Drieëenige God Zijn deugden weerkaatst ziet.

Hij, de Christus Gods, is de eenige en ware Helper van Zijn volk.

En Hij kan dat alles, vanwege de zalving met heilige olie. Die zalving is de gave des Heiligen Geestes, waardoor Hij alle dingen doet naar het vrijmachtig welbehagen Gods. Daardoor wordt vervuld hetgeen we lezen in het twee en twintigste vers: "met welken

Mijne hand vast blijven zal, ook zal Hem Mijn arm versterken."

De vijand zal hem niet drinken, en de zoon der ongerechtigheid zal hem niet onderdrukken.

Dit schijnt te strijden tegen de geschiedenis der Evangelien. Daar schijnt het alsof Hij telkens weggedrukt en verdrongen wordt. En toch is het niet meer dan schijn. Let, b. v., op de akeligste en vreese-lijkste drukking en verdringing die Hem wedervoer. Ik heb het oog op Judas. Welnu, als het tot de lafaardige daad toekomt van het verraad is het Jezus die hem toespreekt en zegt: Wat gij doet, doe het haastelijk! Met andere woorden, alle zoogenaamde verdringing en verdrukking van Jezus is de raad Gods over Hem, waardoor het gansche plan der verlossing en des Vader's heerlijkheid tot stand komt. De kruisiging van Jezus, uit dit oogpunt, is de verhooging des Zoons en de openbaring van God's heerlijkste deugden. De vijanden verliezen het altijd. Tegen God en Jezus vechten is de dwaasheid gekroond.

Luistert slechts verder: "Maar Ik zal Zijne wederpartijders verpletteren voor Zijn aangezicht, en die Hem haten zal ik plagen. Wilt ge nu een voorbeeld zien van die verplettering en dat plagen, dan moet ge luisteren naar de beschrijving van Judas' zelfmoord. God plaagt hem en hij verhangt zich; God verplettert hem en, zooals het Evangelie ons meldt, hij is opgebors-ten.

En Mijne getrouwheid en Mijne goedertierenheid zullen met hem zijn, en zijn hoorn zal in Mijnen naam verhoogd worden.

Dat dit zoo is, toont ons de oorkonde van Jezus' omwandeling op aarde. Ergens heeft iemand geschreven van God, dat "Zijne voetstappen druipen van vettigheid". Het geheele leven van Jezus zijn een commentaar op die woorden. Het is al getrouwheid en goedertierenheid. Zal ik verhalen van Petrus en Maria Magdalena; van Zacheus en Lazarus met zijne zusters? Zal ik verhalen van die hoer die achter Hem stond al weenende en de arme blinden die Hem schreiend nariepen: O Zone Davids, ontferm U onzer? Hij ging het land door goeddoende en het resultaat is "en het volk, dat ziende, gaf Gode lof!" Jezus Christus, de Goede Herder. We worden nooit moede of mat om de goedheid, de trouw en de lieflijkheid van dien Jezus af te malen. En Zijn hoorn is verhoogd geworden door des Heeren hand. Om slechts iets van dien verhoogden hoorn te zeggen: let op Jezus van Nazareth als Hij Zijn stem verheft en te midden van den stank der dooden roept met almachtige kracht: Lazarus, kom uit! En die dood was stond op uit de dooden! Het is de verhoogde hoorn van Jezus. Hoorn is zinnebeeld voor macht en kracht.

En Ik zal zijne hand in de zee zetten en zijne rechterhand in de rivieren.

Het is de aanduiding van het universeele terrein

waar Jezus Zijn Goddelijke wonderen deed en doet. Hij zette Zijn hand in de zee en in de rivieren en Europa en Amerika zagen het heil des Heeren. De zee en de rivieren bespoelen de stranden der werelddeelen. En als Jezus Zijn machtige hand en rechterhand in die rumoerige baren zet, dan ziet men de wonderen der zaligheid en eeuwige redding. Redding van zondaren. Verlossing van Zijn volk.

Hij zal Mij noemen: Gij zijt Mijn Vader, Mijn God en de Rotssteen Mijns heils.

Daar hebt ge het intieme liefdeleven tusschen Vader en Zoon. Doch we moeten wel voor de aandacht houden, dat die Zoon ons hier geschilderd wordt als de Messias, de Middelaar. De Mensch Jezus noemt God Zijn Vader, den Rotssteen Zijns heils. We zullen het nooit vergeten, dat het heil Godes is. Ook Jezus, als Middelaar, is de Gave van den DrieEenigen God. En Hij had Hem lief. Die God en die Vader gaf Hem een gebod bij Zijn komst in de wereld en dat gebod was Zijn eten en Zijn drinken. Leest Johannes 17.

Ook zal Ik Hem ten eerstgeboren zoon stellen, een hoogste over de koningen der aarde.

Ook hier weer: het is de Middelaar Gods en der menschen. God de Vader kan Zijn eeuwigen Goddelijken Zoon niet aanstellen tot een hoogste der koningen. God de Zoon is ook God: den Vader evangelijk in kracht, majesteit en glorie. Hij heeft alles en kan niets gegeven worden, ook niet door God den Vader. Maar aan Jezus wordt gegeven om de eerste te zijn in de economie van een nieuwe hemel en een nieuwe aarde. Aan dien Middelaar wordt gegeven, vanwege Zijn groote vernedering, een naam die boven allen naam is, beide in den hemel en op de aarde. Het Woord vertelt ons, dat aan dien Zoon gegeven wordt om "in allen de eerste te zijn". Coll. 1:18. En in Efeze 1 wordt ons verhaald, dat alle dingen in den hemel en op de aarde in Hem vereenigd zullen worden om zóó vastgelegd te worden aan het hart Gods.

Ik zal hem Mijne goedertierenheid in eeuwigheid houden, en Mijn verbond zal hem vast blijven.

Dit is misschien het diepste vers van den geheelen psalm.

God houdt Hem Zijn goedertierenheid in eeuwigheid. Dat wil zeggen, dat van eeuwigheid tot in eeuwigheid alles in God, DrieEenig, dringt en ruischt en beweegt om met Goddelijke energie Jezus Christus te zegenen, lief te hebben, te omvatten in armen van liefde, van liefde Gods. Want dit laatste, de eeuwige omarming in liefde, is het Verbond. Adam viel en kon vallen. Die mooie Engel Gods Lucifer, die later Satan werd was valbaar geschapen. Maar dat kan Jezus niet. Hij is God en mensch. En in den Persoon zijn die twee naturen één. Het blijft vast, eeuwig vast.

O, als we slechts in Jezus zijn, dan zijn we veilig. Zijn we in Jezus, dan zijn we in God. Want ons leven is dan met Christus verborgen in God. Van dien Jezus

en van Zijn broederen vermeldt ons Mozes, dat "van anderen (zijn) eeuwige armen".

Dat die in Jezus zijn óók veilig zijn, wordt ons geleerd in het volgende vers: En Ik zal Zijn zaad in eeuwigheid zetten, en Zijnen troon als de dagen der hemelen.

Het zaad van Jezus en Zijn troon ziet hetzelfde volk. Zijn zaad is al de vrucht van den arbeid Zijner liefde. De liefde van Christus dringt ons, zegt Paulus. Verstaan in een ietwat anderen zin, dan Paulus het bedoelde, evenwel, toch Bijbelsch, dan ontvangen we hier de beschrijving van de werking dier liefde van Christus. Ja, die liefde dringt ons. Zij dringt en zij werkt en zij vervolgt U, totdat ge in de armen Gods aanlandt, daarboven bij God. Het zaad van Christus is Zijn kerk die Hij werft, opzoekt en vergadert van eeuw tot eeuw. Zij allen zijn het zaad van Zijn strooiing. En die strooiing is het Kruis, het monument van een liefde en van een gehoorzaamheid der liefde, die de hemelen zal doen ruischen van muziek en zang der gezaligden. En dat zaad is ons bedoeld in dien troon. Al dat volk ontvangen Jezus als hun Koning. Zij zijn Hem gehoorzaam op Zijn wenken. En hoewel óók den Koning ons van Israel's God gegeven zal vernederd worden om te knielen voor den troon van den Drie-Eenigen, Hij zal over het Koninkrijk blijven heerschen onder God tot in alle eeuwigheid.

Daar zal ons 't goede van Gods woning verzaden reis op reis. En 't eeuwig deel, O Groote Koning, uit Uw geducht paleis!

Wie zou dien Jezus dan niet beminnen? Wie zou Zijn God dan niet eeren over zulk een onuitsprekelijke Gave?

Indien wij zwegen, zouden de steenen der straten luitkeels roepen.

Doch wij zullen spreken en sprekende zullen wij zingen en zingende zullen wij jubelen, totdat de dorpele deuren zich bewegen en het Huis vervuld wordt met rook.

En die rook is symboliek van de heerlijkheid Gods. Zijn Naam zij geprezen tot in alle eeuwigheid.
Amen, ja, amen!

G. V.

CONSISTORIAL UNION MEETING

The Consistorial Union will meet at Hudsonville on April 4 at 8:00 P. M. All present and former consistory members are urged to be present. Rev. W. Hofman will be the speaker of the evening.

IN HIS FEAR

When To Start Indoctrination

In a previous article we said a few things about the means, the 'how' of indoctrination. In our present article we plan to say a little about the 'when' of the indoctrination. When must the Church start with this; how old should the child be?

I fully realize that the field I am treading upon is so large that I will not be able to finish this subject. It deals with the whole system of our catechetical training. A great many questions enter in. It would indeed be a proper subject for a more lengthy discussion. No justice can be done in one short article. It deals with questions like these: "When must the Church begin teaching 'the man of God', what should be taught, what method should be followed, how about our present method, when should we begin with teaching our children 'doctrine'? etc. Related questions are: "What should be the normal, average age for 'the man of God' in the church to make public profession of faith and partake of communion; do we, in general, perhaps, have a wrong conception of this?" etc. The field before us is so large that it would be well worth while for someone who considers himself qualified, to write a series of articles on these various related subjects. As we said a moment ago, at present we can merely touch upon them. Besides, the undersigned does not consider himself an expert in this field, although I feel free to call at least the attention to some of these things and to make a few suggestions.

Let us start out by mentioning our present method of catechizing. By this time we have our own catechism books, both on history and doctrine. The books on history were composed by Rev. P. De Boer, the ones on doctrine by Rev. H. Hoeksema, and one catechism book on doctrine is composed by Rev. A. Cammenga. As a rule our children come to catechism when they are about 7 or 8 years old. The first book they go through is "Bible History for Beginners". Next follows "Bible History for Juniors." And, finally, "Bible History for Seniors." The first book gives simple Bible stories in 40 lessons. The next two books are more difficult and contain each 30 lessons. Here is a little more connection between the lessons. Texts are given, written work, and here and there dates are inserted. The one book is on the Old Testament, the other on the New Testament. According to the author these books for Juniors: "Intend to emphasize the chronology and the geography of Bible History." The books for Seniors are also on the Old and New Testament, each containing 30 lessons. Memory work is more difficult and

ing to the author, these books: "Intend to emphasize the significance of history in the development of God's covenant."

From the foregoing it is plain that our catechism books on history, although all covering the same history, are not meant to be mere repetition. A definite line is followed, there is also gradual development and the work for the pupils becomes more difficult, which is but proper.

At present we are not discussing the merits or demerits of these books. Neither will we enter into the method which is followed in these books. We may state that if the pupil memorizes the lessons faithfully and does the written work conscientiously, much can be learned from these books. The question might be debated whether no improvement could be made, whether we could not do better from a pedagogical point of view. However, these questions would lead us too far away from our present subject. Fact is these are all the tools we have at present, there is no second choice, and we are glad that we have these books. We are at least no longer dependent upon books written by Christian Reformed or Reformed authors, books, which contain objectionable material for us. And these books by Rev. De Boer can be used very nicely and with profit.

However, I like to say this: "If it is the duty of the Church to give the children a thorough course in Bible History, then these books are wholly inadequate. You simply cannot cover Bible History in detail in the catechism room. And this is not the fault of the books, but this is due to the present method which we follow. We teach catechism for about 45 minutes per week, and on the average not more than 30 weeks in a year. Come to think about it, that is precious little, and personally I am very glad that our Christian Schools devote ever so much more time to teaching Bible History than we do as Churches. If our children had to depend upon the Church for a thorough knowledge of Bible History, I'd pity them, for they simply do not get it. And I certainly pity those children who are deprived of a Christian day school. And parents who send their children to the public school with the excuse that their children receive Bible History in catechism, certainly have a very poor and lame excuse. And if we think indeed that it is the duty of the Church to teach a thorough Bible course to our children, we have to do a lot better before we should be satisfied. We have our children in class but once a week. We have no follow-up, we lack the necessary repetition, and often we must cover way too much material in one lesson. Permit me to illustrate this point for just a moment. I have here on my desk "Old Testament History for Juniors." I can pick out a lesson at random to make the point clear. Take, e.g. the Judges. All the judges, with the exception of Samuel, are treated in one lesson. I ask in all frankness: "Can anyone treat all the judges in one

short period of, at the most 45 minutes?" That is impossible. All that can be accomplished is that you do a little 'picking' here and there. The same is true of 'David', one lesson. Two lessons on the Kingdom of Judah. And thus we might continue. The books for Seniors are about on the same order, although here I can see the element of a general review of history, emphasizing 'the significance of history in the development of God's covenant.' However, the point I am making is, that: "If we think that as churches it is our calling to give our children a thorough course in Bible History (even if we should emphasize the idea that the Church should give the doctrinal aspect) we make a poor job of it. I am not finding fault with the books now, but I simply have reference to our *method* and the actual field we cover.

However, notice that all these books emphasize *History*. And children attending these catechism classes, that means till they are 13 or 14 years old, we consider to belong to what is usually called 'the pre-doctrine' age.

Of late I have read in "The Banner" that some Christian Reformed Churches have abolished some catechism classes in this category of the pre-doctrine age. Various reasons are given for this, but one of the main reasons seems to be: "An overlapping of the teaching of the Christian Schools and the Church." Personally I would not favor such a step. I much rather favor the method we have been following thus far than abolishing these classes altogether. I believe it is true that there often is overlapping, although I don't consider this a serious matter. But besides, abolishing these catechism classes means that nothing takes their place. We don't even give the opportunity to the pastor to work with the children, neither do we train the children in the good 'habit' of attending catechism, nor do we make any work of it of molding them together as one group belonging to the same church that will have to work together tomorrow. Other reasons might be mentioned why we should not abolish any catechism classes, but for me the main reason is after all that such abolishing is tantamount to an admission on the part of the Church: "We have nothing to offer the child in the line of catechism till he is about 13 or 14 years old." And that's a shame, and it is not true either.

As I grow older and have frequently thought about these things, and especially of late while I was writing these few articles, I come more and more to the conclusion that what our children need is *more doctrine*. It's very common to speak of a pre-doctrine age, but how old must a child be before you should teach him doctrine? I believe it to be the primary calling of the Church to indoctrinate 'the man of God'. Well, why don't we do it more than thus far? Is it true that a child below the age of, say 13 years, can not be taught doctrine? I don't believe it. Of course I realize that

as we teach 'History' doctrine enters in and is at times emphasized. Still, we teach *history* and *not doctrine*. Are we doing the right thing? This is well worth considering. I know very well a number of difficulties enter in here. If we are to teach more doctrine this would imply that we must reconsider and even wholly change our present method of catechizing the covenant children. It would mean an altogether different system and method. We would need a whole set of new catechism books. Besides, it may not be too difficult to teach doctrine to young people, but to teach it to the children is a different matter. You have to come down to their level. We would not only need a teachable course of study, but we might even need a special course in our Theological School, the purpose of which would be to teach our future ministers 'how to teach doctrine' to the children. In other words, give the theological students some special preparation for this task. And there are a great many other difficulties to be considered. To change the 'system' also would imply abolishing the present method of teaching history. For to do both would be quite impossible, neither is it sufficient, it seems to me, to merely teach some doctrinal *implications* of Bible history, as is done now at times.

However, why not think into these matters once? It might prove well worth while for us to study the whole question of catechism teaching and its proper place in the life and educational program of the Church. I certainly would appreciate hearing some reaction to the suggestions that I made or the problems I have presented in this article. Should our Churches teach *more doctrine* to the children? Would we favor an almost revolutionary change in our present system of catechizing the children of the Church which we now consider of pre-doctrine age? Come on, fellow brethren, ministers, consistories, interested parents, what do you think about these things?

Fact is of course that there would be several advantages. *More* doctrine would give us a better foundation to build upon when our children reach the high school age. There would be no danger of overlapping with the christian high school age. There would be no danger of overlapping with the christian school instruction and the Church would have its own very unique program and be distinct. It also would follow that in normal circumstances our children would and could make public profession of faith at an age several years younger than is now usually the case. It also would give the pastor the opportunity to continue catechizing the covenant youth after they have made confession of faith and thus cover the field of dogmatics and the contents of our confessional standards much more thoroughly. This can be done now, too, at least theoretically speaking, but usually it does not work out so well. It also would imply that our children would be taught Prot. Ref. doctrine while they are still very young. I

can see the advantage that thus the Church would get a firmer hold on its own youth, and that on the other hand the youth, being so thoroughly trained in Prot. Ref. doctrine, would not as easily leave the Church as is now often the case. They would know our particular doctrine better, understand it clearer, be better founded in the truth. Why not bend the twig while it is still young, why not mold the child while it can still easily be molded? And more indoctrination in their childhood days certainly would help them immensely in better understanding doctrinal preaching.

Perhaps we can learn something here from the Roman Catholics and we might be able to borrow a leaf from them. I have before me here on my desk two Roman Catholic Catechism books. The title of the one is: "How to teach our little ones." (And these little ones are *little* ones). Well, what do they teach them? *No history* but *solid doctrine*. Here follows a partial list of the subjects treated: "God, the Unity and the Trinity, God's presence, Why are we on earth, Heaven and Hell, Purgatory, Angels, The sign of the cross, Sin, Original sin, Our Saviour, The true Church, Grace, Baptism, Confirmation, The Holy Eucharist, Holy Communion, Confession, Extreme Unction, The Sacraments in General, The Ten Commandments, Commandments of the Church." — I gave most of the titles. From the foregoing it is crystal clear that the whole book is *doctrine*. — In the Preface of the second book is stated: "This book has been prepared for children of the fourth and fifth grades in grammar school. Lengthy questions and answers have been avoided, and the phraseology made as simple as an adequate presentation of the doctrine would permit." — The contents of this book, you ask? Again *solid doctrine*, "The articles of Faith, Works to perform (Law), Means to become Holy."

Perhaps you say: "I wouldn't like that, we are no Roman Catholics, we couldn't do it that way, etc. etc." This may be all true and well, but the fact remains that the Roman Catholic Church teaches *doctrine* to its little children. And they succeed too. And when I read books like I mentioned I can readily understand why some young children in the Roman Catholic Church can be very strong "Catholics", even though they are still at an age when our children know little about doctrine and have no idea at all what it means to be Prot. Reformed. And I can also understand why Roman Catholic children can be so young when they are 'Confirmed'. The Roman Catholic Church considers it her business to make Roman Catholics of her seed and loses no time but starts with them very young so as to get a firm hold on her members.

It is the business of our Churches to make our children Protestant Reformed. Why not start young? In the first lesson of the second Catholic catechism book I mentioned you find the following question:

"When should we begin to study Christian doctrine?" The answer is: "We should begin to study Christian doctrine in childhood."

My space is more than filled. I realize that the last word has not been said in this subject. Neither do I expect that every one will agree with some of the sentiments I have expressed. Nor have I solved all the problems involved. However, if I have succeeded in presenting some 'food for thought', I consider this writing not to have been in vain. And may the Lord, the King and Shepherd of His Church make us ever more faithful as churches to indoctrinate 'the man of God' in the pure, blessed, Reformed truth of Scripture.

J. D.

FROM HOLY WRIT

"... unto a dispensation of the fulness of times, to sum up all things in Christ . . . even in Him".

—Eph. 1:8-10.

Before we further consider the implication of the Scriptural presentation of God's wonderful and almighty act of grace, whereby He places all things at the feet of His beloved Son, somewhat more in detail, it will be expedient and to our mutual advantage to notice still another important element in the text.

The element to which we refer is the phrase "unto a dispensation of the fulness of times".

The text in full reads as follows. We quote: "Having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Him (Christ, G. L.) *unto a dispensation of the fulness of times*, to sum up all things in Christ, the things in heaven and the things on earth, even in Him."

In a general way it can be said, that the phrase in question tells us two matters of importance in regard to God's summing up of all things in Christ. The phrase tells us, first of all, that this summing up will be realized at a certain time, at a certain point in history. It thus tells us at *what time* it will occur, take place. That is the first point. To this must be added another important aspect of the work of God, here referred to. We are also told *what kind* of time it shall be, when this shall occur, in the phrase, "fulness of times". This latter aspect does not emphasize at what point of time in history the summing up occurs, but it emphasizes that the point of time has a content, a work all of its own! Thus the peculiar nature, character of the time is indicated. This is the second element, that the phrase under consideration conveys to our mind.

That these two elements should be present in this term is not at all strange. For these two elements were ever the object of the investigation of the prophets, who were led by the Spirit of Christ. All their energies were spent in this investigation. Even the very angels of heaven were desirous to look into this object of the searching of all the prophets, who prophesied until John the Baptist. Thus the apostle Peter writes in his first Epistle. In I Peter 1:10-12 we read: "Concerning which salvation the prophets sought and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace, that should come unto you; searching *what time or what manner of time*, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow them. To whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto you they did minister these things, which now have been announced unto you through them that preached the gospel unto you by the Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven; which things angels desire to look into."

If so much sanctified energy both by prophets and angels has been spent, that we might receive this revelation of God in Christ, well may we beware to give heed.

Surely it should not escape our attention, that the apostle Paul in this brief phrase under consideration does not direct our attention to a mere un-noteworthy detail, but, that, in this brief phrase, he gives a word-picture of all of history. It contains, from a certain aspect, a life- and world-view all in a nut-shell.

Let us attempt to see what the Apostle would teach us in this brief phase as to the time and the manner of the time of the work of God. There are three terms that call for comment and study. They are:

1. Himes, (seasons, kairous) ;
2. Fulness, (pleeroma) ;
3. Dispensation (oikonomia).

We begin with the first mentioned term. The term "times" may best be rendered as meaning "appropriate times", the proper season for anything, for a happening, an event. It is the fit season, the proper occasion for something. Time, in this sense of the term, is not mere extended existence. It is something more, and, therefore, different than the mere aggregate of minutes, hours, days, months, and years. It is then something that cannot be measured with the numbers on the clock, it is not expressed merely in the number of days of the calendar year.

Time in this sense is rather the content, the character of time. And, again, not the character of time, as this character is determined by human standards and occasions, mere human efforts and endeavors, but as this time, these seasons are solely determined by the great acts of almighty God in history.

Permit us to illustrate this.

That even among mere men, human endeavors and conventions, we also speak of time in the sense of the

proper occasion, is clear to all. It is not proper to go visiting at the home of a neighbor or friend at midnight. In itself it is not sinful, but under normal circumstances this is not the time to visit, but it is the time for sleep and repose. One does not easily go and visit the minister on Saturday evening, for that is the proper time for reflection for the coming Sunday. Thus one could go on. But this is sufficient to show how even in human convention there are certain accepted matters that are only proper in their season.

So too God has given definite seasons to all things. There are the time for seed-time and harvest. What time is cannot be determined by merely looking at the calendar of the year. For us in the north temperate zone this time of sowing is from March to June. But in Argentina this order is reversed. For them seed-time is in our harvest-time. What is the proper season for reaping the harvest there in the south, is our time for sowing.

From this we can readily see, that "time" is more than minutes. It always is qualified. It has a content, a proper character all its own. Thus it is with us in the ever recurring cycles of our existence.

In our text the sense of "time", proper season also is qualified. The Apostle gives us, portrays to us all of time, from Genesis 1:1 to the last day. Let us attempt to see just what the apostle has in mind when he speaks of "times". Directly before me in my "study" I have a large blackboard. On it I have drawn a horizontal line from left to right. At the extreme left, the starting point of this line, I made a line indicating that this designated the "beginning" of which both Genesis 1:1 and John 1:1 speak. At the extreme right, at the end of the line, I have another upright mark, indicating the "end" of this present world. Shall we keep this blackboard in mind?

This line that we have thus drawn represents all of time, all of our present mode of existence from Beginning to End. It is the entire measure, the fullness of time, as determined by the Counsel and good-pleasure of God. But this time is not one monotonous aggregate of minutes, hours, days and years. It is divided into great epochs, seasons which the Father has put and keeps in His own authority! The one great epoch leads to the other, and they all lead to the end, God's end.

Thus presenting the "times" we are not misrepresenting the intention of the apostle Paul. To the very contrary, we are merely following in his footsteps in this matter. For elsewhere the apostle himself draws a line on the "blackboard", a line that must represent all of time, and this line he also divides into epochs, times, seasons. We have in mind that great recorded sermon, at least in its highlights, as this is found in Acts 13:16-41.

With this sermon of Paul as a guide, as to general

method, we will have no difficulty in showing just what these epochs, seasons are which the Apostle has in mind.

Now let us look at the blackboard before me. The first upright mark on this line, that I have drawn, I have made slightly to the right from the extreme left. This first line indicates the end of the first epoch. This "mark" indicates the "Deluge", the flood in the days of Noah. This period is often called the prediluvian epoch. It was first in order of time. It has its own significance in history. It was the proper time for that to take place which is recorded to us in Genesis 1-6. This is "season" No. 1.

Now let's see. . . . Oh, yes, the next upright mark on the horizontal line on the blackboard, where shall we place it? This can very conveniently be placed, at a point in history, ten generations later. This brings us to the days of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the Patriarchs. This is the period of which Genesis 12-23 speaks. At this point another definite season, an epoch in the work of God is finished. During it nations were formed by God, the world is again peopled, and the stage is set for Abraham's place and significance among the nations, in the Seed, that is to come. And with Israel's going down into Egypt the curtain falls on the second great epoch. Hence, here we will place mark No. 2.

We will now have to put the third mark on the line on the blackboard. The line runs through. It is not a broken line. The line is continuous. The epochs are not sharply marked off one from the other in the sense that it is a question of a day. Sometimes it is very abrupt, however. Always and again God appears. The next epoch is from the law-giving at Sinai, after Israel's great deliverance from Egypt, till the time of the Judges which ends with Samuel. This covers a period of more than four hundred years. Thus Paul speaks in Acts 13:19, 20. "And when He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He gave them their land for an inheritance, for about four hundred and fifty years, and after these things He gave them judges until Samuel, the Prophet." Again an epoch in which Israel is under the law, but is most lawless, and all things proclaim loudly, that the Throne of David, to rule in righteousness should be established. This is where we place the third "mark" on the horizontal line on our blackboard. And this has brought us up to the time of David's kingship. Again a great epoch in the history of God's covenant dealings.

We now have three epochs marked off on the line before us, haven't we? Let's proceed. From David the line runs through to the Babylonian Captivity. Our next line represents therefore the Babylonian captivity. As far as the flesh and the typical kingship is concerned, David's kingdom goes under. Indeed Israel goes into bondage, but a remnant shall return, Shear-Jashub! And in this return lies the promise of greater things to come. This is mark No. 4.

And now we come to the next season, as far as the Old Testament Scriptures are concerned. In the end of this epoch all the former ones are taken up. Here all the lines meet and converge. It is the birth of Jesus Christ, His death and resurrection. Once more compare Acts 13:23-38. This is the end of the Old Testament.

This is the "fulness of the time" up to this point. To this we believe Gal. 4:4 refers.

We still have room on the line that we have drawn from left to right on the blackboard. There still is time, a season left before all times are come to pass and the measure is full. There is still the period of time from Pentecost till the Return of Christ upon the clouds of heaven.

Here we cannot supply various epochs from Scripture as we were able to in the Old Testament Dispensation.

However, even here we can see great epochs in history. No one will doubt, that such turning points in history as that of the great movement of the nations in the times of the Goths and of the Huns, the birth of the modern Germanic nations are not epoch making. And, again, who doubts, that the Reformation was not an epoch in history? And we can be sure, that when the Man of Sin shall come, again it will be epoch making.

But, however this may be, the entire period of time from Pentecost till Christ's return is the season in which the entire history of the world is brought to its Consummation in Jesus Christ. At the end of this period we will come to that last event in which the Mystery of God will be fulfilled. Rev. 10:7. From here the line of history does not run on. We cannot draw out the line in our blackboard. The measure is full. A definite number of "times" constitute this fullness. In these times God is summing up all things in Christ, according to His eternal good *pleasure*. That is the Mystery of His will, that He has made known unto us.

Just how these "times" fit into the conception "fulness of times" we hope to reflect on the next time.

Therefore, "do not erase" this from the blackboard.

G. L.

CLASSIS EAST

will meet in regular session Wednesday, April 3, at 9 o'clock A. M. All matters for Synod must be brought to this meeting of Classis.

D. Jonker, S. C.

PERISCOPE

FOUR HEADS TOGETHER:

Recently six editors of various magazines and papers from the Netherlands were touring the United States for the purpose of studying trends of thoughts in this country. One was a Roman Catholic, one a Social Democrat, one a liberal, one an editor of a former "underground" newspaper, one a Communist, and one was a "Calvinist". They had luncheon also in Grand Rapids, sponsored by The Grand Rapids Press and the Rev. H. J. Kuiper, Editor of the Banner of the Christian Reformed Churches, states he had the privilege (? , L.V.) to be present at that luncheon. Various subjects were discussed such as the underground movement in Holland, the East Indies situation, the havoc wrought by the Germans in Holland and the present political trend in the old country. And now I will simply quote Rev. Kuiper from The Banner: "The day following the luncheon, Dr. H. Beets, Dr. Clarence Bouma and the undersigned (H. J. Kuiper) had a personal conference with Prof. H. J. Hellema (one of the six touring Editors and who is connected with the Free University of Amsterdam). This prominent Calvinist is a member of one of our Reformed Churches and since 1940 part-time professor at the Free University of Amsterdam. He is connected with the juridical department and teaches tax-law. He is also a member of a well known law-firm and in this capacity has represented a number of Reformed churches in law-suits, involving their property rights, which were jeopardized by the Schilder defection. Prof. Hellema gave us some illuminating information about the schism and answered a number of questions that were put to him. He was also eager to know about the reaction of our people to that movement. Though we are not quoting him, we can say that his evaluation of the situation did not all conflict with the slant his interviewers had on that situation. After listening to him we personally were more convinced than ever that the personality of the central figure in the schismatic group was a very important factor in the tragic separation that has come in the Church with which our own denomination has closer connections than any other ecclesiastical body." Thus far we quote Rev. Kuiper in The Banner of February 22.

A few words of comment on the above information. Reading about this conference, we thought about the conference in the Pantlind Hotel in 1939 to which also Rev. H. J. Kuiper was invited. But Rev. H. J. Kuiper REFUSED to attend that conference. That 1939 conference was called together at the instigation of Dr. K. Schilder, who was at that time touring this country,

and speaking and lecturing. That 1939 conference was for the purpose of discussing the issues that separated our Prot. Ref. Churches and the Chr. Ref. Churches, with a view to a possible rapprochement of the two groups. Dr. Schilder expressed the desire for a possible unity of the two church groups. That 1939 conference would certainly disprove any idea that Schilder loves separation or schism, but rather unity of all that belongs together.

But there is another remark that I am constrained to make. Notice Kuiper's statement: "Though we are not quoting him, we can say that his evaluation of the situation did not at all conflict with the slant his interviewers had on that situation. After listening to him we personally were more convinced than ever that the personality of the central figure in the schismatic group was a very important factor in the tragic separation that has come in the church with which our own church denomination has closer connection than any other ecclesiastical body". No! Kuiper does not want to literally quote the man they had a secret conference with, but he does want to let his readers know that all the conferees had the same slant on the situation. Kuiper, Beets and Bouma all agreed with LAWYER AND TAX-LAW TEACHER OF AMSTERDAM that the movement of Schilder, a.o. is SCHISMATIC, that is, SINFUL, because a schismatic is always the cause of the break in the churches. This is revealing. BEFORE Schilder was a so-called schismatic, when still in good standing in the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands, Rev. H. J. Kuiper condemned him even then. He warned the churches against even inviting Schilder to speak. He refused a conference with him and other brethren of our churches and his own. He turned the cold shoulder to Schilder, even before the latter was "put out" of the churches in the Netherlands. And now he wants his readers to believe that he evaluates the situation in Holland the same as all the conferees, including the one from Amsterdam. My evaluation is that Rev. Kuiper hates Dr. Schilder as he hates "the central figure" also in our group. I do not believe that Rev. Kuiper can give a proper evaluation of the situation in the Netherlands, with his biased and narrow-minded attitude. It is such a sinful attitude that causes schism in the churches. Rather than at least giving a man a hearing, Kuiper will condemn him, without a hearing. But he makes it appear as though he first consults authorities (?) and then evaluates the situation. Your evaluation Rev. Kuiper, is not worth the paper it is written on. Besides it is very UNchristian.

* * *

CHURCH ETIQUETTE:

We read the following item that should be of interest also in our churches which often suffer from a lack of

proper church manners. We quote: "This is the time of the year when much coughing is a disturbing factor in public worship. How strange that so few of us use our handkerchiefs to muffle our barks. We do not seem to realize that every time we emit a loud explosion those who sit near us lose the sound of the words spoken at that moment. They may be the key words in the sentence. In most cases the cough is not necessary; we cough because others do. The other day we told our physician, who happens to be our neighbor and stepped into our home, that we had been coughing for several weeks and nothing we had tried for relief would stop it. He said: "What do you raise?" We answered: "Nothing". He replied, "Then stop coughing. That membrane is irritated and every time you cough you make it worse." We stopped then and there, with an occasional lapse, and the inclination to cough was practically gone in a day. This may not be applicable to all who cough in church but we are persuaded that it does apply to many". Any unnecessary noise in church and during services should be avoided. Putting on our wraps during any part of the services or while singing the doxology should be taboo. If one is late for services such a one should not look around for a seat while the minister is reading Scripture. Wait quietly until the reading is finished. If you don't, you disturb others who are following the reading of the Word of God. If there is a disturbance such as the crying of a baby in church, don't look around to see whose baby it is and who or what is the cause of the disturbance. First you embarrass the mother of such a baby, secondly you are missing part of the service yourself and thirdly you disturb the minister who likes to have the people looking at him and not looking in all directions of the auditorium. And above all don't sleep during the service, for then you might as well stay home and go to bed, seeing you get nothing out of the services and you are a constant source of irritation to others.

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THE NONPROFESSIONAL MISSIONARY:

In an article written by R. C. Van Kampen of Chicago, Ill., on the "Non-professional" Missionary, we came across some ideas that are worthy to pass along to our own reading public, especially in view of the fact that the Mission Committee of our churches has also asked us to write on Mission work for the purpose of awakening interest in this cause among our people. "A non-professional missionary is a layman, a business man, a doctor, a farmer, housewife, or a mechanic, who uses every opportunity to witness" and testify to the truth. The Christian layman has a responsibility as great as that of any preacher. In fact a layman's testimony often carries a greater weight with his neighbors because they realize the layman speaks from con-

viction rather than by reason of position. Further states Mr. Van Kampen: "We send missionaries to the four corners of the world to preach the gospel and set up mission stations, and we send missionaries to the slums of our great cities to deal with the outcasts of society — men and women who have squandered their entire lives in sin. . . . but the average man, your neighbor and my neighbor, one who leads a normal life, who is an asset to society, who raises a fine family, minds his own business, and possibly has a responsible position, we shun like a leper when it comes to giving him the gospel." We quote further a few of the qualifications in order to be an effective non-professional missionary, "(1) Live a Christian testimony. In other words, others should see Christ in you and realize you have a peace and joy they do not understand or have. (2) Emphasize the positive in your Christian life. Others are interested in what you get out of being a Christian, not in what you do without. (3) Use every opportunity of witnessing when the opportunity presents itself. (4) Study God's Word prayerfully; know the reason for the hope that lies within you."

We need not quote more. Certainly these few pointers may be read and re-read and made part and parcel of us all, if we would be consumed by the zeal of God's house and witness of the truth of that house of God. "Ye are my witnesses" said the Lord before He departed to heaven's glory at the Father's right hand. And as the church must certainly desire to go out into the whole world and preach the gospel, so must each individual member of the church, be a true office-bearer in that Church, and carry the message of truth to whom-ever we come in contact with. Thus we are LIVING members of the church of Jesus Christ in the world.

* * * *

INTERESTING NEWS ITEMS:

"The American Bible Society is busily engaged since the war with Japan came to a conclusion, to print Christian literature and Bibles for Japan. One million copies of the New Testament will be printed in Japanese by this Bible Society, as a result of a recent request by Japan's Christian leaders for religious literature. There have already been sent 60,000 of these New Testaments." We wonder why they print and send but half of the Bible and not the whole Bible, including both Old and New Testament.

Another item of interest is that the Southern Baptists of our country, have purchased a site in Anchorage, Alaska, for the purpose of erecting a Baptist College there. The Rev. Bill Petty of Little Rock, Ark. who is a pioneer in the Baptist mission work in the great northern country of Alaska, has reported that there are about 15 denominations and sects represented

in Alaska, but, "that none of the churches are very well attended and most of the people seem neither church conscious nor God-conscious". Of course one need not go to Alaska to find people "neither church conscious nor God conscious". No people is that by nature. All the more reason however for bringing the gospel also there. "The field is the world", said our Lord. And we need not go all the way to China, either.

A statement issued by the provisional committee of the World Council of Churches, at the conclusion of a week's conference Monday, said: "the time is short, and unless man's whole outlook is changed, our civilization will perish." This committee represents 87 Protestant Church bodies. Comment: then civilization will perish, for we can assure all those Protestant Church bodies, that man's outlook will not change. Besides we are not interested in civilization, but in the Kingdom of God, and that Kingdom is not of this world. And unless a man is born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." Also, there is not much to boast about in the "civilization" that will perish. When it does perish, nothing is lost to the christian, except a world of sin and darkness. And THAT world MUST perish.

L. V.

IN MEMORIAM

De Hollandsche Mannen Vereeniging van de Eerste Protestantische Gereformeerde Kerk werd met droefheid getroffen door dat het den Heere behaagde op 11 Februari een harer trouwe leden,

MR. THOMAS RHODA

zoo plotseling door den dood uit hun midden weg te nemen. Maar wij treuren niet als de geenen die geen hoop hebben. Want zalig zijn de dooden die in den Heere sterven. Moge dit ook de troost zijn der weduwe en kinderen.

Mr. G. Koster, Pres.

Mr. B. Veldkamp, Secr.

After a short period of suffering, it pleased the Lord to take unto Himself our beloved Mother, Grandmother and Great-grandmother

MRS. JOHN DATEMA

on December 30, 1945.

Our hearts were saddened, but we rejoice that she now rejoices in the Lord Whom she confessed and desired to serve in perfection.

Mr. and Mrs. M. Vander Ploeg

Mr. and Mrs. O. Datema

Mr. and Mrs. P. Datema

7 grandchildren,

1 great-grandchild.