

THE STANDARD

Bearer

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MEDITATION

THE RESURRECTION

"And he said unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: He is risen; He is not here: behold the place where they laid Him." — MARK 16:6

It is true that Paul determined with himself not to know anything among the churches, but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. However, the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ would not be the topic of so much joy and true gladness were it not for the fact that the crucified Lord was risen the third day. Without the joy of Easter because of the fact of the resurrection, the Cross on that Friday would be an enigma, a terrible symbol of abject failure.

But now we rejoice, for our Lord arose the third day, according to the Scriptures!

For He is risen!

That shall be the glad shout of the Gospel!

And that shout shall be repeated from mouth to mouth, from clime to clime, from people to people, until the whole world shall have heard the glad story of Easter, and time ended. For when the whole world shall have heard that story, then shall be revealed the second coming of that Lord of glory.

For He is risen!

Oh, God's ways are higher than our ways.

When the Godhead, in the depths of eternity, before the world was, decided and counselled who should hear the first edition of that glorious Gospel, their choice fell on Mary the Magdalene out of whom the Lord cast seven devils.

How differently we would have done that.

I think that the majority would have counselled to gather the body of the Apostles of the Lord for the promulgation of the first edition of Easter. Were they not the representatives of the entire New Testament church?

But Mary, the Magdalene?

Oh yes, unto all eternity she shall be pointed out to you as the happy soul whose eyes first saw the foundation of the new heavens and the new earth: the Lord Jesus Christ in glory!

Last year we pointed you to that wonderful story in Holy Writ.

At this time we will hear the same Gospel: He is risen! But now as it was given to the women!

Again we are startled.

What? First to a woman who was known for the awful condition that seven devils dwelled in her?

And now we hear that the second edition of Easter will be given to women?

But, Lord, men are the leaders of women, are they not? And what about the government of the church? When shall, when will that body of office-bearers hear the story from Thy own mouth?

But the Lord does not answer us with respect to His deeds. No one has heard it. We must guess.

The Lord is risen!

As told to the women.

* * * *

And yet, it is true to the style of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus He acted always.

He went to Galilee, not so much to Judea.

He called sinners, not the righteous to repentance.

He chose His sojourn with the humble, the meek, the lowly, the publicans and sinners.

He stretched His holy hands to the little children, taking them as an example for the strong, big men to follow, or to bless them, to bless them

His ways are higher than our ways.

Fittingly so, for He came to reveal the Father.

And the Father? He chose the lowly, the meek, the little ones, the simple, the ignoble, those who had no power in order to put to shame all that arises before Him in arrogance, in deep consciousness of their vaunted power, ability, nobility, riches.

He chose that which was not, in order to shame the things that are. . . .

And therefore, I think, the Lord shewed Himself in the second instance to a group of simple women.

Simple women?

Yes, and I can prove it.

They were even simple in their sinning.

Do you realize that we have but a few words of this company of women?

I have in mind the attempt of James and John to assure for themselves the seats on the right and on the left of the Lord when He should arrive in His glory of the Kingdom. And they used a woman for this proud gesture, their mother, the wife of Zebedee.

Do you know any other utterance of these women?

Well, they had come all the way from Galilee, not to talk, to converse, to talk theology with Jesus and their kinsmen, the disciples, but to minister to the wants of the men-folks, especially the Lord. They had gone along on the way to Judea to minister especially to Jesus' wants. They would wash His clothes, they would prepare the food by the way-side, and they would gently remind Him when it was time to rest. Oh yes, and they would take their little ones to Jesus, so that He would bless them.

Yes, I think they were simple women, and with the word, simple, I mean lowly minded, not given to mannishness, quietness.

But how these women loved Him!

Note how they wept at the cross, how they prepared spices for His burial, how early they were at the sepulchre! Oh yes, they loved Jesus in their simplicity. And Jesus knew it. And God knew it. And God determined them and their loving hearts from all eternity. And at the same time He determined their reward. They would be chosen as the party of the second part to see the risen Lord.

For He is risen!

Hear, ye women that love and seek Jesus!

He is risen indeed! He is not here.

* * * *

For He is risen!

Yes, they sought the Lord, but it was the *crucified* Lord whom they sought.

Attend to what the angel tells them: I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified!

But that crucified Jesus is risen from the dead!

In these words I have penned down the contents of the everlasting Gospel.

He was crucified.

That means that He *was dead*. Later, much later, He said as much to John: I am He that liveth, and *was dead*!

Yes, He arose from the dead. And that has wonderful significance.

It means for Jesus that He had the victory.

First, over all His enemies. Oh, how they had harassed Him. The whole world was arrayed against Him. Jew, Roman, and Greek reared their heads against Him, and it was the Jew first. Shades of Caiaphas and Judas.

Second, the devil with his devils are conquered. The whole of this foul world of devils were against Him. John on Patmos has given us the whole astounding story in the Revelation of Jesus Christ. There was a great red dragon standing before the woman for four thousand years to devour the little manchild as soon as it should be born. But when it was born, God snatched it away from his jaws. Jesus crushed the head of the devil on the accursed tree.

Third, the curse of the law is conquered. That curse clung to Him. It clung to Him so thoroughly and so tenaciously that the Holy Ghost, looking upon Him in the state of His humiliation, called Him a curse. Imagine it if you can: One of Jesus' names is the Curse! But Jesus suffered to be the curse, and He suffered so much and so intensely that all that curse is gone, annihilated. And in its place came blessing. His name is now Blessing of God.

Fourth, He overcame the grave, death and hell. He entered into them, and swallowed them unto victory. We have the attestation of that tremendous truth on every page of Holy Scripture, either in prophecy or as historical fact.

And note that this is the Gospel.

We are world, under the dominion of devils, under the rightful curse of God, because of our sin, and therefore on the way to the grave, death and hell.

But Jesus conquered them all, annihilated them all, never to return.

We are taken out of the world by regeneration and conversion; we are made enemies of the devil because God put enmity between us and him; we are saved from the curse of the law, and ever since such liberation the law is our great friend, our rule and norm of a glorious life of love; and we see through the grave a new way to heaven, we arose from death, and we do not have to go to hell anymore. Instead, we may go to heaven!

Is that not a glorious Gospel?

For He is risen!

He is not here!

* * * *

For He is risen!

What does that mean?

It means that Jesus is entirely changed now. He is not the same Jesus anymore.

He is completely changed. He is now heavenly, spiritual, glorious, eternal. First He was, even as we are, earthly, flesh and blood, miserable, temporal, and mortal.

Jesus has received a life that is different from any life ever before manifested. He is different from the glorious Adam. His resurrection is different from the resurrection of Lazarus and others.

He is the very Personification of Eternal Life.

And that means that He is ever turning to the Father, approximating that Father unto all eternity.

For He is risen!

That glorious chant has even deeper significance: it means that the Triune God approved of the work He did. It means that God accepted the price He paid for His own. It means that God was even now taking this Holy Child to His bosom. It means that He would receive a Name that is above all that is named in this world and in the world to come.

For He is risen!

It is the chant that shall be repeated from age to age, until time is no more. And then it shall be translated in perfect language, song and music, and the same chant shall make heaven musical forever!

Oh yes, Jesus is risen, is risen indeed!

And the women saw Him!

Hallelujah!

G.V.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On Tuesday, April 26, 1960, our beloved parents,

MR. and MRS. HENRY H. KUIPER

hope to commemorate their fiftieth wedding anniversary. We are thankful to our covenant God for having spared them for each other and for us these many years. Our prayer is that they may continue to experience the Lord's richest blessings.

Their grateful children:

Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Kuiper
Mr. and Mrs. Herman Kuiper
Miss Elsie Kuiper
Mr. and Mrs. Albert Brunink
Mr. and Mrs. Peter Petroelje
Mr. and Mrs. Henry Kuiper, Jr.
Mr. and Mrs. William Plowman
Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Kuiper
35 grandchildren
2 great-grandchildren

Grand Rapids, Michigan

IN MEMORIAM

The Martha Ladies' Aid Society of the Hull Protestant Reformed Church wishes to express its sincere sympathy to one of its members, Mrs. Ben Bleyenbergh, in the loss of her sister,

MRS. GERTIE RENS.

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose. Rom. 8:28.

Ray Brunsting, Vice President
Mrs. J. Hoksbergen, Vice Secretary

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EDITORIALS

Christian Education In Our Country

Almost entirely Christian education in our country is conducted by the Sunday school.

And what is worse, it is chiefly given under the influence of modernism. Of this we quoted a few illustrations from *Christianity Today*.

In this article I wish to quote some more illustrations.

Here are some of the principles that are supposed to be a guide for the religious education of the children and youth in the Sunday school. They were adopted by the International Council of Religious Education in 1932 and have never been amended or changed:

"1. Christian Religious Education seeks to foster in growing persons a consciousness of God as a reality in human experience, and a sense of personal relationship to him."

This first principle of religious education is characterized by its vagueness and generality. Who is this God of whom it speaks? Is it the God of the Scriptures Who has revealed Himself in Christ Jesus our Lord or is it perhaps some other god? How does Christian education seek to foster a consciousness of God "as a reality in human experience"? By thorough instruction in the Bible as the Word of God? And how will the teacher awaken a sense of personal relationship to that God? Is it awakening in the pupil a deep sense of sin and guilt so that the pupil may flee to the cross of Jesus for redemption and forgiveness and deliverance from sin and death and receive everlasting life?

Of all this the first principle does not speak at all. It seeks refuge in vague generalities.

"2. Christian Religious Education seeks to develop in growing persons such an understanding and appreciation of the personality, life, and teaching of Jesus as will lead to experience of Him as Savior and Lord, loyalty to Him and to His cause, and manifest itself in daily life and conduct."

Such is the second principle. One would almost be inclined to approve of this and subscribe to it. Does it not speak of Jesus as "Savior and Lord"? But be not deceived! The question must be asked and answered: how and in what way is Jesus our Savior and Lord? To that question true Christian Religious Education uniformly answers: Through His death, resurrection, and exaltation at the right hand of God and His reception of the Holy Spirit. But how does this second principle answer this question? By referring to "the personality, life, and teaching of Jesus." There is no room for the cross and for the atoning death of this "savior and Lord." Hence, the Jesus that is mentioned in this second principle is no Savior at all.

"3. Christian Religious Education seeks to foster in growing persons a progressive and continuous development of Christlike character."

This is the third principle.

This is, as you will recognize, thoroughly modernistic language. It is the moderns that like to speak of Christlike character, whatever this may mean. But a "Christlike character" (let us assume for a moment that the term can even be used) is impossible without the cross-resurrection-exaltation of Christ and the sovereign operation of the Spirit of Christ in our hearts and that, too, through the Word of God and the preaching of the Word. Then the principle of regeneration is wrought in our hearts by sovereign grace. Then we become in principle Christlike. And as to fostering a progressive and continuous development of such a "Christlike character," if it means anything at all, it must mean that "Christian Religious Education" brings the Word of God to the pupils so that they are admonished to put off the old man and to put on the new and thus to walk in newness of life. This is the only conceivable "development of Christlike character."

But, of course, this is not the meaning of the authors of these "principles." What they mean is that the pupils must be taught to copy the "personality, life, and teaching of Jesus" in their own life and walk in the world. And this certainly is not Scriptural.

4. "Christian Religious Education seeks to develop in growing persons the ability and disposition to participate in and contribute constructively to the building of a social order throughout the world, embodying the idea of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man."

This is the fourth principle.

The idea is, of course, the universal Fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of man.

This is quite in harmony with all the foregoing principles. If Christian religion is nothing but the consciousness of some God or god as a reality in human experience and a sense of personal relationship to him; if we must know Christ only in His personality, life, and teaching and not as the One who bore all our sins away on the accursed tree; if that religion consists in the development of a Christlike character; if the terrible reality of sin is denied (and sin is not even mentioned in any of the principles quoted here) — then, indeed, one may speak of a universal fatherhood of such a god, and of the universal brotherhood of such men, regardless of the question whether they believe in such a god or whether they are atheists, regardless of the question whether they believe or not in such a Christ, and regardless whether they are righteous or wicked. But this is not in harmony with the Word of God. Do the authors of these principles mean that the teachers in the Sunday school must teach their pupils to pray the Lord's Prayer and in the sense of the universal Fatherhood of God address Him as "Our Father

who art in heaven"? Let them try it. They will soon discover that all men cannot and will not pray even the first petition nor any of the others.

There is no universal fatherhood of God nor a universal brotherhood of Man.

God is the Father of His children in Christ Jesus our Lord. And the sons of God are brethren.

We have still more to say about these principles. But this must wait till our next issue, D.V.

H.H.

About Being Protestant Reformed

The last time we briefly referred to and explained some of the passages of Scripture that speak of the covenant of God with His people as a relation of friendship and intimate fellowship. In fact, the chief and highest purpose of all the works of God outside of Himself is the realization of this bond of friendship. That is why, in the book of Revelation, chapter 21 vs. 3, we read: "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." This means that God's covenant shall have been realized in the highest sense of the word. In fact, this final realization of the covenant shall be the highest possible bliss. In the new Jerusalem the people of God shall see His face and walk in the light of the glory of God.

For the revelation of the covenant life of God, He in His eternal counsel determined to form a people that was like unto Himself in a creaturely way. For the bond of friendship and fellowship, as we said before, requires a basis of likeness. Hence, in His eternal counsel God conceived of a people that would be like unto the image of His Son. That creature is, first of all and preeminently, Christ. For thus we read in Col. 1:15ff.: "Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature. For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead: that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased God the Father that in him should all the fulness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of the cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things on earth, or things in heaven."

This is a most beautiful and profound passage of Scripture, which I will not interpret in detail at present.

My purpose is rather to show that, in the counsel of God, the Son of God, in human nature, and that, too, as the resurrected Lord, is absolutely first. Christ is not only the

firstborn of every creature, but He is also the first begotten of the dead.

You understand, of course, that the text in Col. 1:15-20 presents to us the supra-lapsarian viewpoint of the counsel of God.

Infra-lapsarianism presents the historical viewpoint. In history, Adam is first, then the fall into sin, then Christ, His incarnation, death and resurrection, and the redemption of the people of God. But according to supra, Christ is first and all other things not only creation but also the fall, are for and by Christ. This is taught us by the text in Col. 1.

With Christ, therefore, the Son of God in human nature, Who is the most perfect likeness of God, the covenant of friendship is first of all established.

But this is not all.

Christ does not stand alone. He is not only the firstborn of every creature and the first begotten of the dead, but He is also the firstborn among many brethren. For thus we read in Rom. 8:29, 30: "For whom he did foreknow, them he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." These many brethren of whom Christ is the firstborn are, of course, the elect. They are given to Christ. They are chosen in Him. And the purpose is that the covenant of friendship might be established with and reflected in countless millions of men and the glory of God's own covenant-life might be revealed in the highest possible manner.

Still more.

Unto Christ and the elect in Him are also given all things in heaven and on earth. For He is the firstborn of every creature. In the eternal counsel of God all things in the whole universe are conceived as being united in Him even as they are created by Him and for Him. The whole creation is a house of God in Christ and through His Church of which He is the Head, the fulness of him that filleth all in all. Eph. 1:23. The covenant of God embraces every creature. All things must serve the people of God in Christ that they serve their God.

Of this all-embracing idea of the covenant the rainbow is the sign and symbol.

All this is not yet historically realized. Nevertheless, all things in time, all that takes place in time: creation, the fall, and all that takes place in the history of the world, with Christ and His cross and resurrection in the midst, must be and are conducive to the final realization of God's all-embracing covenant of friendship.

H.H.

AS TO BOOKS

Christian Perspectives, by Dr. Van Riessen, Prof. Farris, and Dr. Runner. Published by Pella Publishing Inc., Pella, Iowa.

This book contains a series of lectures delivered before a Study Conference at Unionville, Ontario. The first group of lectures deals with the relation of the Bible to science; the second with the relation of the Bible to history; the third with the relation of the Bible to learning.

It is somewhat difficult for me to review this book properly. The reasons are: 1. That it is written by three different authors, and although one may discern a certain line running through the lectures that are published here, yet I would have to criticize (in the good sense of the word) every part of the book separately. And although the contents of the book are worthy of such more elaborate discussion, yet this is not possible in a brief review. 2. A second reason is that I cannot recommend the book to the general public for, both as to contents and form, it is beyond many of them. The lectures on "The Relation of the Bible to History" may be considered an exception.

Very obvious it is that Dr. Runner is a faithful student and follower of Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven.

H.H.

The Witness of the Spirit, by Bernard Ramm. Published by Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich. Price \$3.00.

This is a very good book on an important and, at the same time, very difficult subject. The book treats of the Testimony of the Holy Spirit. It treats this subject in five chapters: Historical Roots, Fundamental Considerations, The Testimonium and the Testimony of Scripture, The Theological Implications, the Testimonium, and the Testimonium and Theologies. It emphasizes that there is no testimony of the Spirit apart from Scripture. In this respect he agrees with Calvin to whom he refers rather frequently, and he condemns Roman Catholicism. Writes he: "Yet, when we turn to what Catholicism terms the holy, inspired Scripture we are told that the self-witness of the Bible to its own inspiration is so weak and imperfect, so capable of equivocation, that we cannot be certain of its inspiration until we are so informed by the Roman Catholic Church The Scriptures are, 'dead documents,' 'dead records of primitive documents,' 'Life grown stiff and numb' the Bible is a 'dumb and difficult book.' This attitude towards the Bible is so much a part of the Catholic apologetics that it could be documented endlessly." This view of Scripture the author radically condemns.

I could quote more from Ramm's book, but the reader

better read the book itself. I am not sure whether I can agree with the author's presentation of the three Persons of the Holy Trinity on p. 31. And I do not agree with the author's implied interpretation of the term "world" in John 3:16 and in I John 2:2, p. 81.

Heartily recommended.

H.H.

God Hath Spoken, by T. Roland Philips. Published by Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich. Price \$3.00.

This book furnishes easy reading. It contains a series of sermons preached by the author in The Arlington Presbyterian Church. The messages are very brief and easily readable. Sometimes, it seems to me, the author is guilty of spiritualization as, for instance, in the case of the leprosy of Naaman the Syrian.

I do not like what the author writes on p. 64: "Now God loves all men. 'God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' There is no man anywhere, at any time, whom God does not love, and for whom he has not made a wonderful provision."

This is neither Scriptural nor Presbyterian.

I recommend this book to the discerning and critical reader.

H.H.

"The Holy Scriptures, however, teach a wholly different doctrine, which, as we understand it, is, that no work acceptable and pleasing to God can be undertaken, and performed by anyone, without regeneration and the special grace of the Holy Spirit; neither can there be any more or less good in the counsels and actions of any man, than God in His own free grace chooses to produce in them; nor can the will of any creature be inclined in any other direction than which seems good to the eternal and gracious counsel of God. And yet all the actions of the created will, both good and bad, are performed freely."

Ursinus, *Commentary On Heid. Catechism*, Ques. 8

IN MEMORIAM

The Reformed Witness Hour Radio Choir wishes to express its sincere sympathy to one of its members, Mr. George Vink, in the death of his father,

MR. CORNELIUS VINK

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

OUR DOCTRINE

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

PART TWO

CHAPTER TWELVE

The Angels and the Voice

Revelation 14:6-13

It is not because they themselves are less faithful; not as if the stronger would have any power of their own. No, God has prepared them, and even prepared their works, also their special works. But what now shall become of these? Shall they all be lost? Shall in the day of judgment all these works dwindle away in the general bliss of God's people? Of course not; their works shall follow them. And these works shall be rewarded. All shall enter into bliss: for Christ died for them, and they all die in the Lord. But all shall not attain to the same state of glory. There shall be distinction and difference. And those whom God prepared to do more work than others and to suffer more than others may thank the Lord God for this great privilege. For their works shall follow them also in the new creation.

What a difference! By the light shed from heaven upon the scene of Antichrist the scene has changed completely. First the beast seemed to be supreme, and Babylon permanently established forever. Now the Lamb appears as the King over Zion. First the kingdom of the Holy One seemed to be a lost cause; now the kingdom of the beast is doomed to destruction. First the people of God seemed to be hopelessly lost; now the worshippers of the beast are sent to everlasting torment. First the worshippers of the beast seemed to be in control of all things and participated in the blessings of the kingdom; now the followers of the Lamb inherit everlasting bliss, and serve God and the Lamb day and night forevermore. Surely, the saints may indeed be patient. For all things are theirs, because they are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

The Harvest and the Vintage

Revelation 14:14-20

14. And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.

15. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.

16. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.

17. And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.

18. And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe.

19. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.

20. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.

When we read these words, we are, of course, immediately reminded of the fact that this constitutes the close of the vision that was begun to be pictured in the thirteenth chapter. Taking chapters 13 and 14 together, we found that they could not be separated; but they form one vision, a vision of the kingdom of Antichrist in its highest stage of development, and that both from the worldly point of view and from the point of view of heaven, God and His Anointed.

The first vision, that of the beast with his seven heads and ten horns, pictured to us the kingdom of Antichrist from the political point of view and informed us that the kingdom should be universal, established by the voluntary consent of all nations and peoples and tribes of the earth. The central power of this kingdom has sway over all peoples, and, at the same time, over all things, so that all are dependent upon the beast. And, in the second place, it pictured to us that final kingdom as being anti-Christ, anti-God, anti-kingdom, and anti-saints. All worship the beast. All admire this tremendous kingdom. But for the people of God there is no standing-room on the earth.

This last feature of the kingdom of Antichrist was pictured to us especially in the vision of the second beast, with his two horns like a lamb and speech like the dragon. He, so we found, was a picture of the false prophet, of the influence of false philosophy and false religion. And we found that this beast succeeded in uniting the whole world under his creed. They all took stock in the words of this beast. He made them make an image. He gave them a sign. And only the worshippers of the beast and his image, that had the sign, could participate in the blessings of the kingdom of Antichrist, the rest not being able to buy or sell.

The third vision was that of the Lamb on Mount Zion, which, so we found, began to shed an entirely new light upon the scene of worldly power and iniquity and oppression and idolatry. If it seemed as if the kingdom of Antichrist was actually supreme and everlasting, this vision tells us a different story. It tells us that God Almighty never anointed the beast or the dragon to rule, but that He has His own King over Zion and that this King surely shall have control

over all things. He tells us for that very reason that God in the heavens sits and laughs about all the efforts of the beast and Satan, and that God's people are perfectly safe. The one hundred forty-four thousand are all there, and not one is lacking.

The fourth vision was that of angels flying in mid-heaven, each delivering his message for the kingdom of Antichrist, and of a voice speaking of joy to those that die in the Lord. The first angel announced, to the comfort of God's people, that God did not renounce His claim, but demanded as ever that every creature should bow before Him and worship Him as the God of heaven and earth. The second and third angels follow up this claim of the Almighty by announcing destruction upon the kingdom that rose against His sovereignty and upon the individual worshippers of the beast and his image. And, in conclusion, the voice spoke of joy and glory and rest for those that were subjected to tribulation and persecution in this dispensation because they refused to worship the beast.

Now we are at the close of the vision. The words of the passage quoted above take us to the end of time. Just as evidently the opening of the sixth seal in chapter six took us to the close of all human history, so also does the passage we are about to discuss, though from a slightly different point of view and with fuller development of detail. Nevertheless, also what is recorded in these words will again be spoken of in future chapters. And the fall of Babylon, the great harlot, and the treading of the nations in the winepress of the wrath of God will all be developed and pictured to us in future chapters with greater vividness and in greater detail. And therefore, in our present chapter we must discuss in a general way the harvest and the vintage, or the end of the world.

It does not need a lengthy discussion to convince us that the harvester in this case, or at least he who supervises the reaping of the earth, is none other than Jesus Christ our Lord. We read: "And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle." We are acquainted with the expression "one like unto the Son of man." We are so well acquainted with this expression that we can never fail to recognize Him that bears this name. It is always used of Christ. It was the name with which Christ loved to call Himself. It denotes His all-overshadowing glory as the human servant of God. When John sees the vision of the seven golden candlesticks, he tells us that he also saw "in the midst of the candlesticks one like unto a Son of man." And we know immediately who He is. In Daniel 7:13 we read of the same person: "I saw in the night visions, and behold there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a Son of man; and he came even unto the Ancient of days." And therefore, there is no possibility of mistaking the identity of this person that holds the sharp sickle. He is the Son of man, the Christ, the Servant of Jehovah, the Lamb who was slain, the King of Zion anointed by the Almighty to have dominion over all.

Besides, also His sitting on the white cloud would lead us to the same conclusion. To come with the clouds has already become a standing expression, and it denotes an honor that is bestowed only upon Christ Jesus. Before the high priest, Jesus already had witnessed: "Henceforth ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of God, and coming on the clouds of heaven." And also in the first part of this book of Revelation the warning note was heard: "Behold, he cometh with the clouds, and every eye shall see him." Rev. 1:7. And, therefore, both these expressions "the Son of man" and "sitting on a white cloud" establish it beyond the shadow of doubt that here we have again a vision of Christ.

But how, in what capacity does He appear? In the first place, it is plain that He reveals Himself here as King. He is the Lamb on mount Zion and has been anointed by God to be king over all and that forever. He must rule. He has gained His kingdom by obedience even unto the death of the cross and now has received a name which is above every name. As such He now appears. His appearance spells evil and destruction to the beast and his dominion. For that beast has attempted to gain the kingdom over all. All dominion over which the beast apparently holds power belongs to this Son of man on the cloud. And, therefore, that He appears here, while antichrist rages, certainly can only mean destruction for the usurper. But, at the same time, the appearance of the Son of man on the white cloud also means deliverance for His people that have been oppressed and persecuted by the anti-christian power. He comes as King. He comes to claim His own. He comes to destroy His enemies. And He comes to save His people. That this is true is also plain from the fact that he sits on the white cloud. To come with the clouds always denotes that this Son of man is coming for judgment. We have become accustomed to the expression, and as soon as we hear or read it, we are thinking, and rightly so, of Christ coming as judge. The purity of the white cloud indicates that He will judge in righteousness and destroy the unrighteous. And the same idea of judgment is indicated by the sickle. He has come to cut down, for the sickle is sharp and is whetted to do the work. Hence, the Lord appears in this connection as the King-Judge.

But He is not alone.

In fact we receive the impression that He merely supervises and the work of reaping proper is left to the angels, His servants. That is also the impression we receive from other parts of Scripture. In Matthew 13:39 Christ explains, at the close of the parable of the tares among the wheat: "The reapers are the angels." And in Matthew 24:31 we read: "And he shall send forth his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." So also the text here. It speaks of the angels as the servants of the Son of man. At least one of them that comes out of the temple and, therefore, out of the immediate presence of the Holy One, one of

the angels that stand before God, acts as reaper in this scene. Two other angels act as messengers, and both proclaim that the time is ripe and that it is the exact hour for the harvest of the earth to be gathered in. One of them carries the command directly from God, and announces to the Son of man that it is time to reap, and that the hour is come for harvesting. This is not without significance. In the first place, we are given to understand that this is an important hour. The harvest must be gathered but not before it is fully ripe. It is a very significant hour indeed. All must be finished. And the Savior tells us that only God knows of this hour. Even He, as the Christ, does not know it. For thus He tells us: "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, not even the angels in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only." And this He says in answer to the question of His disciples concerning the end of the world. Matt. 24:36. It is entirely in harmony with this idea, that in the vision the angel comes out of the temple of God and announces that the hour has now come, and that the reaping of the harvest may begin. The second angel brings a similar message to the angel that must gather the vines, the clusters of the vine of the earth. He comes out from the altar and has power over fire. Although, therefore, he brings a similar message as that of the first angel, his message must be considered from a different viewpoint. With the altar from which the angel proceeds we have become acquainted before. In the sixth chapter we read of it and there we heard how the cry for vengeance proceeded from under it, pressed from the souls of those that had been slain for the Word of God. And then they received the answer that they would have to wait a little while till also their brethren would have been slain for the same cause. Hence, that the angel proceeds from the altar with the message to reap tells us, that now all God's people have been oppressed and have suffered from antichrist and that the time of vengeance has come. Also in the eighth chapter we read of this same altar, upon which the angels minister unto the prayers of the saints which are followed by judgments on the earth. The same idea, therefore, is again expressed here. The time of judgment, the time that the prayers of all the saints shall be heard, has now come. Hence, it is also said that this angel has power over fire, a symbol of the same truth, namely, that the reaping that is to be done is judgment and vengeance. We arrive, therefore, at this conclusion, first, that the harvest is symbolic of judgment and vengeance and, secondly, that the reapers or harvesters are Christ and His servants, His angels.

Thus far all is rather simple and clear.

But a more difficult question we approach when we attempt to explain the harvest as such.

In order to understand the meaning of this harvest and vintage, it is well that we bear in mind that here there is no mention of the judgment proper, that is, of the public judgment before the throne of God, by which everyone will be rewarded according to his works. This impression might

easily be received from the vision of the Son of man on the great white cloud. But this is not the case. We must not confuse things. There is a difference between the final judgment and the end of this dispensation. And it is only of the latter that this passage speaks. The world is to come to an end. History will reach a certain climax. The question is: how shall history reach its termination? How must we picture to ourselves the end of all history? You understand, of course, that it certainly is not proper to picture to ourselves this end of the world and of all history by a sudden appearance of Christ at any arbitrary moment to destroy His enemies and to deliver His Church. That may be easy to imagine but that is not in harmony with Scripture. What we must attempt to answer is the question: how shall the general course of history be thus that it leads and must lead to a climax and end? This question is, in a general way, answered in the words of our text. How shall these things be? How must I conceive of the general course of the history in this world that it must necessarily lead to the final catastrophe and to the coming of Christ? That this is, indeed, the idea of the text is plain from the figure of the harvest. In the parable of the tares among the wheat the Lord explains "the harvest is the end of the world." But it stands to reason that the harvest must be ripe before that end can come. The end cannot come at any arbitrary moment. And hence the question must be answered: what is the course of the history of the world so as to lead necessarily to the end?

Besides, we must not entertain the false notion that "the day of the Lord" and the end of the world shall come in one moment, or even in one day. Such is often the conception we have of that "day of the Lord." History shall continue very regularly and normally and there will be nothing special or extraordinary in that history of the world until of a sudden Christ comes and all will be ended, all in one moment, in the twinkling of an eye as it were. But this is, evidently, not the case. The harvest, the end of the world implies big things and great events. Some time may very well elapse before the harvest is finished. And the question is: in that period of the harvest of the world what shall be the order of events? How must we conceive of the end of the world? Of course, this would be an idle and vain question if Scripture did not reveal anything about this. But now it is different. The Bible certainly does reveal to us something about the order of events in this great day of the Lord. And also the passage we are now discussing gives us at least a general indication of the order of the events that then shall take place.

H.H.

"He that augmenteth his substance by interest and increase, gathereth it for him that hath pity on the poor."

Proverbs 28:8

A CLOUD OF WITNESSES

The Return to Egypt

And their father Israel said unto them, If it must be so now, do this; . . .

Take also your brother, and arise, go again unto the man:

And God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother, and Benjamin. If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved. — GENESIS 43:11, 13, 14

In moody silence the ten sons of Jacob returned to their homes in Canaan. Their hearts were heavy and hurting within them. They had hesitated to make a trip to Egypt, and the outcome had proved even worse than they had anticipated. No sooner had they entered Egypt than they had been accosted by the ruler of the land and accused of being spies. The man had spoken to them very harshly and imprisoned them all in the king's dungeon. After three days they had been released, except Simeon who was bound before their eyes and kept in custody. They were sent away and told not to return again without Benjamin their youngest brother; it was a condition with which they could hardly expect their father would allow them to comply. With heavy hearts they made their journey in silence. Finally when they were nearly home, one of them opened a sack of grain and found in the mouth of it the money which the Egyptians were supposed to have taken as the price for the grain. To them it seemed to forebode nothing more than another occasion for trouble.

This all the brothers could not understand. There seemed to have settled over their lives a cloud of mystery which their minds were not able to penetrate. Why, when everyone else was received so congenially in Egypt, were they singled out for such harsh treatment? Why, when there was not a shred of real evidence against them, were they repeatedly accused of being spies? Why had the bungling Egyptians failed to keep the money which they had given them, leaving room for them to be accused of stealing? From a human point of view there was no reason for it all. Again and again they searched their hearts, and always they ended up with only one possible explanation, the hand of the Lord was upon them. They had hated their younger brother Joseph because he was more righteous than they, and had sold him for a slave to the Ishmaelites. Thereby they had sinned against their father, the covenant of God, and God Himself. For many years they had kept it hidden, not telling their father, hardly mentioning it among themselves, and even trying to ignore it in their own minds. But now the time of recompense had come. With smarting conscience they recognized this was the hand of the Lord.

Jacob could see it on the faces of his sons the moment

that they alighted from their asses. The eagerness and joviality which characterizes the conclusion of a successful journey was not there. That they had obtained the food for which they went was evident, for the asses were heavily laden. But scanning the group Jacob saw one of them was missing, Simeon. With darkened faces and faltering lips the nine approached him and spoke. "The man, who is the lord of the land, spake roughly to us, and took us for spies of the country. And we said unto him, We are true men; we are no spies: we be twelve brethren, sons of our father; one is not, and the youngest is this day with our father in the land of Canaan. And the man, the lord of the country, said unto us, Hereby shall I know that ye are true men; leave one of your brethren here with me, and take food for the famine of your households, and be gone: and bring your youngest brother unto me: then shall I know that ye are no spies, but that ye are true men: so will I deliver you your brother, and ye shall traffick in the land." Each word cut deeply into the soul of the aged man. There seemed to be no end to sorrow brought upon him by his children. First there had been the shame that they had brought upon him by their wicked and riotous living. Then there had been their jealousy and hatred that they had maintained toward their younger brother, Joseph, because he had not taken part in their evil but had lived more righteously than they. Then there had been the disappearance of Joseph, claimed to be an accident, but about which they still maintained a guilty silence. Now they returned from Egypt without Simeon, and they wanted to take Benjamin away also. Crushed by the troubles of his divided house, the fruits of his own bigamous life, Jacob cried out in rebellion, "Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me."

What were the men to say in reply to their father? His accusation was even more true than he himself realized. True, they had not been the direct cause of Simeon's imprisonment, and it was not at all said that Benjamin would not return again from Egypt. But they had been the cause of Joseph's departure. His cries for mercy still rung in their ears, but they had not heeded them. In their carnal hatred they had sold him for silver. Was not Simeon's imprisonment a punishment of God upon them for their sin? And could they be sure that God would not see well to take also Benjamin away? Guilt seared their hearts as they looked with downcast faces to the ground. It was Reuben who broke the confused silence by blurting forth, "Slay my two sons, if I bring him not to thee: deliver him into my hand, and I will bring him to thee again." But Jacob would have none of such folly. Was he a man whose pains could be satiated with blood? Revenge is a poor comforter, especially for a child of God. To slay his own grandchildren would only bereave him the more. With firm resolve he answered back, "My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he is left alone: if mischief befall him by the way in the

which ye go, then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave." Surely faith and the comforts of grace had removed themselves far from the family of Jacob. For years they had seemed to be able to sin with impunity, not experiencing any evil effects. But at last the time had come when God would purge them from their sins. It was that purging fire of God that was touching the quick of their hearts.

When the men turned to unload their beasts of burden, yet another reminder of their dire state came to their attention. Not just one man's money was in his sack, but each one found his own in turn. Their guilty consciences would not allow them to see it as a gesture of favor. It appeared to be some evil plot which was being formed to torment and to torture them.

A deathly quiet fell over the household of Jacob. Each man went about his own particular duties with hardly a word. There was nothing to say. Each man suffered his own guilty thoughts alone. Meticulously they measured out the grain from Egypt, observing the strictest rationing. No one wanted more than was his due for all dreaded alike the day when it would be gone. Searching glances were thrown toward the sky, longing for the return of rain; but the skies remained like brass, reflecting only the righteousness of God, convicting each man of his sin. Finally the day came when their most frugal efforts proved unsuccessful; the grain from Egypt was gone. Anxiously they compassed the land searching for some other form of food. A few nuts, a little honey, some resin and spices, luxuries in themselves, but hardly sufficient to maintain life. Empty stomachs joined with their aching hearts to remind them of their guilt. Still they dared not make the feared suggestion. Each suffered by himself in silence.

Finally it was Jacob who could endure the gaunt looks of pain no longer. "Go again," he remonstrated. "Buy us a little food." It was a foolish demand, for he meant that they should go without Benjamin. Jacob realized himself that it was impossible, but in desperation he suggested it anyway. This time it was Judah who stepped to the fore to speak for the brothers. "The man did solemnly protest unto us, saying, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you. If thou wilt send our brother with us, we will go down and buy thee food: but if thou wilt not send him, we will not go down: for the man said unto us, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you." It was sad, the perplexity into which the old man was thrown. On the one hand was the cruel power of the famine. On the other hand was the fearful uncertainty that seemed to overshadow the lives of his children, the strange vicissitudes of a ruler in Egypt, the guilty silence of his own sons that made it so difficult for him to trust them. Torn between the two, Jacob knew not which way to turn. And what made it even more sad, he neglected the one great comfort which he had, the promises of his God. Had not God assured him,

"I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins; and the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land." Surely God would keep this promise. Jacob's seed had to continue. But in his perplexity, Jacob's faith grew dim; it ceased to give him light. Driven by his grief, Jacob's flesh lashed back in rebellion, "Wherefore dealt ye so ill with me, as to tell the man whether ye had yet a brother?" The answer was so very typical of a person who has lost his mooring in faith, without comfort and without reason. His sons were quite right when they told him, "The man asked us straitly of our state, and of our kindred, saying, Is your father yet alive? have ye another brother? and we told him according to the tenor of these words: could we certainly know that he would say, Bring your brother down?"

Then more kindly and sensibly Judah began to speak. "Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go; that we may live, and not die, both we, and thou, and also our little ones. I will be surety for him; of my hand shalt thou require him; if I bring him not unto thee, and set him before thee, then let me bear the blame for ever; for except we had lingered, surely now we had returned this second time." Was there something in Judah's tone of voice that spoke of sincerity? Had Judah, perhaps, showed himself more trustworthy than the rest since his sad experience with Tamar? Had he, perhaps, in former years always been more kindly disposed toward Joseph than the others? Something there was about this speech of Judah's that led Jacob to reconsider his rash affirmation and relent. Placing his trust in Judah's promise he answered, "If it must be so now, do this; take of the best fruits in the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a present, a little balm, and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts, and almonds: and take double money in your hand; and the money that was brought again in the mouth of your sacks, carry it again in your hand; peradventure it was an oversight: take also your brother, and arise, go again unto the man." Broken of his rebellion Jacob began once again to give his sons wise leadership and directions. But more valuable than all was the prayer with which he concluded. "And God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother, and Benjamin. If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved." Once again Jacob was brought to a position of faith. There was only one who could control the hearts and ways of men. To Him Jacob had to commit his way. With a prayer of faith he gave his children into the hand of the Lord.

Thus it was that once again ten of the sons of Jacob came into the land of Egypt, this time with Benjamin among them, so that in the presence of Joseph they might be led into a full and complete repentance for their sins.

B.W.

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of I Corinthians 15

IV.

(I Corinthians 15:20-28)

b.

We shall now continue our discussion which we began in our essay in the former issue of *The Standard Bearer* on the verses 20-28 of the Chapter under consideration.

We noticed in the former essay on this passage particularly that it is the clear and indisputable teaching of Scripture that Christ is the First-born of all creatures. This, we indicated, is the more basic truth when compared with the Scriptural teaching that Christ is also the "first-fruits." It was for that reason that we first signalled the implicit truth of Scripture, as also taught here in this passage, that Christ is the "First-born" Son of God!

We will now call attention to the truth of the Word of God that Christ is the "first-fruits of them that have slept."

It may be beneficial at this point of the discussion to point out what, to our mind, is the relationship and distinction between the truth that Christ is the First-born and that He is the First-fruits. It appears to us most likely, the distinction between these two truths should be stated as follows:

1. When Scripture speaks of Christ being the "First-born" emphasis is laid upon the fact that Christ is the preeminent Son amongst all the sons of God, in His relationship and the relationship of all the adopted sons to God. In the truth that he is the First-born we see that it was the Father's good-pleasure that all the fulness should dwell in Him. As the First-born Son, in our human nature, He is exalted above every name that is named, both in this age and in the ages to come. He is the Lord of lords and the King of kings.

2. However, when Scripture speaks of Christ as the "First-fruits" the same preeminence of the Son of God in the flesh is taught from a slightly different viewpoint. He is still the Son in Whom all the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily; He is still the One whom all the angels of God are to worship. However, now the Scriptures speak of this same Son of God, Immanuel, God-with-us, as He stands in relationship to the full harvest, which shall become a reality in His *Parousia*, when He shall have come to dwell with us forever more. Then shall the tabernacle of God be with men.

Thus briefly we would state the relationship and the distinction in Scripture between the truth that Christ is the First-born and that He is the First fruits!

For a proper and correct understanding of what is meant

in the text in verses 20 and 23 it will be well to take notice of some selected passages, from both the Old Testament and from the New Testament Scriptures.

The idea of the "first-fruits" is a very prevalent one in the Old Testament of God with His people. Thus we read in Exodus 23:19: "The first of the first-fruits of thy ground shalt thou bring into the house of Jehovah thy God." The phrase "first of thy first-fruits" evidently refers to the very first fruits, and the first and the best of them. It seems that even in the plant life the best fruits are generally those which are ripe first. That these must be brought into the house of the Lord, into the tabernacle indicates that the entire harvest belonged to the Lord. The entire land and all that is therein belongs to him, so that what we have here is a part for the whole, and that, too, the first and the best! Thus also we read in Numbers 15:20: "Of the first of your dough ye shall offer up a cake for a heave-offering; as the heave-offering of the threshing floor so shall ye heave it. Of the first of your dough ye shall give unto Jehovah a heave-offering throughout your generations." Also here we have the idea of a part for the whole. By heaving the heave offering it was sanctified. This meant that a little of the dough was taken and a little cake was baked and given to the priests, and so the entire lump of dough from which the little was taken was considered as holy as the heave-offering itself.

It is instructive to notice that the offering of the first-fruits had also a definite place in the Sabbatic calendar of Israel in the Old Testament. Thus we read in Lev. 23:9-11: "And Jehovah spake unto Moses, saying, speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, when ye are come into the land which I give unto you, and shalt reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring the sheaf of the first-fruits of your harvest unto the priest; and he shall wave the sheaf before Jehovah, to be accepted for you; on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it." From this it is evident that the "first-fruits" must, (1) follow upon the feast of the unleavened bread, the Passover; (2) must be brought to the Lord on the day after the Sabbath, that is on the first day of the week. It really belongs to the things that are new; the old is passed away and the new is come, and is now set in the service of the Lord. The "first-fruits" proclaim that presently all things shall be made new. Christ our Passover has been slain, and now we have the first-fruits of the full harvest. Thus it was typified in the Old Testament ritual and worship.

This point is also brought out by Paul in Romans 11:16: "And if the first-fruit is holy, so is the lump; and if the root is holy so are the branches." Paul is here discussing the so-called "Jewish-question." He discusses the place of Israel as a nation in God's covenant, and their rejection as a nation in the New Testament dispensation. Now the Gentiles are saved. And these Gentiles are holy. Why? Because they were ingrafted into the tree of the Jews. And this tree is holy. And to illustrate this Paul says: if the root (the

Jews) are holy so are the branches (the Gentiles). We Gentiles are simply ingrafted into the holy root, the root of Jesse. This is just as with the little bit of the first-fruit cake in relationship to the dough from which it is taken. Israel is that "first-fruit" cake and we are as Gentiles the dough. And if the former is holy so are the latter. Confer Numbers 15:20.

There are other and more instructive passages in the New Testament Scriptures from which we could quote to demonstrate this truth and idea of the first-fruits. We shall call attention to just one more instance. We refer to Rev. 14:4: "These are they that were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they that follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were purchased from among men to be the first-fruits unto God and unto the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no lie; they are without blemish." On the very surface of this passage it is clear that "first-fruits" is fruits of the redemptive work of Christ, and consist in a life of sanctification. It refers to children of God as they are distinct from the world. They are the (144,000) hundred and forty-four thousand, having the name of the Lamb and of the Father written upon their foreheads. And these sing a new song, worshipping God in newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter. And thus they are even now in this life some "first-fruits" of God's creation. Compare James 1:18.

From the foregoing survey of the truth of the Scriptures concerning the "first-fruits" it is quite evident:

1. That the term "fruits" in this term refers to the fruits of the land of Israel, as they are a holy people. It refers to the fruits of holiness, positively in the service of God.
2. That the term "first" refers to first in time but also in quality and excellence. It is a part for the whole, a guarantee that the entire harvest too will follow.
3. That applied to the salvation which we now have in faith, it refers to this as being "first-fruits" of the Spirit in our hearts. We have a small beginning of the eternal joy in our hearts. Presently the full joy of the full harvest-time.
4. That when applied to Christ's resurrection it is very understandable that Paul would speak of this as the first-fruits of those who slept.

Now concerning the latter the text speaks. Christ is become the first-fruits of them. In the phrase "first-fruits of them that have slept" it is evident that we are dealing with a part of the whole. The whole is when all the dead in Christ shall rise in his *Parousia*! The part is Christ's resurrection, inclusive of his glorious ascension and sitting at the right hand of God. And the latter is the guarantee that the former shall surely be accomplished.

However, it should be borne in mind that in this case we are not dealing with the harvest-time in the natural seasons, but are dealing with the work of God in Christ by the

quickening Spirit. Here we are dealing with the harvest of life out of death, and the final overcoming of the last "enemy," namely, death.

Death is an *enemy*!

Death is not natural. Death as such can not bear fruit. Fruit can only be born when death is destroyed. It is the wages of sin. It proclaims that there is no fruit. And it is ranked with many other enemies. There are the principalities and powers, Satan and all his hosts. Then too there are the hordes of those who do not believe in the Lord, nor do they fall asleep in him. They are all enemies which must be subjected to the feet of Christ the King. And they shall be dashed to pieces like a potter's vessel.

But should these all be destroyed, and not death, then we still would not yet have conquered our greatest enemy!

The greatest enemy is death. And Christ reserves this "enemy" for the last. It is the greatest demonstration that all things are subjected to Him. And it shows more than aught else that His is the preeminence. It is the demonstration of the great power of God, powerfully revealed to be the Son of God!

Death must be destroyed. It must be wholly abolished. And in its stead must come life. And therefore corruption, and the fading away must cease. Death must be wholly swallowed up in victory! And when this is come to pass then all things shall be subject to the Christ.

Forsooth, then shall all things be torn from the prince of this world and from the dominion of death, and the entire Cosmos will be set in the service of God. And when the entire Cosmos shall be set in the service of God, by the resurrected saints, then shall God be all in all. God only shall then be served in the entire new heaven and new earth.

Now this has been preached by Paul to the Corinthians! And thus it has been received. And, therefore, let no one say that there is no resurrection. Let none say that the preaching is empty and that faith is empty. Nor let any say that those who die in the Lord are still in their sins. Neither let it be said that those who believe in Christ believe only for this life; that they are of all men most pitiable.

For Christ is the risen Lord, now at the right hand of God, and, at this very moment, *reigns* over the nations.

He shall triumph gloriously.

Death shall be no more. And all tears shall be wiped from our eyes.

For through man came death, and through man is also the resurrection.

Yes, the fact of death by one man is a universal experience for every man. Be it so. Howbeit, the fact of Christ's resurrection is a glorious reality for all who believe in Christ.

I think of the song: You ask me how I know He lives?

He lives within my heart!

G.L.

IN HIS FEAR

And What About The Children?

It is our desire to be helpful.

That does not mean that this was not our desire in the past. The rubric *IN HIS FEAR* surely must be written in His fear. And that means that it is written to be helpful, to give help and direction, comfort and warning along the way of our earthly pilgrimage through this vale of tears and wilderness of sin and corruption.

It does mean that we have a special help in mind at this time.

It means that we have a specific group of readers in mind.

There are those who always maintained that they loved the truth as it has been taught and maintained in our churches from 1924 onward to this very day. Even through all the painful days of the conflict that raged in 1953 and the years that followed, they maintained this to be their position. And they also maintained that they took the stand that they did and took sides as they did in order to defend that truth. But today they see very clearly that they will soon stand before the choice of joining the churches which cast us out because of that truth in 1924 or . . . (?)

Indeed what shall we put in there to fill out the sentence? There is the alternative of coming back to us and maintaining that truth with us. Therein we would not boast but surely would rejoice. The letter sent out by our churches and drawn up by our last synod makes that abundantly clear. Some would desire to struggle on with what is left — and at the moment what will be left is very indefinite — and would consider it a matter of calling before God to do so. Still others cannot for conscience before God — we want to believe that and do not want to accuse them of pride — go back and declare by that act that our history since 1924 was one continuous sin of separatism and schism over minor, unessential things. Some of these would welcome a third choice: A denomination not too far removed from the Protestant Reformed Churches and one that does not demand signing of the three points of “Common Garce.” At any rate from east and west dissatisfaction is being voiced. Awareness of being misled is not silenced but openly confessed. Acknowledgment of being deceived is widespread. Deep concern as to the future fills many hearts and minds today as never before. Confidence in leadership is shaken. And that prospect of being forced into a return to the denomination that cast us out is becoming more real than ever before as the time of synodical meetings draws nigh. To many the very thought of such a return is repulsive. They declare it openly. Indeed in 1953 and shortly thereafter even their leaders said that very same thing. Those who labored so

fervently on the Committee of Contact said that in no uncertain terms in 1953, even though now they maintain a document that swallows many of the errors of that theory of “Common Grace.” But we do not believe that ALL who say they will never go back are talking out of both sides of their mouths. We believe and want to believe that many, who “rebuked” us personally in the years shortly after 1953 for writing that the gate was open for such a return, did not, at the time they sought to “rebuke,” want to go back and do not want to go back today. It is with these in mind that we wish to say a few things at this time to try to be helpful. Therefore we ask the question: And What About The Children?

We mean, of course, if these nevertheless yield to pressure and find it too hard to confess that they have been deceived and to reject wholeheartedly the conditional theology that led to all this sad chapter in their ecclesiastical lives, what are they going to do about their children? The three points might be withdrawn as that which must be signed and be declared binding upon them for membership in these churches that cast us out because we would *not* sign them and refused to be bound by them. But the children of these who return, will they be freed from the lie of these three points and from the practices which are based upon them? Will their children be taught that God’s grace is sovereign and particular? Will their children be taught the antithesis? Will they be impressed with the truth of the infallibility of the Scriptures? Will they be warned against godless unions and the evil of the remarriage of divorced persons? The churches that cast us out in 1924 have made history and still are making history. We can, therefore, understand the reluctance of those who love the Protestant Reformed truth to go back *now* to these churches after all this history has been made.

Indeed, we are not at all against friendlier relations with those who cast us out. And that we state that they have made history is not the expression of a bitter or conceited heart. We did not leave that denomination in hatred and by schism. We did not leave. We were put out; office bearers were “deposed” by the Classis. Even then, it was at that time our desire to stay in the mother church. It was our desire to be helpful then and to seek to keep her pure in doctrine and in walk. And today we have that same desire; but because of the history — which to no little degree is the result of that theory of “Common Grace” — we understand that the breach between us doctrinally is wider than ever and feel it our God-given duty to remind those, who fear being “forced” back, that this is the case. We remind them for their own sakes, and we remind them for the sake of their covenant youth who will grow up in a sphere which once these parents were convinced was not the right place for them and for their children. It is to try to be helpful to those who declare that they still love the Protestant Reformed truth that we write these lines and not because we would irritate those who believe it their God-given duty to remain in these

churches that cast us out. If we do irritate, it is not because we sought it but because that greater breach actually does exist today.

One thing that we consider so very striking, as more calmly now we can look back over the last six or seven years, is that the cry of "solely a church political issue" is so completely forgotten, and the doctrinal issue—which we always maintained was the real issue, even in this rubric—is now so prominent in all the discussion on the floor of Classis and in magazine. The camouflage is now removed, and now some dare to speak openly, and to write, that doctrinally their position is changed from what it was prior to 1953. Others perhaps in sincerity—we will not judge—actually believed that it was simply a church political issue. But what is so striking today is that these leaders in the schism and defenders of the heretical statements speak only of the doctrinal issue, and as far as it is concerned are willing to compromise with the three points of "common grace." Indeed some of them see the folly and warn the synod not to adopt the report of the committee, for then it would be a fourth form. But the committee did not see this. These same leaders who fought so vigorously against the Declaration of Principles which is thoroughly Reformed—even according to their judgment and statements upon the matter—now are ready to rush and to advise their people to rush into adopting a fourth form that is ready to swallow some of the error which led to our separate existence as Protestant Reformed Churches.

But let those things be. There are more serious questions to ask now. Those covenant children—your children and your grandchildren—are they going to embrace the truth in such a merger or are they going to go the way of least resistance and go along with the crowd to defend and serve the purpose of a doctrine, which we were all convinced at one time, might not be defended and maintained? You may argue for yourself—and we have heard much of that in this and in similar circumstances—that you know the truth. You will not sign that which is not the truth of God's Word. You know all the aspects of the truth and no one shall ever take it away from you. You will miss the positive preaching. You will be inwardly grieved to hear something else than the truth. The questioning of the infallibility of God's Word, the catering to the philosophies of the world, the failure to discipline union members and "re-married" divorced persons all will bring grief to your soul. But no man shall take from you that wonderful truth of the Word of God that you confessed with us in the years prior to 1953. As we said, we heard that more than once in the past and found that it did not take too long before little by little a subtle change did take place; and although the knowledge of what was learned in the past remained, the practices of another doctrine are condoned, defended and the error of the lie does not sting as it did in the past.

Our question still remains: And what of the children?

They stand as firm as you? And do they not see your return as a sign that all is well and that they ought indeed to support wholeheartedly and believe without reservations all that they are taught? Do we have a right before them—to say nothing of a right before God—to bring them into a sphere where they are constantly in a state of confusion and where they must be disloyal to those to whom they must come for instruction and guidance?

And if, as one of the members of that committee of contact so vehemently insisted, it is only a church political issue that separates us, would it not in the fear of the Lord be the proper thing to seek affiliation once again with us? If the truth is in our churches—and it was "only a political issue"—the church political way will be right. And if the truth is with us a return to the right way from an evil way is assured. But if the truth is not there you cannot expect the right church political way either. Now that the whole history takes on a new perspective and the conviction is growing by hard facts that this was the direction in which the leaders were already going in 1953, can we not sit down calmly in His fear and discuss this church political issue and the doctrinal difference that led to the schism of 1953?

Is that not our duty before God? And what about the children? Do we not have an obligation as far as they are concerned to provide the very best and not the next best? It is not simply a matter of looking out now for a new church roof. It still is a matter of the truth, of the glory of God and of our covenant obligation in regard to our children. Ask your leaders to examine our Declaration of Principles as carefully and honestly as they did the three points. Make a careful study yourself of this and of the various church political steps that you claim were evil on our part. Feel free to discuss the matter with us. And for your children's sake and for the sake of your calling over-against them (grandchildren too before whom you set an example) look farther into the future than the next year or two. After all this history since 1924, is this the time to take your children and grandchildren back? It is back, is it not, and not forward?

J.A.H.

IN MEMORIAM

Our Society wishes to express its heartfelt sympathy to one of its members, Mr. George Vink, in the passing away of his father,

MR. CORNELIUS VINK

May our heavenly Father comfort the bereaved with the assurance that He doeth all things well.

The Men's Society of the First Prot.
Ref. Church of Grand Rapids, Mich.

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema, President
Mr. S. Beiboer, Secretary

Contending For The Faith

The Church and the Sacraments

THE TIME OF THE REFORMATION

VIEWS ON THE CHURCH

FORMAL PRINCIPLE

(continued)

We were busy in our last article with a discussion of Rome's argument of "common consent." Rome claims that it is unanimous in its teachings and doctrines. It also claims that all the Christians in the midst of the world are confined to the Church of Rome, and that therefore all the Christians in the midst of the world are unanimous in what they believe. And we concluded our last article with the observation that, should this claim of Rome be correct, namely that all the people of God are found only in the Church of Rome, their appeal to their argument of "common consent" would by no means be conclusive. Rome must not only prove that they are unanimous *today* in what they teach, but also that *the* Church was always unanimous also in the past.

We have already made the observation that there was but one Church of God and of Christ during the first ten and one half centuries of the New Dispensation. And it is surely an historical fact that all the peculiar doctrines of the Romish church today were not received and adopted in the early Church (in the early part of the New Dispensation) as matters of faith. Incidentally, this was one of the arguments of Martin Luther in a debate with a certain Dr. Eck, a Roman Catholic theologian. Dr. Eck had forced the German reformer to say that, in his opinion (Luther's opinion) some of the teachings of John Huss had been unjustly condemned. John Huss, we must bear in mind, had been condemned by the Romish Church in its Council of Constance. Dr. Eck, therefore, had forced Martin Luther to take his stand openly on the side of a man whom Rome had condemned. This, we understand, would be enough to seal the conviction of the German reformer. However, Luther called attention to the fact that the Eastern Catholic Church had never acknowledged the supremacy of the bishop of Rome. And, prior to the middle of the eleventh century, the Eastern Catholic Church had been a part of the one Church of God and of Christ. Luther, therefore, showed conclusively that the doctrine of the supremacy of the pope of Rome had not always been a doctrine of the Church of God and of Christ. The great councils of the early Christian Church knew nothing of the papal supremacy of the bishop of Rome, and then we refer to the great Church Councils of Nicea, Con-

stantinople, Ephesus, and Chalcedon. How, then, could it be possible to maintain that the pope is the successor of the apostle Peter?

It is certainly an historical fact that all the peculiar doctrines and teachings of the Romish Church were not received and adopted in the early Church as matters of faith. In his Systematic Theology, Hodge writes on this matter as follows (Vol. I, 123-125): "It is, however, a historical fact that all the peculiar doctrines of Romanism were not received in the early Church as matters of faith. Such doctrines as the supremacy of the Bishop of Rome; the perpetuity of the apostleship, the grace of orders; transubstantiation; the propitiatory sacrifice of the Mass; purgatory; the immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary, etc., etc., can all be historically traced in their origin, gradual development, and final adoption. As it would be unjust to determine the theology of Calvin and Beza from the Socinianism of modern Geneva; or that of Luther from the theology of the Germans of our day; so it is utterly unreasonable to infer that because the Latin Church believes all that the Council of Trent pronounced to be true, that such was its faith in the first centuries of its history. It is not to be denied that for the first hundred years after the Reformation the Church of England was Calvinistic; then under Archbishop Laud and the Stuarts it became almost thoroughly Romanized; then it became to a large extent Rationalistic, so that Bishop Burnet said of the men of his day, that Christianity seemed to be regarded as a fable "among all persons of discernment." To this succeeded a general revival of evangelical doctrine and piety, and that has been followed by a like revival of Romanism and Ritualism. Mr. Newman says of the present time: "In the Church of England, we shall hardly find ten or twenty neighboring clergymen who agree together; and that, not in non-essentials of religion, but as to what are its elementary and necessary doctrines; or as to the fact and definite faith required for salvation." Such is the testimony of history. In no external visible Church, has there been a consent to any form of faith, *semper et ab omnibus*.

The Latin Church is no exception to this remark. It is an undeniable fact of history that Arianism prevailed for years both in the East and West; that it received the sanction of the vast majority of the bishops, of provincial and ecumenical councils, and of the Bishop of Rome. It is no less certain that in the Latin Church, Augustinianism, including all the characteristic doctrine of what is now called Calvinism, was declared to be the true faith by council after council, provincial and general, and by bishops and popes. Soon, however, Augustinianism lost its ascendancy. For seven or eight centuries no one form of doctrine concerning sin, grace, and predestination prevailed in the Latin Church. Augustinianism, Semi-Pelagianism, and Mysticism (equally irreconcilable with both), were in constant conflict; and that, too, on questions on which the Church had already pronounced its judgment. It was *not* until the beginning of the sixteenth century that the Council of Trent, after long conflict within

itself, gave its sanction to a modified form of Semi-Pelagianism.

The claim, therefore, for common consent, as understood by Romanists, is contrary to history. It is inconsistent with undeniable facts. This is virtually admitted by Romanists themselves. For with them it is common to say, We believe because the fifth century believed. But this is a virtual admission that their peculiar faith is not historically traceable beyond the fifth century. This admission of a want of all historical evidence of "common consent" is also involved, as before remarked, in their constant appeal to the authority of the Church. What the Church says is a matter of faith, we, the traditionists affirm, are bound to believe, has always been a matter of faith. The argument amounts to this. The Church believes on the ground of common consent. The proof that a thing is a matter of common consent, and always has been, is that the Church now believes it."—end of quote from Hodge.

A third argument that may be advanced against the Roman Catholic doctrine of Tradition is that the common, ordinary people or laity do not have access to it. Tradition, we understand, must be a rule of faith for the people. Tradition is supposed to have equal authority with the Word of God. Should not all the people then have access to this rule of faith? Should it not be in the possession of all? Such, however, is not the case. This tradition is scattered through ecclesiastical records of some eighteen centuries. How can the people know whether the doctrines which the Romish Church teaches today have been taught by the Church throughout the ages? How can the people know that its teachings enjoy the unanimous consent of all since the beginning of the New Dispensation? They simply cannot know. They have no access to this proof. They must believe what the Church (the clergy) teaches. They are required to believe upon the peril of their souls doctrines which they cannot possibly prove.

Fourthly, Rome contends that the Bible is too difficult, too mysterious a book to be read and interpreted by the common people. The Bible must be interpreted for them. Tradition must serve to help the people to understand the Scriptures more properly. Now we may certainly remark that the Bible is characterized by profundity. In the Scriptures we surely encounter the truths of the living God which become ever more unfathomable as we read about them and study them. But it is certainly true that the Word of God is also characterized by perspicuity, clearness. The apostle John tells us in one of his epistles that "we all know and need no man to teach us." But, if the Bible is such a difficult book to read and understand what must one think of Tradition which must serve to help the people? The people of the Romish Church surely need help to interpret for them Tradition, to help them understand that which must throw light upon the Holy Scriptures.

In the fifth place, Tradition destroys the authority of the

Holy Scriptures. We have already quoted from the decrees of the Roman Catholic Council of Trent, and have noted in these decrees that that Council declared that the unwritten traditions (unwritten in distinction from the written Word of God) must be received and venerated with an equal affection of piety and reverence with the Holy Scriptures. According to Rome the office of tradition is to convey a knowledge of doctrines, precepts, and institutions not contained in Scripture and also to serve as a guide to the proper understanding of what is therein written. Tradition, therefore, in the Church of Rome is both the supplement and interpretation of the written Word of God. In the strict sense of the word, the pope alone is infallible in matters of faith and life, but, in order to be thus infallible, he must also be such in the judging of the sources of faith and in the interpretation or determination of what is Scripture and Tradition, in the determination of what constitutes the authority of the church fathers, of the church councils, canonization of saints, etc. (see Dogmatics of H. Bavinck, Vol. I, 457), and the power and authority of the pope really transcends that of the Word of God. He stands above the Word of God, judges its contents and significance. Scripture does need tradition, the confirmation of the pope, but tradition does not need the Holy Scriptures. Tradition does not supplement the Scripture, but the Scriptures do supplement Tradition. Scripture alone is insufficient, but Tradition is sufficient. If there be two standards of doctrine of equal authority, the one the explanatory and infallible interpreter of the other, it is of necessity the interpretation which determines the faith of the people. Instead, therefore, of our faith resting on the testimony of God as recorded in His Word, it rests on what poor, fallible, often fanciful, prejudiced and benighted men tell us is the meaning of that Word (Hodge). Man and his authority take the place of the Word of God. And it is an historical fact that the Scriptures have been made of no account wherever the authority of tradition has been admitted. Our Lord said that the Scribes and Pharisees made the Word of God of no account or effect by their traditions, that they taught for doctrines the commandments of men. This is also true historically of the Church of Rome. A great mass of doctrines and rites and ordinances and institutions, of which the Scriptures know nothing, has been imposed on the reason, conscience, and life of the people. How little the mass of Romanists are acquainted with the Word of God and live out of the infallibly written Word of God! How ignorant they are of the Word of God! In fact, this is true in all churches when the people simply accept and hold for true whatever the Church says and decrees. This ignorance of the masses is not something which is to be confined to the Roman Catholic Church. It is very general also today. People simply accept, without investigation or study, whatever the Church has spoken and decreed.

H.V.

The Voice of Our Fathers

The Canons of Dordrecht

PART TWO — EXPOSITION OF THE CANONS

FIFTH HEAD OF DOCTRINE

OF THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

REJECTION OF ERRORS

Article 3 (concluded)

In this connection we must still give our attention to the Scripture passages cited. The first is Romans 5:8, 9, quoted in part in the article: "That while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." Concerning this proof-text we may note the following: 1) It undoubtedly was chosen in connection with the charge that the Arminian conception renders ineffectual the grace of justification. This is plain from the reference to justification in the text itself: "being now justified by his blood." 2) Also this text does not speak of preservation or perseverance as such, but it implies preservation and perseverance. For the text looks to the end, to the day of judgment and of the execution of God's righteous judgment. This is the plain implication of the statement that "we shall be saved from wrath through him." Our previous contention, and the contention of this third article of the rejection, therefore, that you can never separate between the wonder of preservation and the other wonders of grace in the "order of salvation" is clearly supported by this Scripture passage. 3) And thus we must notice that the text proceeds from the fact of our justification in the blood of Christ to what must with absolute certainty be the consequence of that justification, namely, that we shall be saved from wrath through Christ. And, in fact, the text even emphasizes that this is "much more then." That is, whoever is justified by Christ's blood is still more certainly saved from the wrath of God through Christ. The Arminian conception that one can be covered by the blood of Christ and still finally become subject to the wrath of God is absolutely false. Either one is justified by the blood of Christ and then he can never, under the righteous judgment of God, be the object of God's wrath, since God, Who is righteous, cannot punish the righteous. Or, if one is the object of the wrath of God, he is not righteous before God because he has not been justified by the blood of Christ. Justification cannot be rendered ineffectual. 4) And finally, it must be noted that the presentation of the text is absolutely unconditional. Christ died for us. Because Christ died for us, we are justified by His blood. And because we are justified, we shall certainly be saved from wrath through Him. And there is no condition attached. What, in fact, is the source of it all? That is ex-

pressed in the portion of the text that is not quoted here: "But God commendeth his love toward us . . ." Hence, it is altogether of God, not of us.

The second passage cited by the fathers in this connection is I John 3:9: "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." Concerning this text we may note: 1) That it was undoubtedly chosen because of its reference to regeneration and in connection with the fathers' charge that the Arminians by their denial of perseverance render ineffectual the grace of regeneration. 2) Again, this passage brings out the connection between preservation and regeneration. If you deny the preservation of the saints, you must deny the efficacy of regeneration. For preservation simply means, in part, that the new life, the life of regeneration, is preserved in the saints even unto the end. 3) And the text plainly teaches that "once regenerated is always regenerated." For he that is born of God "cannot sin." In other words, the life of regeneration cannot be changed about into the life of unregeneration. And why not? Because "his seed remaineth in him." 4) And once more, this is absolutely unconditional. It is all of God, not at all of man.

The third passage quoted is John 10:28, 29: "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." Concerning this text we may note: 1) That it speaks directly of preservation and of our continued keeping by Christ. 2) That it speaks of this wonder of grace not from the viewpoint of its being perseverance on our part, but from the viewpoint of its being preservation on the part of God in Christ. We are in the hand of Christ. Christ holds us. And no one is able to pluck us out of Christ's hand. 3) That the text plainly teaches that this preservation by God in Christ is absolutely sure: "they shall never perish." 4) That the reason for this certainty is based upon the fact that "My Father . . . is greater than all," and upon the fact that this Father, the Triune God, Who is "greater than all"—and therefore, greater than any enemy or opposing power that may seek to destroy the sheep—has committed these sheep into the hand of Christ. 5) That the beauty of this passage lies especially in the fact that it so clearly connects our preservation with our eternal election. At the same time we may note that there is absolutely no conditional element mentioned in either the text or the context. The Arminian cannot possibly say here that being Christ's sheep is dependent on your believing. For the context teaches the very opposite. Christ says to the unbelieving Jews: "Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you." vs. 26. Hence, the Arminian has no right to quote a passage like the above, and he has no claim to the comfort and assurance of words such as these. His doctrine is a corrupt and humanistic doctrine. He cannot derive it from the Scriptures. He can only try to impose it upon the Scrip-

tures, and then only at the price of wresting and twisting the infallible Word of God.

* * * *

Article 4. Who teach: That true believers and regenerate can sin the sin unto death or against the Holy Spirit. Since the same Apostle John, after having spoken in the fifth chapter of his first epistle, vss. 16 and 17, of those who sin unto death and having forbidden to pray for them, immediately adds to this in vs. 18: "We know that whosoever is begotten of God sinneth not (meaning a sin of that character), but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and the evil one toucheth him not," I John 5:18.

The above translation can be allowed to stand without change.

As far as the error that is rejected in this article is concerned we must understand, first of all, that a real Arminian must indeed be a hypocrite in order even to bring the argument that a true believer and regenerate man can sin the sin against the Holy Spirit. In the first place, the Arminian does not believe in regeneration. He speaks of regeneration and the regenerate, but he does not teach the truth of regeneration. The Arminian limits the work of God in the matter of salvation to a kind of divine *help*. And the Scriptural doctrine of regeneration maintains that regeneration is "a new creation, a resurrection from the dead, a making alive, which God works in us without us." *Canons* III, IV, 12. And of course, if the Arminian first empties the concept "regeneration" of its true content in order to pour into that concept his own Arminian content, denying the very meaning of the term, he can very easily teach also that these regenerate-in-the-Arminian-sense can sin the sin unto death. Actually, however, one cannot really discuss the matter concerned in this article with the genuine Arminian, since he and we would be talking about two different things when we say "regenerate." In the second place, the Arminian cannot truly speak about the sin against the Holy Ghost. For the Arminians are agreed with the Socinians, who deny the personal existence of the Holy Ghost and teach that the Spirit is merely a power or influence of the Son. Hence, here again the Arminian and the Reformed man would be speaking of two entirely different matters when they spoke of this sin against the Holy Ghost.

Bearing in mind these Arminian inconsistencies, however, we may take note of the error that is rejected here. That Scripture speaks of a sin unto death and a sin against the Holy Ghost is well-known. The apostle John is not alone in the mention of this sin. He speaks of it as a sin unto death in I John 5. The Lord Jesus Himself speaks of the sin against the Holy Spirit, Mark 3:28, 29: "Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme. But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation." However, the Arminian teaches that it is possible for the believers and regenerate to commit this sin. In this connection we may notice, in the first place, that to a Reformed man this is a contradiction in terms. How can a true believer

commit a sin unto death? Either he is no true believer, or he does not and cannot commit the sin unto death. Both are not possible. We may indeed grant that an apparent believer, one who is outwardly a believer, a member of the church as it exists visibly on earth, one who is *of* the covenant, can commit this sin. In fact, we may safely say that it is only in the sphere of the covenant and of the church that this sin can be committed. But for a true believer, that is, one who is elect, to commit this sin is impossible. This sin is possible only for an Esau, a reprobate. Nor, in the second place, does Scripture anywhere state that it is the regenerate who do and can commit this sin. Jesus makes mention of this sin in connection with the charge of the wicked scribes, who accused Him of casting out devils by the prince of the devils. The apostle John, as this article notes, clearly makes a distinction between those who commit this sin and those who are born of God. The passage to which the Arminians often appeal in this connection is that in Hebrews 6:4-6, which undoubtedly refers to this same sin unto death from a little different viewpoint: "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." But without going into detail concerning the meaning of this passage, we may immediately notice: 1) That while it indeed describes those who fall away in very strong terms, and expresses that from a certain point of view they have come very close to the kingdom of heaven, it nevertheless nowhere literally states that those who fall away are regenerate. Even for the Arminian, therefore, this passage is a matter of interpretation, not of literal statement. 2) That the interpretation of the various descriptive terms of this passage in Hebrews must be made in the light of the rest of Scripture, especially such passages as I John 3:9 and I John 5:16-18, which forbids the interpretation that the men of Hebrews 6:4-6 are regenerate and true believers. Hence, the Arminian can make the statement and the claim which is condemned in this article by our fathers, but he cannot possibly make this claim with any semblance of a legitimate appeal to Holy Scripture.

And on the side of the Reformed truth is the fact which our fathers emphasize in this article, namely, that Scripture very clearly distinguishes between those who commit the sin unto death and those who are regenerate, teaching that "whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." Moreover, we may note, in conclusion, that this "sinneth not" and "keepeth himself" proceeds from regeneration. Who is he that sinneth not and that keepeth himself? It is *he that is born of God*. And the plain implication is that it is exactly because of his regeneration that he does not commit this sin unto death, yea, cannot commit it. H.C.H.

DECENCY and ORDER

The Records of Ecclesiastical Assemblies

"It shall be the duty of the church in which the Classis and likewise the (particular) or general Synod meets to furnish the following meeting with the minutes of the preceding." —Art. 45 D.K.O.

The provisions of this article of our Church Order are no longer observed. It is one of those articles that is no longer necessary due to changing circumstances and, it seems to me, there is even room to question the propriety of making one particular church responsible for the presence of the minutes of a broader gathering. Undoubtedly this is one article that would undergo a complete revision or be dropped altogether if the Synod would decide to carry through the proposal to revise our Church Order of some years ago.

In the proposed Church Order revision of the Christian Reformed Church this article has been dropped and the following inserted in its place:

"Major Assemblies shall appoint Stated Clerks for the purpose of receiving communications, keeping the files and the archives, and preparing and distributing the agenda. They shall likewise appoint treasurers to receive and distribute finances."

In favor of this revision is the fact that it expresses current practices. When the Classis or the Synod meets, it is not the church in which that gathering is held that furnishes the body with the minutes of the preceding session but it is the Stated Clerk of the gathering itself who provides this information. Against this revision, however, is that it omits an important element that is probably the principal reason for the article in the first place.

We retain the provision of Article 45 but do not observe it. That is not good. We do not require the calling church of the Synod or the particular church in which the Classis meets to furnish these bodies with the minutes of their previous session. In strict compliance with the letter of the Church Order, however, this should be done and if it were practiced it would, in effect, simply mean that the consistory of the church where the broader gathering was to be held would be responsible to see to it that the Stated Clerk was present with the required data. In the case of the Classis, it would involve a practical difficulty, if not an impossibility, for the local congregation to provide the Classis with these minutes because our consistories do not receive copies of them. In the case of the Synod, the local church could provide the Synod with a printed copy of the Acts of the preceding Synod but this is not necessary since Synod has in its own possession sufficient copies.

In the set of rules adopted by our Synod in 1957-58 mention is not made of this matter. Now it might be argued that it was not necessary to express this because it is already expressed in the Church Order proper and, of course, this is correct. However, if we take a careful look at these rules it becomes evident that in the adoption of these rules, Synod had no intention of observing the rule of Article 45 of the Church Order.

When Synod, in Article I, set forth the duties of the calling church, they merely expressed that the calling church "shall announce the next succeeding Synod to the churches in a Synodically designated publication at least one month before the date of the meeting and they shall provide all the facilities needed for the synodical meetings, make arrangements for the lodging of the delegates, etc." This rule would not exclude their also "providing the Synod with the minutes of the preceding" but then there might have been at least a reference to Art. 45 D.K.O. However, when the Synod in Article IV of the same rules defines one of the duties of the Stated Clerk as follows: "he must be present at all synodical meetings in order to furnish Synod, upon request, with any needed information from the archives," it becomes plain that the responsibility the Church Order places upon the calling church, Synod puts upon its Stated Clerk.

Synod's position is clearly that it is the responsibility of the Stated Clerk to provide any needed information from the preceding minutes and either Article 45 then should be revised accordingly or this rule abrogated. Undoubtedly the present practice is motivated by practical considerations.

That the churches in the past did not follow this practice of today can easily be understood. First of all, due to the costs of printing, the Acts of Synods were not as plentiful and readily available as they are today. And next, the churches of the immediate post-reformation era preferred to delegate authority to churches rather than to individuals. They were afraid of individuals assuming too much power and especially of abusing or misusing authority that was delegated to them. These fears were not without justification for they had been witnesses of countless evils in the church in the past which sprang from such abuse of power. It was not, therefore, mere practical considerations that moved the Synod of 1578 and again in 1581 to incorporate the provisions of Article 45 in our Church Order. These forefathers believed that the records and archives of the churches belonged to the churches and not to any individual. Consequently, the churches rather than an individual should also be responsible for them. In this they were undoubtedly correct.

With a view to this it seems that there is something lacking in Article 45 and, on the other hand, it is evident that the current practice of the churches with regard to this matter is not, strictly speaking, in harmony with the Church Order. The matter, however, is not real serious and it could conceivably be corrected by a simple revision of this article.

Such a revision would retain the present practice which, for practical considerations, is advisable and at the same time preserve the principle of this article of the Church Order.

We need not suggest an exact reformulation of such a proposed revision. It is sufficient for our present purpose to suggest the elements that it should contain. These would be:

(1) A statement to the effect that the Stated Clerk of the major ecclesiastical assemblies shall be responsible to see that the past records of the assembly are available for consultation, if needed, at the time of the meetings. This would be similar to our present Synodical rule.

(2) A provision according to which these records of the major ecclesiastical bodies are placed in the custody of a local church, preferably one with a fire-proof safe. That church would then be responsible for their safe-keeping.

(3) A stipulation by which the Stated Clerk would be made trustee of the records under the direct jurisdiction of the local church. In the event of any act of malfeasance on the part of the Stated Clerk, the local consistory could then immediately take action to dispossess him of the properties that belong to the churches.

History also makes plain the need of some such provisions. We may cite our own case as an example. In 1953-54 the Stated Clerk of our Synod abused his authority and has since that time confiscated the records that morally and legally belong to our Synod. The same is true of the records of our Classis West. Now it is, of course, possible that if the above suggestions had been enacted the consistory in that sordid history might have also gone schismatic with those Stated Clerks and the end result would have been the same, but it is also possible that the custody of those records might have been entrusted to a consistory that remained faithful to the historic traditions and confessions of the Protestant Reformed Churches. In that event action could have immediately been taken by which those records might have been reclaimed for the Synod whose lawful property they are.

The preservation of ecclesiastical records is a matter of great importance. This is true for the local churches as well as for the major assemblies of the churches. Often this is not realized and those entrusted with the keeping of those records, through carelessness permit them to become lost. The result is that there are some churches that have no historical record of their origin and early history. The minute books, together with all supplements to the minutes, as well as other papers and documents of importance ought to be kept in a safe place and preserved with great care. These documents are not made in duplicate and once they are lost it is difficult, if not impossible, to replace them.

Our Synod too should take definite steps to preserve our historic records. Especially would this be true if in the

providence of God the confiscated records that date back to the origin of our churches and Synod should be repossessed by our churches.

In the Netherlands the large church of Amsterdam has acted as an Archivist for the Reformed Churches for many years. In 1911 the Synod Zwolle authorized this church to build a special fire-proof vault for the safe keeping of historic documents. In 1934 the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church appointed an Historical Committee which was charged "to gather and preserve books and documents of historical value pertaining to the history of our church and the church from which we originated and to religion in general, and to provide a room and facilities in the college or seminary building where they can be properly preserved and displayed."

Today the church visitors ask each consistory during their annual visit whether "the archives are in order" and further whether "all proofs of possessions are kept in a safe place." It might be well to add a further question which would remind all consistories that they ought to keep their records in a safe, and if possible, a fire-proof place.

G.V.d.B.

Announcement

The Eastern Ladies' League meeting will be held April 21, at Southwest Church, at 8 o'clock. The speaker will be Prof. H. C. Hoeksema. Come and enjoy an evening of Christian fellowship with us.

Mrs. Jacob Kuiper, Vice Secretary

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On April 25, 1960, our dear parents,

MR. and MRS. JACOB KUIPER (nee Korhorn)

hope to commemorate their 25th wedding anniversary. We give thanks to our Heavenly Father for sparing them through these many years for us and for each other. Our earnest prayer is that He may further bless them in the way that lies ahead.

Their grateful children:

Henry J. Kuiper
Mr. and Mrs. Isaac R. Kuiper
Jacob Kuiper, Jr.
Gerald Kuiper
Etta Mae Kuiper
Clarence Kuiper
Sharon Ann Kuiper
Mary Louise Kuiper
Marie Ruth Kuiper
Betty Carol Kuiper
Robert Lee Kuiper
Linda Alice Kuiper
1 grandchild

Grand Rapids, Michigan

ALL AROUND US

Rev. E. Knott's Position Regarding Re-Union in Question.

Under the title "The Long, Hard Road to Church Re-Union" Dr. Peter Y. De Jong informs us in the April, 1960 issue of *Torch and Trumpet* of his reactions to the position expressed by the Rev. E. Knott in the *Reformed Guardian* respecting the proposed reunion of the Christian Reformed Church and the Protestant Reformed Churches (De Wolf group).

Our readers have been informed from time to time of the fact that committees of the two above named groups have been meeting with a view to ironing out the obstacles that appear to subsist between them, which if removed, will open the way to ultimate reunion.

Dr. De Jong informs his readers that though the Christian Reformed press has been almost silent on the activities of these committees, the *Reformed Guardian* is rather prolific in its utterances on the subject. Dr. De Jong, it appears, does not feel very strongly for the position of Rev. Knott which the latter revealed in the *Reformed Guardian*. Dr. De Jong reveals Knott's position in the following paragraph:

"After expressing his reaction again to the Three Points of 1924, the Rev. Knott raises the question whether reunion should take place at once even if the Christian Reformed Church should decide to 'remove the three points as a condition for membership.' He rejects the view that then 'reunion would be automatic and immediate,' arguing instead that such a step would 'open the possibility for real discussion with the Christian Reformed Church.' Because of the presence of 'different emphases' in the two denominations, arising from different convictions on the labor problem, divorce and remarriage, woman suffrage, and the authority of classis and synod, he suggests entering into a sister-church relationship during which all these and possibly other differences would be discussed before organic union could be consummated."

Dr. De Jong expresses his position as follows:

"Much as we appreciate the defense of basic doctrinal agreement as a necessary condition for reunion, we wonder whether the course suggested by the Rev. Knott could ever prove fruitful. As long as the substance of the decisions of 1924 is regarded as suspect by the Protestant Reformed brethren, serious consideration on their part to reunion with the Christian Reformed Church appears very unlikely. Should unanimity of 'emphasis' be required, all hope of reunion will vanish like summer morning mist. Unity among Reformed believers has never implied uniformity of opinion on all matters. Although apt to be misapplied, the motto 'In essentials unity; in non-essentials liberty; in all things charity' may well serve as our guide along this thorny path

of seeking understanding. If and when the two churches can agree on what are the essentials, then differences of emphasis need not stand in the way of reunion. Within the framework of the confessional standards there is room for differences. These will be better understood, evaluated, and appreciated by becoming one than by going our separate ways."

In respect to the above quotations we remark, first of all, that it appears that Rev. Knott in distinction from the rest of his colleagues stands practically alone. If the rumors we hear are correct, then most of those who left us in the recent schism are ready and eager to return to the Christian Reformed Church. But Knott has serious objections. Not only is he dubious about the matter of accepting the Three Points, but he fears that even if the Christian Reformed Church should remove these Three Points to open the way for their return, there are still obstacles of just as great proportions which they will have to hurdle before he is ready for reunion. Rev. Knott sees, and I believe correctly, that since 1924 the Christian Reformed Church has developed in the way of error in other directions. They have taken a very weak position in respect to worldly labor unions. They have gone off the track in regard to the matter of divorce and remarriage of divorced persons, and other matters. Rev. Knott would rather discuss these matters as well as the initial difference on the common grace question at greater length before he is ready to be organically one again with the Christian Reformed Church. Whether Rev. Knott will be able to maintain his position in the face of majority opposition in his group will have to be seen.

In the second place, it appears that Dr. De Jong does not like Rev. Knott's interference in the attempts at reunion. In fact he is sure that if the negotiating committees give heed to Knott's plea to consider all the differences then he sees no hope of reunion at all. He says "as long as the substance of the decisions of 1924 is regarded as suspect by the Protestant Reformed brethren, serious consideration on their part to reunion with the Christian Reformed Church appears very unlikely." What does he mean by "the substance of the decisions of 1924"? I understand this to mean the doctrine of common grace as set forth in the Three Points. You may change a word here or there if it does not suit you, but don't monkey with the doctrine. You must embrace the doctrine of common grace and never question it if you will be one with us. If that is what Dr. De Jong means, and I think he does, then he says exactly what the Christian Reformed Church synod said to our synod when we asked them for a conference. They don't want rehearsals. They don't want to be shown where the doctrine of common grace is in error. You can be one with them only if you agree on the basis of that doctrine. If that is De Jong's position and the position of the Christian Reformed Church then, of course, there will be no reunion so long as the Three Points are regarded as suspect.

But how does this coincide with the other statement of

De Jong, namely, "within the framework of the confessional standards there is room for differences"? It seems to me that if the confessional standards determine that there is such a thing as common grace, then there is no room left for differences. That was the position of the Christian Reformed Church in 1924 when they cast out men who differed with the church on this question. And apparently that is still the position of the church. Why then speak of room for differences? Moreover, it is also a question what he means by "differences of emphasis" and "non-essentials." Maybe Rev. Knott would like to ask him that question too. Does this mean matters such as labor unions, divorce and remarriage, etc.?

"Rome Speaks With Authority."

Such is the title of one of the editorials appearing in the April issue of the *Christian Herald*, written by Daniel A. Poling.

The editorial informs us that the first diocesan ecclesiastical council ever held in Rome was held under direction of Pope John XXIII on January 24.

The Pope endorsed certain recommendations of the council which will be published in the form of a "constitution" and which will be fundamental law of the diocese of Rome.

We are told that the news releases from Rome carried the statement, "Although the new rules will be valid only for the Rome diocese, it is expected that other dioceses throughout the world will follow suit."

The editor informs us that "of particular interest to Protestants are the articles of this 'constitution' which apply to 'all Catholic laymen.' As published in the *New York Times*, they are:

1. Obligated on pain of excommunication to enact no laws harmful to the Church.

2. Forbidden to read publications inspired by Protestantism, illuminism, existentialism, atheism or materialism.

3. Forbidden to take part in services, sermons or discussions of non-Catholic cults or in sessions of spiritism, magic or divination.

4. Liable to excommunication if they join or vote for political parties or persons that promote heretical principles or doctrines, even though they may not go so far as apostasy and atheism.

5. Subject to excommunication also if they back doctrines or views in contrast with the Catholic dogmas in the press, in lectures or in public speeches."

The editorial closes with "And finally, as of the *Times*, Jan. 27, 'Catholics should deal with social questions on the basis of the Church's teachings and may not favor political or other organizations condemned by it.'"

It certainly appears from the above there is a concerted

attempt on the part of Roman Catholicism to dominate the State. And incidentally, though Poling does not mention it, it seems that these articles of the "constitution" have reference to the tiff between Dr. Poling and Senator John Kennedy concerning which Poling has written rather prolifically of late, both in the *Christian Herald* and in his autobiography entitled, *Mine Eyes Have Seen*.

Statistics.

Having lately finished the preparation of the material that must appear in the Yearbook which will find its place in the Acts of the forthcoming synod of our churches, and comparing the figures with those appearing in *The Banner* of March 25 under the title "Statistical Information" which sums up the facts concerning the Christian Reformed Church, we consider the work involved negligible and the figures of almost no account. The following comparison will show you what we mean:

	P. R.	Chr. Ref.
Families	661	52,689
Increase in Families over 1959	14	1,361
Communicants	1,447	124,268
Total Souls	2,774	236,145
Congregations	19	541
Ministers (Active)	15	442
Vacant Churches	5	94
Catechumens	826	48,744
Sunday School Enrollment	491	64,287
Emeriti Ministers	1	72
Missionaries	1	92

The above is only a partial report of both churches. Many other facts of statistical interest appear in the reports. But this will suffice to show that as far as size is concerned the Protestant Reformed Churches do not weigh much on the scale of numbers. It is perhaps for that reason that the church world about us does not appear to reckon with us.

We have not called your attention to these facts in order to scare the little band of Protestant Reformed Churches which may be compared to a Gideon's band. The reader may remember that the Lord was not pleased to use a huge army in Gideon's day to fight the Midianites, but depreciated the host down to a mere 300 to accomplish His purpose and reveal His strength. We believe we are such a little band holding forth the sword of the Lord which is the truth He has so graciously entrusted to our hand to wield.

M.S.

"In the day of prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity consider; yea, God hath made the one side by side with the other, to the end that man should not find out anything that shall be after him." Ecclesiastes 7:14.

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

"All the saints salute thee . . ." PHIL. 4:21

April 5, 1960

Randolph has extended a call to Rev. G. Vanden Berg of Oak Lawn, from a trio which included the Revs. G. Lubbers and G. Vos. Rev. R. Veldman, of Southeast Church, declined the call from Hull. Hull now has made a new trio which consists of Revs. G. Lubbers, M. Schipper and G. Vos.

Rev. Lanting, Holland's pastor, will give a public lecture Thursday, April 28, at 8 P. M. The lecture, entitled, "The Eternal Rewards," will be held at W. 12th St., corner of Washington Ave. Everyone is cordially invited.

The Office Bearers' conference was held April 5 at Hope Church, featuring a speech by Rev. A. Mulder, of Kalamazoo. The speaker examined the relationships of the offices of minister, elder and deacon, answering the question, "Is it true that one is elevated above another." Rev. Mulder is also scheduled to speak at the Mr. and Mrs. Society League meeting to be held April 22, explaining Deut. 6:7, under the theme, "The Protestant Reformed Home."

Rev. B. Woudenberg's farewell sermon at Creston, March 20, was based on the text found in Ps. 27:14, under the theme, "Waiting On The Lord." In that Sunday's bulletin Rev. and Mrs. Woudenberg placed the following: "We wish to thank you for the evening of programming and fellowship provided for us Friday evening, as well as for the parting gift. Our prayer is that the blessing of the Lord may continue to rest upon you as a congregation."

First Church's Wednesday evening adult Bible class ended their season's activities with a question hour conducted by their leader, Rev. H. Hoeksema. He explained Isaiah 65:20; Ecc. 7:16-18; Prov. 11:30; II Kings 3:15; and discussed the problem of suffering in body, soul and spirit. Many of the questions dealt with topics related to the subject matter studied in the past season, which was the Doctrine of the Last Things.

The Sr. Y. P. Society of First Church enjoyed a guided tour through Children's Retreat Tuesday, March 22. The members, as do all the visitors to the Retreat, learned to appreciate a little more the work of the dedicated teachers in that institution.

Missionary news: Rev. G. Lubbers is laboring in the Pella area until the summer meeting of Synod. The foreign broadcast committee of the Mission Committee is busy securing a station which is available in the West Indies.

The Lynden *Tribune* featured an article recently written by the minister of the Lynden Prot. Ref. Church. Rev. Harbach's article was entitled, "Jesus the True God," and treated the subject by answering the questions, who is Jesus, and, what is Jesus?

March 21 was the date of the Oak Lawn-South Holland combined Men's Societies meeting. Rev. Heys spoke on the subject, "The Anti-Christian Implications of Roman Catholicism."

The Society for Secondary Education (Prot. Ref. High School Society) met in Southwest Church, March 31. A constitution was adopted; annual membership fees were established; and Board members were elected, three for a term of three years, three to serve two years, and three for a one-year term. This first meetings' record shows that eighty-three ballots were cast. May this good beginning be furthered under the blessing of our covenant God Who calls us to instruct our children "in the aforesaid doctrines to the utmost of our ability."

Radio News: Rev. R. Veldman, of Southeast Church, is scheduled to be on the air for the month of May, with Rev. C. Hanko, of First Church, following him in the month of June. The theme of Rev. Veldman's first sermon will be, "Entering The Kingdom." He then will preach two sermons on the Seventh Commandment, followed by two others which will be announced later. The program Committee asks us to again remind you that they invite your response to the weekly broadcasts, sending your comments to The Reformed Witness Hour, P.O. Box 8, Grand Rapids 1, Mich.

Adams St. Christian School children gave their annual spring program in First Church auditorium March 20. The theme, "The Fear of the Lord" was carried throughout the entire program. By narration, poems, choir and band, the students proclaimed their thankfulness to God for the instruction received in their home, in the church, and in the school in its first ten years of existence.

Bulletin quote (Oak Lawn's): God preserves the way of His saints, not by seclusion from danger, but by protection in the midst of danger.

The Hudsonville Young People's Society sponsored a program of stereophonic slides, April 4th, to raise funds for the purchase of tables to be used in their church basement.

The Coffee for the benefit of the Christian Foundation for Handicapped Children, sponsored by the Priscilla Society of First Church, was a success despite the stormy winter weather, and netted a benefit of \$263.00 for the Foundation.

First Church's congregation has finally decided to take the drastic measures necessary to protect the auditorium from damage occasioned by the leaky roof with which it has been plagued for almost all of its thirty-five years of existence. Probably the reason for the long delay is the fact that it will cost \$4200.00 to effect the replacement.

"Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." James 5:7, 8.

. . . see you in church.

J.M.F.