

THE STANDARD

Bearer

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MEDITATION

THE TREATMENT OF OUR SINS

*"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but
whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have
mercy."* PROV. 28:13

Proverbs is in the Old Testament what James is in the New Testament. I might add that also the Sermon on the Mount is included in that appraisal.

At any rate, they both are severely practical. Both Proverbs and James treat the spiritual life of the Christian on the background of the wicked's darkness.

Throughout Proverbs the righteous are revealed on the background of the wicked, with the constant result that the wicked are fallen, but that it shall go well with the righteous.

So also here: Cover your sins, and you won't prosper! But confess and forsake them, and you shall have mercy!

Let's look at that a little closer.

* * * *

He that covereth his sins.

There is a horrible use of the possessive pronoun: sin and the person who sins are identified. And that is a horrible entity. His sins! There is a horrible property, besmirching the possessor! Sin is really the sinning person.

Hence, that is our name. The publican in the Temple of God saw truth. When he came to himself, and saw himself as he really was, he expressed his true name: The Sinner! (That is according to the original Greek.)

Yes, brother, that is your name also, as you are by nature. From the cradle to the grave, and every moment in between, you sin. You sin incessantly, continually. You sin whether you are regenerated and converted or not. Even the holiest man or woman that ever lived sins always and at every step of his way to eternity.

What is sin?

Sin is to miss the mark. It is a figurative expression of the Bible. And the figure used, speaks of a man that shoots the arrow or slings the stone or casts the spear at a mark set before him.

And that mark?

That mark is the glory of God!

Or: just God!

Thus man was set in the paradise of God the first.

All within him told him to shoot at the true mark: the glory of his Maker.

But such activity you do not see any more.

Man shoots, but not at God. He directs himself at the creature, either ourselves or another, or both.

* * * *

To cover sin: what is it?

From whom?

From man? Well, that is good. When you are extremely evil you sin openly. Extremely evil men and women sin openly.

See: Isaiah 3:9, "And they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not." Look at the fallen empires, just before their final fall: they flaunt sin openly!

Although when you sin against your brother you should not cover it before *his* eye, but, indeed, you even then cover your sin before the eye of the rest of the church.

Note some texts which refer to the covering of sin:

James 5:20, "Let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death and shall hide a multitude of sins."

And: I Peter 5:8, "And above all things, have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins."

So there is a certain covering or hiding of sin which is good and salutary.

What then?

The prophet speaks here of the covering of your sin before God! And that is very evil.

And that's the idea here. Look at the context. First of all in the text itself. But whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy. That is spoken of the man who confesses sin before God, of course. And so we conclude that also the first part of the text refers to God. You should not cover your sins before God.

And in the context: "Happy is the man that feareth alway, but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief." Also here man's relationship to God is stressed, and the prophet continues of course in the same strain.

Therefore, the idea is that you sinned against God. And you knew it was sin, but you did not confess, nor leave off sinning. But you covered this sin in your heart: you hardened your heart before God's all-seeing-eye.

And why?

Because you loved your sin, you relished it, and hated God, the Light.

And that is done.

Always by the wicked. Also, sometimes, by the church. Because of the flesh. And the Lord is addressing Himself to the church, of course. And this old prophet addresses you today, saying to you: confess your sins and you shall have mercy.

* * * *

What then? We are to confess our sins.

And to do that, my dear reader, you need the knowledge of God in two ways.

First, you need that knowledge as it is revealed in His Word. That is, the Bible, the whole Bible.

And that Bible is the revelation of God's own ethical life and will for our lives. In it you see exactly how you should walk from the heart out. Remember the text: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path"? Psalm 119:105.

However, even that Word of God is not enough. You may have that Bible memorized in full, and still go to hell.

Therefore, you need the knowledge of God by His Holy Spirit. More correctly: you need the knowledge of God through the Spirit of Christ, the Pentecostal Spirit.

If you have that Spirit, you are regenerated, converted, and you walk on the way of sanctification. Then the Word of God becomes a living power within you. For that Spirit is the Spirit of Truth and the Faithful Witness. He takes it out of Christ, and declares it unto you.

Through the twofold knowledge of God you acquire a knowledge of sin.

The conscience, enlightened and refreshed daily by the Spirit of Christ, reacheth you experientially when you sin, through the Word of God. And it also is the spiritual sense organ which makes you hate sin, especially your own sin.

And the result is that you will sorrow after God from the heart. Daily you will tell the Lord that you have sinned. You pour out your heart before His face.

That is confessing your sin. To that you are called in my text.

Then you confess your sins, all your sins, even the sins you do not know. You will distrust your own heart, and its dark corners. You will say with David in another place: Cleanse Thou me from secret faults!

* * * *

And forsaketh them.

First of all, that will be the constant desire of your heart. A Christian's inmost desire is to live without sin. That is so because Jesus lives within you. Hence, we desire to live according to all God's commandments.

And, secondly, that is the striving, the serious endeavour of your whole life. That is the constant laying off of the old man of sin, a daily exercise. And the putting on of the new man in Christ. In a word: sanctification.

But no perfectionism.

Even the holiest of God's children have only a very small principle of this new obedience. That makes heaven so attractive. For in heaven no one of God's children sins anymore.

* * * *

And what is the result?

Those who cover their sins before the eye of God shall not prosper.

First let me tell you that no one really succeeds in covering his sin before God's eye. You may think so in your heart, but it is not so. He knows all our hearts and the secrets within.

Now then, what is prospering?

To prosper is to proceed toward the set goal.

You know, creation must go through a great process in order to arrive at the final glorious purpose.

And the final goal is, that heaven and earth and all their hosts arrive before the Face of God, united in Christ Jesus in order to sing everlastingly the praises of Jehovah.

Now, if you cover your sins you will never arrive there. Oh, you will go to God alright, but when you get there, you will hear Him say to you: Depart from Me, you evil doer, I have never known you! Not to prosper means that you will retrograde. And that is hell!

The world, the wicked world, does not prosper.

That is very evident. Just live: see, hear, and observe. In all the media. And the sum total will tell you: they are running headlong into everlasting destruction.

But it is also a warning to the church of Jesus Christ. The tendency to cover our sins is always there.

David did. Until Nathan, the prophet, called on him and said: Thou art that man!

I read: "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah. I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and my iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah."

Hence: Return to the confession of your sins! Beware! If you do not: God's hand will be heavy upon you, until you do!

But when confessing and forsaking your sins, you will taste the mercy of Jehovah.

Mercy is the love of God for His people in great misery, with the determination to deliver them out of all their distresses.

It means that you will have the forgiveness of your sins, the acceptance in the everlasting arms of God!

Through His marvellous grace over you!

In that grace He gave you His great Substitute: Jesus Christ. All our sins were visited on Him, so that you might be set free!

Indeed, great is the mystery of Godliness: God manifested in the flesh: our Jesus!

G.V.

Notice for Classis West

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will convene, the Lord willing, in Oak Lawn, Illinois, on Wednesday, March 16, 1960, at 9:00 a. m.

The consistories are reminded of the rule that all matters for the classical agenda must be in the hands of the Stated Clerk not later than 30 days before the date of Classis.

Anyone needing lodging is requested to write to Rev. G. Vanden Berg, 9402 South 53rd Court, Oak Lawn, Illinois.

REV. H. VELDMAN, *Stated Clerk*
817 Webster St.
Redlands, California.

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Editor — REV. HERMAN HOEKSEMA

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EDITORIALS

As To Being Protestant Reformed

NOTE.

All our readers, no doubt, will by this time have wondered about my editorial in the Feb. 15 issue of our paper. The explanation is that, instead of the protest I meant to publish, something else appeared and the protest was left out. Hence I now publish the entire editorial as I meant to write it.

You ask who is to blame for this ridiculous error. Let us say: the undersigned, although he still cannot understand how it could possibly have taken place.

Just remember, dear reader, that *nihil humanum alianum est mihi*. And I say *peccavi*. Perhaps you cannot figure this out either. Then you better ask someone that knows Latin.

H.H.

I cannot refrain from acquainting our readers with a protest that was sent by those that call themselves the consistory of the Orthodox Protestant Reformed Church. I publish this protest because its contents are quite Protestant Reformed as far as it goes. Perhaps, this is the reason for the postscript at the end of this document.

The protest is meant for the schismatic Synod. I understand that it has already been before their classis in January, that, however, the discussion about it was not finished and that, therefore, it will be brought up again at a special meeting of classis in February.

I will first publish the entire protest and, at the end, make a few remarks.

Here, then, follows the protest:

To the Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches
convening in Grand Rapids, Mich., June 8, 1960

Rev. James Howerzyl — Clerk

Esteemed Brethren:

We are pleased that the Synod of 1959 complied with the request of this consistory that the Protestant Reformed Contact Committee report and its conclusions be forwarded to the individual consistories for further study and consideration.

In compliance with Art. 123, Acts of Synod 1959, this consistory offers the following evaluation, comment and recommendation.

I.

Our first observation is, that according to Art. 70 Acts of Synod 1957, dealing with the Testimony to the Christian Reformed Church in Proposition 3, sets forth the committee's mandate as consisting of "freely discussing the differences and similarities—and to report back to their respective churches."

The committee, we believe, went beyond this mandate. The mandate was to discuss differences and similarities. It seems that the Committee felt its mandate was to settle

the differences and to arbitrate the areas of agreement.

We are aware of the fact that the committee states in its introduction that they alone (N.L. the committee) are responsible for the material contained in the documents given to the Christian Reformed committee, but fact is nevertheless that what we have here are not opinions and expressions from mere individuals but from an officially appointed committee of the Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches and, therefore, when the committee states with regard to Point I, "We do not stumble over the expression that there is a certain grace or favor of God shown to the creatures in general"—and "we do not deny the offer of the gospel"—and when they speak of a non-redemptive favor or grace and of an un-differentiated mankind—then what other conclusion must be drawn from these statements but that this is what is commonly believed in the Protestant Reformed Churches. This, however, is not the truth—not only that it is not commonly believed, but it is contrary to all that has ever been written, preached or taught in the entire history of our churches.

II.

Secondly, when the committee report proposes a certain grace or favor to all creatures in general (non-redemptive) we oppose this on the same grounds we always have, namely, we find no Scriptural or confessional ground for it; it is not in harmony with God's wrath over sin; it is a grace with which the wicked go to eternal damnation, and the general tenor of Scripture is diametrically opposed to such a conception. To use as proof a footnote in Rev. Hoeksema's "History of the Protestant Reformed Churches" is unwarranted as the entire content of the book is a clear testimony to the contrary.

The committee report refers to three texts of Scripture for proof of the statements under Point I, namely: Psalm 145:9, Matt. 5:44, 45 and Acts 14:16, 17.

In each of these texts we have the assurance that God is good and that His goodness comes to manifestation in all of His works. This fact has never been denied by us.

However, God is also righteous in the manifestation of His goodness and "unless complete satisfaction is made for the sin which is committed against the most high majesty of God there is no escape from the punishment (both temporal and eternal) of the righteous and just God. The only way of *being again received into His favor* is by the satisfaction of Jesus Christ our Mediator." Lord's Day 4 and 5.

The Scriptures do not speak of any favor or grace in any other way than referred to above. The proof-texts cited in the committee report do not either.

The texts referred to, if taken in their proper context, teach that God gives good gifts to all His creatures but they do not teach that these gifts are given as a manifest token of His grace or favor. Grace is not in things as such. Psalm 145:20 and numerous other passages of Holy Scripture teach what God's attitude toward the wicked is.

Without giving any interpretation or exegesis the committee report simply refers to three texts from which we are convinced no one can prove what the committee seeks to prove.

How can the texts in question or any other text prove that the good gifts of rain, sunshine etc. must be conceived of as God's gracious inclination to reprobate in the face of the clear and constant testimony of the Scriptures that God hates the wicked, that He sets them in slippery places to destroy them, that His curse is upon them and that "He hides from them the mystery of the kingdom of God so that seeing they may see and not perceive and hearing they may hear and not understand, lest at any time they should be converted and their sins be forgiven them"?

III.

Thirdly, the consistory does not agree to a "general well-meant offer of the gospel."

The report speaks of "A call of the gospel that comes to a sinful mankind which historically is not yet differentiated as elect and reprobate."

This philosophy, we believe, is refuted in the early beginnings of history when God approaches mankind as the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent; which seeds were at that time yet to be born. God continues this approach throughout the Scriptures. We fail to find the so-called "undifferentiated" approach.

When we speak of the offer of the Gospel our attention is called to what is offered rather than to the seriousness and the well-meaningness of the offer, for if it is true that God offers something then it is certainly serious and well meant.

However, the question is what is meant by the offer of the Gospel. We may say without fear of contradiction that the Gospel is centrally Christ in His redemptive and saving power. If that is the content of the Gospel offered, to all that hear that Gospel, how do we escape the error of universal atonement? For if Christ is offered to all, then there must be salvation for all. We consider this to be in conflict with the word of Christ Himself when He said, "I pray not for the world, but them which Thou hast given me; for they are Thine." John 17:9.

If Christ does not pray for all, how can it be said that He is offered to all. Christ came to save those whom the Father had given Him. That must be proclaimed to all to whom God in His good pleasure sends the gospel of salvation. But that in itself already excludes those whom the Father has not given Him, therefore He does not pray for them. But Christ must be set before their eyes, as the only way of salvation, in order that through their rejection of the Saviour they may become ripe for destruction. That is according to the Scriptures and confessions.

IV.

Concerning the committee's report in regard to the second and third of the three points of 1924, the consistory expresses that the reformulations proposed are merely a sub-

terfuge, in that they by-pass the true thrust of the points in question.

In Point II, the restraint of sin being ascribed to the general operation of the Holy Spirit on the unregenerate is by-passed, and a restraint of sin ascribed to the providence of God and purposing the defense and preservation of the church is proposed.

In Point III the committee report proposes a civic good which, however, in the last analysis, is sinful in the sight of God, whereas it is not done from the root of faith. We do admit that the natural man at times does that which is outwardly according to the law of God, but to speak of a *sinful good* is a contradiction in terms, and whereas it is not done from the root of faith, neither to the glory of God, we would rather say with Romans 14:23, "whatsoever is not of faith is sin," and Romans 3:12, "there is none that doeth good, no, not one."

V.

We would sum up our observations by stating that the committee, in proposing certain reformulations, went beyond their mandate, and in so doing drew conclusions and made impressions that cannot be substantiated.

It is our avowed purpose and, we pray it may be Synod's also, to re-affirm our historic stand in regard to God's Sovereignty, man's total inability and the antithesis. Compromise in matters of God's truth will serve no good purpose for His church.

We feel that as Protestant Reformed Churches we can maintain a stronger antithetical position in this world by holding to the truth as it has been taught in our churches. It is not reformulations but re-affirmations that will yield good fruit for both the Protestant Reformed and the Christian Reformed churches.

May the good relations between the denominations continue and by mutual respect and goodwill, the cause of Christ be furthered.

We recommend that Synod do not approve the Committee's conclusions and further that the Synod, in answer to the official letter from the Christian Reformed Church, forward to them a testimony of the historic position of the Protestant Reformed Churches in regard to the Three Points of 1924, which the Christian Reformed Church has not in any degree revised or retracted.

Wishing you the guidance of the Holy Spirit in all your deliberations, we are your brethren in Christ.

Consistory of the First Orthodox
Protestant Reformed Church

(w.s.) H. De Wolf, Pres.

(w.s.) J. Bouwman, Clerk

Done in Consistory

November 23, 1959. December 28, 1959.

P. S. Rev. H. De Wolf's signature is not to be interpreted as indicating his agreement with the contents of this letter.

Remarks.

1. The reader will agree with me that the above is a thoroughly Protestant Reformed document. When you read this, you cannot help but wonder why, in 1953, the schismatics left the Protestant Reformed Churches. And when a split has once become a fact, history teaches us very plainly that it is well-nigh impossible to heal the breach. Of course, we are very willing to receive them back again but only on the basis of confession of their sin. It is impossible for us simply to re-unite as churches for we may not recognize them as such. Hence, we must ask them to confess their sin and thus return to us.

2. You may have noticed that I wrote above this document that it is Protestant Reformed "as far as it goes." This means, of course, that it does not go quite far enough. I have in mind now especially the conditional Theology of De Wolf c.s. Do they still agree with this? It seems almost impossible in view of the fact that they deny the "Three Points" and the well-meant offer of grace and salvation. With this a conditional promise certainly does not agree. Yet, on the other hand, they still maintain De Wolf and that seems to mean that they also agree with his heretical preaching as it was concentrated in the two well-known statements that were condemned by Classis East. Those statements, as you will remember were: 1. "God promises to everyone of you eternal life, if you believe"; and 2. "Faith is a prerequisite to enter the kingdom of heaven." No Protestant Reformed person can possibly agree with this conditional theology. And so, the question: do the authors of the document still maintain this?

3. The statement that the De Wolf's signature does not mean that he agrees is as ambiguous as many of his statements I have heard of him in the past. One can make most anything of it. And, therefore, I prefer to make nothing of it. The only thing I will say is that, personally, I would not sign any document if my signature had to be ambiguous, negative, and without any meaning.

H.H.

AS TO BOOKS

The Calvinistic Concept of Culture, by Dr. Henry Van Til. Published by Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich. Price \$4.50.

This book is divided into three parts. The first part defines the issue, the second is historical, the third is entitled: "Basic Considerations Toward a Definition."

It seems to me that the nearest approach to a definition of Culture is found, not in the third part of the book, as one would expect, but already in the first. Van Til defines or, at least, describes culture as "any human labor bestowed on God's creation in its widest sense, including man himself, by

which it receives historical forms and is refined to a higher level of productivity for the enjoyment of man. Culture, then, is any and all human effort and labor expended upon the cosmos, to unearth its treasures and its riches and bring them into the service of man for the enrichment of human existence and unto the glory of God."

The author rather strongly emphasizes the idea of the antithesis also in the sphere of culture. For this reason I cannot understand how he can nevertheless speak of and believe the doctrine of so-called common grace, maintaining the favorable attitude of God to the wicked, the restraint of sin, and civic righteousness. Writes he: "And although man in that state of sin hates God and not subject to the law of God yet by virtue of God's restraining grace he is able to do good," p. 235. In another connection he speaks of "relative good" whatever that may be. The author seems to have felt himself that this "common grace" cannot very well be harmonized with the truth of the antithesis. Yet he makes an attempt to do so. Cf. p. 237.

With all this we do not agree, as the author well knows. We do not believe in the restraint of sin but instead we teach the organic development of the human race and with it the organic development of sin. We do not believe that there is such a thing as "relative good" as does the author, simply because neither Scripture nor the Confessions speak of this. An act or deed of man is either good or evil. This is taught in Scripture throughout even in Luke 6:33. It is true that Rom. 1 tells us that, from the revelation in creation, the heathen knows God, but do not forget, in that same chapter, the Scriptures tell us that they hold under the truth in unrighteousness.

It is true that, according to Genesis 1, it was man's calling to subdue the earth. But, after the fall, he cannot do this anymore. The reason for this is, on the one hand, that the earth is under the curse and all the creatures are subject to vanity; and, on the other hand, that man has lost all his excellent gifts and has only a few remnants left. The result is that, in the real sense of the word, there is no true culture: death is the end of all man's labor under the sun, and presently creation will be destroyed by fire, even as the first world was destroyed by water. There is no final purpose of what is called culture. I have an idea that Kuyper felt this, too, and that for that reason he invented the absurd philosophy that the products of culture will be brought into the New Jerusalem. Culture and its products must have a final goal and purpose in order to be real culture. And this is not the case. The man of culture walks, as it were in a treadmill: he gets nowhere.

Nevertheless, I recommend this book to our readers and to read it critically.

H.H.

OUR DOCTRINE

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

PART TWO

CHAPTER TWELVE

The Lamb On Mount Zion

Revelation 14:1-5

There we found that all the kingdoms of the earth had combined and conspired together, and that with the definite purpose of rebellion against God and against His Christ. The nations we found raging with madness to establish their kingdom, in which the devil is worshipped and Jehovah is thrust from His throne. And those same facts are described in Psalm 2. But let us continue. Verse 4 reveals to us the attitude of God Almighty over against these raging nations and peoples. What does Jehovah think about this condition? Is He frightened? Does He now admit His defeat and acknowledge that He must surrender His kingdom? Not at all. We read: "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision." When Antichrist shall rage and establish his kingdom and apparently will have the victory and realize his kingdom, God Almighty shall laugh. The whole thing appears so utterly foolish to Him that He laughs about it. That man could conceive of the possibility of establishing a kingdom in which the devil should be supreme is such a piece of folly to God in heaven that He derides them from heaven and mocks at the whole devilry of the dragon. It is a vain thing which they imagine. The whole plan of the raging nations shall collapse and prove to be without reality. And why? Simply because of His own eternal plan and counsel. The Lord God Almighty made His counsel. And that eternal counsel of the Almighty does not call for the permanent existence of such a kingdom of Satan, but for its destruction. And for that reason the psalm continues to reveal that plan of God Almighty. In verses 5 to 9 we read: "Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." Because God had anointed Christ, and not the devil, over His holy hill, the stronghold of the kingdom, the former shall never succeed; but his kingdom shall fall. And therefore, it is from that psalm that we learn the meaning of the expression "the Lamb on mount Zion." It implies that God's decree shall stand and that no raging nations shall ever frustrate His plan. It implies that God's decree calls for a kingdom under Christ, the Lamb, the Anointed of God, and that this Lamb actually stands in authority over the na-

tions at all times. It implies that the entire devilry of Antichrist shall be destroyed and that the Holy One of Zion shall break them in pieces.

If this is clear, the whole vision of John and its purpose is also clear. The question might arise, as we look at that mighty kingdom of Antichrist: is not this after all the kingdom that shall abide forever — this mighty kingdom, beautiful and strong, lording it over all the world, and finding its highest purpose in the worship of the beast and the devil? If that is so, is not then the cause of Christ a lost cause, and have not the people of God then hoped in Him in vain? These questions are answered in our vision of the Lamb on Mount Zion. No, that entire kingdom of the world is bound to fall and to be destroyed. Why? Because the Lamb still stands on Mount Zion. To the natural eye He is not visible; the spiritual eye of faith sees Him plainly. The Lamb, not the devil, is the King of this world. The Lamb, and not the beast, shall have the victory. The devil, and not the Lamb, shall be defeated and destroyed. Because the Lamb is the Anointed One, and therefore has the certain decree of God back of Him, He shall surely have the victory. And therefore the people of God, when all things seem against them and Antichrist seems to rage in all his fury, need never despair. Lift up your eyes to heaven and behold the Lamb on mount Zion. His is the victory.

If this picture of the power of the Lamb over against the antichrist is clear, we will also understand that the rest of our text shows us the effect of this power of our mighty King upon His own people. The Lamb is not alone, He has His people with Him, the one hundred and forty-four thousand. We have met with this number before. See on chapter VII. And, therefore, we do not have to explain the meaning of this number again. At that time we called your attention to the fact that they were not Israelites in the literal sense of the word. The present passage corroborates this. There can be no question that in both cases the number has the same meaning. If in the former case they were Jews they must also be here. But then you obtain the strange explanation, which some actually hold, that the saints that will be on earth at the time of Antichrist will all be from the seed of Abraham in the literal sense of the word. And that is, evidently, not the case. And, therefore, we maintain that the one hundred and forty-four thousand represent the number of the elect that are on the earth at any moment of the world's history. There are always one hundred and forty-four thousand people of God on earth: the number of God's elect. In the present passage they denote the people of God on earth at the time of the antichristian power. What, then, is the meaning of this number in this connection? Why are they mentioned here? Simply to show that not one of the elect is missing. They are all with the Lamb on mount Zion. They have all remained faithful. They have all followed the Lamb whithersoever He leadeth them even in the time of tribulation.

H.H.

A CLOUD OF WITNESSES

Joseph Before Pharaoh

And it came to pass at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh dreamed . . .

Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon . . .

And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, the dream of Pharaoh is one: God hath shewed Pharaoh what he is about to do. GENESIS 41:1, 14, 25.

Days stretched into weeks, and weeks into months, and the months multiplied themselves, after the king's butler was taken from prison, but the release which Joseph expected did not come. The hope had grown strong within him that he would be set free to return to the land of Canaan and to his father's house. Seeing the dreams of the butler and baker fulfilled before his eyes revived in his memory the dreams of his youth. Those dreams too, he realized now even more than at the time, were revelations from God. Yet they seemed impossible of fulfillment unless he would be left free to return to his brothers and father. The butler appeared to be the logical agent through whom such could be brought to pass. But God does not follow the plans of man. The butler, who figured so prominently in Joseph's plan, was a mere man and not worthy of being trusted. Though he had promised, to ask favors of Pharaoh was too precarious a thing. Time and again he put it off until Joseph was all but forgotten. While he procrastinated, the months slipped by, and gradually and sadly the hopes of Joseph began to wane. God was teaching him. He was left with nothing more to do than to "wait on the Lord." Only when he had learned that lesson would he be ready for what God had in store.

Two full years had passed by when Pharaoh dreamed dreams. In a sense these dreams were hardly extraordinary. The elements of the dreams were such as might be expected to appear in the undirected playing of Pharaoh's mind during sleep. In the first dream, "There came up out of the river seven well favoured kine and fatfleshed; and they fed in a meadow. And, behold, seven other kine came up after them out of the river, ill favoured and leanfleshed; and stood by the other kine upon the brink of the river. And the ill favoured and leanfleshed kine did eat up the seven well favoured and fat kine." The river here is the Nile upon which all of the fertility of Egypt was dependent. The cows were an almost sacred symbol of fertility. These were constantly on the minds of the Egyptians and that they should appear in the dream of Pharaoh was not at all unusual. That seven lean cows should eat seven fat cows is one of the strange quirks which are almost ordinary in everyone's dreams. The same is true of the second dream. In that dream, "Seven ears of corn came up on one stalk, rank and good.

And behold, seven thin ears and blasted with the east wind sprung up after them. And the seven thin ears devoured the seven rank and full ears." Corn, or grain, was the chief crop of Egypt and an every day concern. The east wind mentioned was a hot wilting breeze and an ever present danger for their crops. These were frequently on Pharaoh's mind and could very normally appear in his dreams.

Nonetheless, from the moment that he awoke, Pharaoh could not think of these dreams as something normal. They were different from any that he had ever had. They were so extremely vivid. We read, "And Pharaoh awoke, and, behold, it was a dream." He was startled and astonished to find himself lying in bed. He had none of that vague distant feeling toward what he had seen which often characterizes a dream. Even after he awoke, the image of those dreams stood out so vividly in his mind that he could hardly imagine that they had not been real. The dreams stood out in his memory so much like an actual experience that it frightened him. Furthermore there was the strange similarity of the two dreams, too great to be coincidental. The two were definitely distinct, not just the repetition of one dream with slight variations. Nonetheless, the underlying thought of both was exactly the same. This too frightened him. But more than anything else that made these dreams important, was the feeling that accompanied them. From the moment that he awoke, Pharaoh knew that the source of his dreams was more than human. He undoubtedly tried to shake that thought, ascribing all to his imagination, but it would not leave him. There was something ominously impending in those dreams that he could not ignore. Try as he would he could not escape that feeling for a moment. It frightened him. He could not rest until he found out the meaning of those dreams.

Upon awaking Pharaoh summoned the magicians and wise men of his court. This was the natural thing to do. These were men that were constantly delving into the matters of the future. By astrology, sorcery, and many other means they were ever trying to tell what the morrow would bring. Not the least of their methods was to elicit from dreams fanciful, allegorical predictions. This time, however, they listened to the dream of Pharaoh and remained silent. They could not give an interpretation. This is what surprises us. Why did these men not offer an imaginary interpretation, as was their custom, so veiled in vague language that the truthfulness of it could never be tested? Was it, perhaps, that, seeing how vitally concerned Pharaoh was with these dreams, they knew that he would never be satisfied with their usual vague ambiguities? Were they maybe afraid that they might say something that would offend and anger him in his agitated state, concluding that silence was the safer course? Or was it merely that God so confused their minds that they were unable to engage in their usual duplicity and had to confess their ignorance to Pharaoh? Regardless of what actually took place in the minds of these magicians

and wise men, this much is sure, it showed to Pharaoh that in as much as the dreams which he had received were from God, the interpretation of them was not to be found in the minds of any mere man.

It was not long before the consternation in the court over the dream of the king came to the attention of the chief butler. It sent his mind back to a similar situation in his own life, when he had had a revelatory dream and was troubled for lack of an interpreter. For two years now he had failed to keep his promise in pleading the cause of Joseph before the king for fear that the king would consider him presumptuous even though the cause was just. Now he saw the opportunity of bringing Joseph out of prison and at the same time doing Pharaoh a favor which would be to his own advantage. He went to the king and related how Joseph had accurately interpreted his dream in the prison.

Pharaoh, his own wise men having failed him, was ready to try whatever means presented itself to arrive at the meaning of his dreams. Joseph was called from prison and, after he had shaved himself and put on a new garment, he was received into the presence of Pharaoh. To him Pharaoh said, "I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it: and I have heard say of thee, that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it." To this Joseph gave the beautiful answer, "It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace." Having undergone over a dozen years of hardship and suffering, Joseph was purged from the pride of his youth. An ordinary man would find in the request of Pharaoh a severe temptation to tell about some of his own excellency and ability. Joseph, however, disclaimed all personal virtue in the matter. The first thing which he said to Pharaoh was that the ability to interpret dreams did not rest with himself. Having learned not to trust in himself, he gave all of the glory to his God. Whether in the dungeon of a dank prison or in the court of a great king, the first word from Joseph's lips was a witness to the greatness of his God. "It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace."

Pharaoh, having become even more concerned about the dreams than at first, immediately began to relate the dreams to Joseph in even more vivid terms than before. The ill favoured and lean-fleshed kine of the first description are now spoken of as "very ill favoured and leanfleshed, such as I never saw in all the land of Egypt for badness." To the fact that the ill favoured kine ate the well fleshed kine he added, "And when they had eaten them up, it could not be known that they had eaten them." Constant review made the dream appear even more vivid in Pharaoh's mind. The outstanding features were implanting themselves deeper in his memory.

With the calmness of a man who had learned to trust completely in his God, Joseph immediately related to Pharaoh the meaning of his dream. "The dream of Pharaoh is one: God hath shewed Pharaoh what he is about to do. The seven good kine are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years: the dream is one. And the seven thin and ill favoured kine that came up after them are seven

years; and the seven empty ears blasted with the east wind shall be seven years of famine. This is the thing which I have spoken unto Pharaoh: What God is about to do he sheweth unto Pharaoh. Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt; and the famine shall consume the land; and the plenty shall not be known in the land by reason of that famine following; for it shall be very grievous. And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice; it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass." The explanation is simple, direct, and understandable. Once it is understood it seems almost self-evident. Only one fact had to be revealed, the seven kine and seven ears of grain were equivalent to seven years, then the whole matter immediately became clear. The good kine and good ears were seven years of plenty. The bad kine and bad ears were seven years of famine. The bad years would consume the plenty of the good and be left with nothing to spare. No one could seriously question the correctness of this interpretation. Even the Egyptian magicians must have immediately realized that what he said was true. The certainty of divinely revealed truth compared to the uncertainty of the wisdom of man stood out in the clearest contrast.

To this also Joseph added a word of advice. "Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt. Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years. And let them gather all the food of those good years that come, and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities. And that food shall be for store to the land against the seven years of famine, which shall be in the land of Egypt; that the land perish not through the famine." How astonishing this must have appeared unto Pharaoh. There before him stood a man who not only was able to lay before him the meaning of his dream in the most direct and simple terms, but he also was able to give to him a solution to all the many problems that presented themselves in this amazing revelation. Pharaoh looked at that young man standing there and speaking with the wisdom of the divine; yet Joseph took to himself no airs, no pride or boasting; with all humility he stood with the meekness of a servant. Awed by the wisdom that Joseph received from his God, Pharaoh answered, "Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art: Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou."

B.W.

Notice

Commencing March 1, 1960, the worship services and all meetings of the First Prot. Ref. Church of Holland, Mich., will be held at their new location on West 12th St., corner of Washington Avenue.

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of I Corinthians 15

I.

(I Corinthians 15:1-11)

During the past several years it has been the privilege of the undersigned writer to have given expository essays on several Chapters of the first epistle of Paul to the Corinthians.

I believe that a perusal of the past issues of *The Standard Bearer* will bear out that I have written separate series of essays on I Corinthians 1-4; I Corinthians 7; I Corinthians 12-14, and other separate essays on other texts in this epistle.

When one writes continuously, and for many years, it is heartening, to say the least, to receive word from a reader that he or she enjoys, or has enjoyed a certain series of articles from one's pen. Occasionally the undersigned receives such comments. I would like to take this opportunity to thank these readers for such expressions of appreciation. Although one does not live by applause it nevertheless gives added impetus for new and other series of articles when such appreciation is expressed.

Recently a reader requested that I write on I Corinthians 15. Since I am now finished with the exposition of Romans 14, 15, I will at this time comply with that request. I do so because I believe that this chapter contains very much matter of real and vital instruction concerning the hope of the Gospel of Christ. It is rich in implication concerning the meaning of the resurrection of Christ, and concerning our blessed resurrection, and lastly, but not least, concerning the truth of the resurrection as it is the cardinal factor wherein God becomes all in all in the whole creation in Christ.

Permit us to quote the first section of this fifteenth chapter of the first epistle of Paul to the Corinthians. It reads as follows: "*Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all, that which also I received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he arose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve . . . Wherefore whether it were I or they, so we preach and so ye believed.*"

Looking at this section, these first eleven verses, we believe that we should call attention to the following salient points.

Paul's Concern For The Truth Of The Gospel.

(Verses 1, 2, 11)

Paul indicates at the very outset in these verses, that, in this chapter, he is touching upon the very *heart* of the gospel. When some, in the church at Corinth, said that "there is no resurrection out of the dead" they were not simply denying some peripheral detail, some matter lying at the outer circumference of the gospel, but they put the knife at the jugular vein of the truth of the gospel. Deny the truth and the fact of the resurrection and one denies the very glad-tidings of salvation itself. It is because of this that Paul labors to establish once more in the mind of the Corinthian saints what he and the other apostles had preached, and what they had believed. He ends this section with the very terse saying, "Wherefore whether it were I or they, so we preach and so ye believed."

Indeed that is elegantly and concisely stated.

We do well, therefore, to take a bit more careful notice of Paul's *point of departure* in this chapter.

This point of departure is twofold. And thus Paul establishes the *Status Quo* in the church. Paul makes a point of it to insist that whatsoever he had preached in their midst it was what he "had received." When he first came to Corinth on his second missionary journey (see Acts 18), he "delivered" to them what he had received from the Lord. He had come to them as an ambassador, as a herald in the name of Christ. He had determined to know nothing among them save Jesus Christ and him crucified, with all of its implications. And he had faithfully performed the task of such a messenger of Christ. Do we not read in Acts 18:5, "and when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ." And, again, do we not read of Apollos in Acts 18:28 that "he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, shewing by the Scriptures, that Jesus was the Christ"?

Particularly two points were the chief subject in this convincing of the people that Jesus was the Christ. It was that this appears in his *death* and in his *resurrection*.

Such had been the *central theme* of all Paul's preaching. That had been the very heart of it. He preached this as one unit. The one belonged with the other in the gospel story of redemption. This is very beautifully expressed in Romans 4:25, where we read, "who was delivered for our offenses and raised for our justification." This certainly means that because we were sinners, Christ died for us. It was a vicarious death. And that Christ might come forth from the grave to proclaim to us that our sins are no more, and to give us immortality and life.

What a sordid commentary on human nature that Paul must, with might and main, defend this position of the gospel, and that so soon after he had preached it to them. Fact is, that due to the Jewish leaders Paul was not even welcome in this church. They looked at him askance. But he will

defend the central truth of the gospel nonetheless. The love of Christ constrains him.

What glorious gospel that Christ came forth on the third day, according to the Scriptures, because he died according to the Scriptures for our sins. Compare Isaiah 53:8, 9; Luke 24:26. Does not the resurrected Christ say to the travelers to Emmaus, "Must not the Christ suffer all these things and thus enter into his glory." And do we not read that "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." See also Luke 24:44. Thus it was according to the Scriptures that Christ arose from the dead on the "third day." Is there not a remote reference to this already in such passages II Kings 20:5, Isaiah 54:7 and Hosea 6:2? And is not the prophecy of Jonah most explicit on this score where we read, "And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights" (Jonah 1:17.) And does not our Lord himself interpret this as the sign of his own death and resurrection in Matthew 12:40, "For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

Such was the gospel which Paul had received and such was what he had "delivered" to the church at Corinth.

That determines what is truth in the church!

They who deny this are false teachers, and put the knife to the jugular vein; let none be deceived by them!

On the other hand such was also the truth in which the church "believed," unless they had believed in vain. It was possible that they had only rejoiced for a season, and that they had become confirmed apostates. But if they were not, then surely they were such that they *were saved* by the truth delivered unto them, and they were confirmed in this truth and stood in it, and they had indeed received it with believing hearts.

Thus the truth of the gospel is confirmed in their minds.

Such is Paul's concern; such is his *point of departure*!

Besides, the truth of the Gospel, as sealed in the resurrection of Christ, is attested to by many reliable witnesses. Paul mentions them here in verses 5-10. He really has two classes of witnesses.

First of all there are the witnesses which we might call the regular witnesses. They witness Christ after his resurrection and before his ascension to heaven. They are given by Paul in the following order here:

1. First of all by Cephas (vs. 5).
2. Then by the "twelve" on the evening of the day of the resurrection. Compare also Luke 24 and John 20:19 (vs. 5).
3. Then He was witnessed by about five hundred brethren at once, the greater part of whom were still alive when Paul wrote these lines (vs. 6).
4. Then by James, the brother of the Lord (vs. 7).

5. Last of all by the apostles at the occasion of the ascension to heaven (vs. 8).

Secondly, Paul puts himself in a class of witnesses all by himself. He did not witness the risen Lord prior to his ascension to heaven. It was on the road to Damascus that Paul saw the Lord. Besides, the Lord himself appeared to Paul in Corinth in the night by a vision (Acts 18:9) and Paul indicates both in Gal. 1:1 and in I Cor. 11:23 that he had seen the Lord. It is true that he considers this his witnessing of Christ comparable to being as "one born out of due time" (a miscarriage) but this does not detract from the reliability of his having been a witness of the risen and glorified Lord, who was delivered for our offenses and raised for our justification.

Thus the truth stands attested.

In the marvelous providence of God Paul received this "vision" of Christ as a great mercy. What he is and has done is all the grace of God. And therein he glories.

Thus the foundation is laid for that which Paul will now "make known" unto the Corinthians. It should be noticed that Paul employs a rather peculiar term here in verse 1, when he says: "moreover, brethren, I *declare* unto you . . ." The verb "declare" is a translation of the term in Greek "Gnoorizoo," which means: "to make known" and not simply to "call to mind." The latter term is a translation of the verb "ana-mimneeskoo." An instance of the latter we find in I Cor. 4:17: ". . . who shall *put you in remembrance* of my ways which are in Christ Jesus." However, Paul would do more than simply put the Corinthians in remembrance of what he had taught them during his year and a half stay in their midst. He will "make known" unto them more in detail the implication of the resurrection of Christ for the entire plan of salvation, the mystery of godliness. For the use of the term *make known* we refer to such clear passages as Rom. 9:22, 23; John 15:15 and John 17:26.

In all of these passages mention is made of making known of something which was hitherto hid, and which is known only by revelation. Hence, Paul will reveal the fuller implications of the truth of the resurrection, which he had, indeed, preached to them while in their midst.

This is corroborated by a bird's-eye view of this entire chapter. Paul will call attention, therefore, in the sequence of this chapter (verses 12-58) to the following points:

1. The central meaning itself for the gospel *as such* of the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Verses 12-19.
2. The meaning of the resurrection for Christ's exaltation as the "First-fruits," the subjection of all things under his feet, and for our deliverance from sin and death, that "God may be all in all." Verses 20-28.
3. The meaning which the doctrine and fact of the resurrection has for Christian ethics. Verses 29-34.
4. The manner of the resurrection and the nature of the resurrection, as it transforms us into the immortality of Christ and the final victory over death. G.L.

IN HIS FEAR

Punishment or Praise?

(3)

The question is not whether we shall or shall not punish or praise. The question is rather, When shall we punish and when shall we praise? We are not writing to those who condemn all punishment. Although we are aware of the fact that there are all too many parents even in our circles who punish far too seldom. There are parents who fail not only to punish their disobedient children, but instead pat them on the back even in their sins. The child comes home with a black eye and bruised nose. Well, he had been called names at school and gotten into a fist-fight to retain his dignity among his classmates. The natural thing to do is to be more concerned with his cuts and bruises than with his guilt. You cannot touch that guilt, but you can care for the bruised and injured flesh. It is so easy and natural to ask the child what happened to him rather than to ask what he did. And on learning the facts in the case many a parent's next question is as to whether he gave that other fellow what he had coming, and then to pat him on the back for winning this little encounter with the "enemy." O, indeed, we too are in favour of patting children on the back after such a deed. Only it must be hard enough and low enough so as not to be misunderstood! If the world's slogan, "spare the rod and spoil the child," is true, then here you will find the answer to the question as to why so many children are spoiled today. And that wisest of all mere men, Solomon, says, "He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes (by the times)." To be sure, there are those today who consider themselves to be wiser than Solomon and consider him to be old fashioned. But this still remains the word of God regardless of our opinion of Solomon. And though a man may appear to have all the natural love for his child that you could want to see in him, he has no spiritual love, if he spares the rod and fails to inflict the punishment upon his child which the times demand. It seems cute to let him go. It seems so much more fatherly to walk in the ways of Eli. And then when in later years he goes his own unspiritual way, the matter is transferred to others with words such as these, "Domine, I wish you would talk to my boy. I told him this and that, but he just does it anyway. Maybe, if you talk to him, you can get him to have more interest in spiritual things." First we teach our children that business and religion do not mix and that recreation and religion do not mix; and then we expect someone else to take hold of our children when they continue to choose business and recreation above religion. We teach them that material things have the preference over the spiritual, that a business trip or meeting, a new suit of clothes, a little pleasure here and a

program there may have the preference over catechism; and then we wonder why they choose the material as being more important than the spiritual. And even in their presence we will defend that business trip or the like. We do not like to be classified with those of whom Solomon says that they hate their children. Yet it is plain that we do not love them enough to direct them in the right way.

And yet we maintain, we are not writing to those who deny and condemn all punishment. With all the weaknesses and frailties that are to be found among the children of God in their role of parents, we do not believe that those who condemn all punishment are interested enough to read these lines. In His Fear does not interest them. In The Bank does. In the Pocket does. In The Eyes of Men does. In The Sphere of Worldly Entertainment does. But In His Fear is not their sphere. And so we go out from the principle that we are writing to those who value punishment as a corrective method in their children and in the church.

What is more, we have pointed out that praise is not in every instance to be condemned. Speaking one's praise is not necessarily evil. Jesus praised the Canaanitish woman to her face. And Paul writes words of praise to the various congregations and of the men who labored with him in the work of the ministry. And so punishment and praise are here in this world with God's approval. In the right place and rightly used they have their own peculiar value and benefit.

But now the problem arises: when in the same deed there is evil and that which is praiseworthy, what shall we do? Shall we punish and praise? Shall we choose punishment alone, on the principle that the sin and evil far overshadows the good, and more harm is done by failing to punish than failing to praise? Or shall we praise alone, in the belief that to encourage to do good and to praise for the doing of good will make the sin less attractive and avoided?

Of course, we may expect to find in the life of the regenerated child of God that which demands punishment and also that which is praiseworthy. In the ungodly you will never find anything but that which is displeasing in God's sight. "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord; but the prayer of the upright is His delight," Proverbs 15:8. That sacrifice may look praiseworthy; and that which Cain brought in a sacrifice to God was the best of what he grew in the field. Yet it was an abomination to the Lord. And so it is with all that which the unregenerated do regardless of whether it looks good to us or not. "Without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him," Hebrews 11:6. "For whatsoever is not of faith is sin," Romans 14:23b. Never mind what the eye sees. A thing is praiseworthy only when it is worthy of God's praise. Only when HE says that it is good, it is worthy of our praise. Every physical or mental deed has its spiritual side which determines whether it is good or bad.

The motive behind it is a spiritual thing. The goal it seeks to reach is a spiritual thing. And even as God's purpose in giving a thing or in doing a certain work determines whether it is a work of grace or merely of His providence, so our purpose, the innermost thought and desire behind our works determines whether they are worthy of praise or not. Uzzah, the son of Abinedab, to all outward appearances performed a good deed when he put forth his hand to keep the ark from falling off the cart into the mire. It would seem that God punished him instead of praised him for a good deed. But let us not pretend to be wiser than God! God calls it a rash deed. God is filled with anger and not with delight. We repeat with underscoring, "The sacrifices of the wicked are an *abomination* to the Lord: but the prayer of the upright is His delight." And so you will not find anything praiseworthy among the unregenerated, and we better be sure that we do not applaud them and encourage them to repeat and develop their evil deeds.

But in the church you may find both, because there you deal with regenerated, new-born men; and yet their old natures are still also very present to produce works worthy of punishment and requiring chastisement. The child who copies and cheats in school in order that he may please his parents with a good report card is not worthy of praise. Not only is the praise of a good report card not due to him. But his motive was evil. To please one's parents is not a good work and one worthy of praise. To please God and to please one's parents by pleasing God is another matter. And so such a child should be punished and not praised at all. His attention should be called to the fact that it is not right to seek to please parents in the way of disobeying God. And the parent who encourages his child in such endeavours and does not point out the error of this to his child is letting his natural love discount the spiritual things. You cannot even say to such a child, You meant well. He did not mean well. We are not saying that all tact and careful handling of the matter must be thrown out the window. Not at all. But we mean that the child must be taught that his cheating was wicked in God's sight and that his desire to please his parents in a sinful way is likewise wicked, that he has nothing for which to be praised. And by all means, let him know that you consider walking in God's commandments the principal thing, so that a good mark on the report card must come only in that way.

There are, however, certain instances where a child disobeys and yet in the same deed does a praiseworthy thing. The method may be wrong while the motive is good. We have a classic example of such an act in the Scriptures. It deals with the deed of an adult, but it reveals that while much sin cleaves to us and to our children, we do also that which is praiseworthy. Rahab, the harlot, is recorded with the "heroes of faith" and praised for having hid the spies. Yet it was a lie that she used in order to keep them safe in their place of hiding. Similarly today, a man may lose his temper

while defending the truth. He may be filled with zeal for the truth over against those who would destroy it and deceive others. He is not to be excused and surely is worthy of severe rebukes for revealing personal anger. Yet he is to be praised for his stand for the truth. He should not be praised for his temper, his unethical procedure. Nor does he have room to complain if he is severely taken to task for his unbrotherly conduct. We may esteem him for his zeal and love for the truth, but we must not praise him for works of the flesh. We have our own flesh, and that makes it so easy and natural to banish all thought of rebuke and to praise even out of carnal considerations. But these two, punishment and praise, must never militate against each other or deny each other.

No different is it with our children. Our covenant youth also have spiritual life. No, they are not as fully advanced in the truth as we are. They are not as experienced in the things spiritual as the adult. But let us make no mistake about it: they not only have spiritual life within them; they have the very same spiritual life that we have. We both have the life of Christ, given us by the selfsame Spirit of Christ. That our children do have spiritual motives and that there are works also in their lives that are praiseworthy is to be expected and is not to be viewed with amazement. It is as much a miracle that we believe and walk in good works as it is that they do. And because they still have the old nature, there is that matter of discipline also, and punishment becomes a must.

Next time we would like to lay down certain principles whereby we may be guided in determining when to punish and when to praise. For in punishing but also in praising we would walk in His fear.

J.A.H.

A PRAYER OF FAITH

O gracious God, forsake me not
When I am old and gray,
That unto those that follow me
I may Thy might display.

Thy perfect righteousness, O God,
The height of heaven exceeds;
O who is like to Thee, Who hast
Performed such mighty deeds?

Thou Who has sent me many griefs
Wilt yet my soul restore,
And out of sorrow's lowest depths
Wilt bring me forth once more.

Psalm 71:1-3

CHRIST AND MOSES CONCERNING DIVORCE

The above title does not refer to the teaching of Moses and of Christ concerning the whole subject of divorce, but only concerning Jesus' interpretation of one of the laws of Moses. The text referred to in the title is found in Deuteronomy 24:1-4. This passage reads: "When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife. And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth it in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her to be his wife; Her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after she is defiled; for that is abomination before the Lord: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance."

This text therefore teaches that a husband, once having put away his wife for some uncleanness which he found in her, may never take her again to be his wife under any circumstances.

This text and its interpretation, the wicked Pharisees of Jesus' day used as an occasion to try to trap Jesus so that they would have some basis on which to accuse Him and condemn Him.

The rabbins did not agree completely on their interpretation of this text. There was the school of Hillel, a rather noted rabbi himself, who taught that this passage meant that a wife could be put away for any reason which the husband might consider just. If a wife burned her husband's food for the evening meal, this might be considered adequate grounds for divorce if a husband was so inclined. The school that followed this rabbi was a lax school with a very wide and almost worldly interpretation of the law. It was, to a considerable extent, followed by the Pharisees in Jesus' day—at least when it served as the rule for their own lives. They were always ready to apply a narrower interpretation of the law to the lives of the common people. There was however, also the school of Shammai which was much more strict in its interpretation of the whole body of Mosaic legislation in general, and of this passage in particular. This school, following its founder, taught that the "uncleanness" spoken of in the text referred particularly to some sin of fornication, as lasciviousness, inordinate lust, wanton living, etc. And the conclusion was that only for these reasons could a man put away his wife and give her a writ of divorce.

It is evidently to the difference between these schools of thought that the Pharisees refer when they came to Jesus "tempting him." In fact it seems as if they refer specifically to the Rabbi Hillel when they say, "Is it lawful for a man

to put away his wife *for every cause*?" Matthew 19:3. If Jesus answered "Yes," they could accuse Him of a very loose interpretation of the law and a scorn for the sanctity of marriage; while if He answered in the negative, they would be ready to point out that Moses had made provision for divorce, and that He was placing Himself in conflict with Moses.

But Jesus was perfectly aware of their treachery and base designs; and in answering them He used the occasion to lay down some important principles concerning the marriage relation. Christ went back not to Moses, but to Adam and Eve in Paradise. He pointed out to them that the marriage relationship was established in Paradise, and that it was an unbreakable relationship. "Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." Matthew 19:4-6.

This was exactly what the Jews had been waiting for; and they are quick to point out to Jesus the passage quoted above where it appears as if a divorce is permissible after all. Jesus had emphasized that the marriage bond was incapable of being destroyed. The Pharisees, almost gleefully, show that Moses had made provision for putting away one's wife. "Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?" vs. 7. The answer of Jesus to this question is that "Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so." vs. 8.

Thus the question is, Was Jesus' teaching concerning divorce different from the teaching of Moses?

Before discussing the relation between these two passages of Holy Writ, it is important to notice that the question before us is not whether remarriage is possible for divorced people. This was not the question that concerned the Pharisees, nor is it the question that concerns us. This subject has aroused considerable discussion of late and has even resulted in Synodical action in the Christian Reformed Church. But this is not here our problem. In fact, this subject, which was assigned, would seem to imply that a true severing of the marriage bond is impossible, and that any remarriage constitutes adultery for both parties that are separated and who marry others. Although divorce is possible on the grounds of adultery, this can only mean that husband and wife separate, remaining in fact however in the covenant of marriage. For, if those who had assigned the subject had taken the position that Jesus teaches that remarriage after divorce is possible, there would then be no point in discussing this matter, for there would not even be an apparent contradiction. Deuteronomy speaks of the remarriage of the guilty party. And certainly if the guilty party may remarry, the innocent party may also enter into a marriage relationship with another.

With the position that the marriage relation can be dissolved by nothing but death, I am in perfect agreement. This is the position that Jesus takes in this passage in Matthew 19, and this is quite obviously the meaning of Scripture in such passages as Matthew 5:32, Mark 10:11, Luke 16:18. This is also plainly taught in the fact that the marriage relationship is but a picture of the eternal relation between Christ and His church in which He is the Bridegroom and His elect church the bride. This marriage can never be dissolved. It is an eternal relation that Christ sovereignly and graciously maintains even when His people repeatedly commit spiritual adultery.

But the question remains, Did Jesus contradict Moses? This is, of course impossible. Moses was a prophet, and as such the mouthpiece of God. Moses laid down the laws which governed Israel's life by divine revelation. What Moses said, God said. And Jesus, Who is God's own Son in our flesh could perfectly speak the Word of God and could perfectly understand and interpret what God said through Moses.

But then, how could Jesus speak of the marriage bond as indissoluble while Moses spoke of giving one's wife a writ of divorce for certain reasons?

Usually the interpretation is given that Moses made a concession to the sin of the people. This is construed as being the meaning of Jesus when He says, "Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives." Then the meaning is that somewhere in Israel's history, probably in Egypt in their association with the heathen Egyptians, they had picked up the custom of divorcing their wives for various reasons. When Israel came to Sinai, and the law of God was given to them, Moses found it to be impossible to root out this evil completely, for the people were of a very hard heart. He therefore conceded that the custom could not be entirely eliminated and tried instead to put some check on a loose life of divorce and remarriage. Frivolous divorces were stopped by the law which Moses laid down, for if a man could not remarry his wife once she had been put away and remarried to another, he would not rashly divorce her in the first place. Besides, a woman, knowing that divorce was possible if she did not please her husband, would be careful not to offer an inducement for divorce. And finally this check was placed upon rash divorces, that a woman was defiled morally by a second marriage which defilement made it impossible for her to go back to her first husband.

The serious objection to this interpretation is however, that God never makes concessions to sin. His law is holy and just and good and is the perfect reflection of His own will with respect to the lives of His moral creatures. He does not take into account the sins of which mankind are guilty and lighten the requirement of the law because it may be impossible for man to fulfill it. He does not "tone down" His just demands because man has sinned so greatly and

hardened himself in sin to such an extent that he cannot keep the law at all. For God to do this in one instance would make probable the possibility that He had done it in other instances, and this would be a virtual denial of God's righteousness. He cannot deny Himself. His demands stand eternally. He never lowers the requirements of His law. He always punishes evil doers, whether or not they are able to keep His law.

What then?

Calvin offers the following interpretation. "But it is asked, Ought Moses to have permitted what was in itself bad and sinful? I reply, That, strictly speaking, he did not *permit* it; but in so far as he did not strictly forbid it, he is said to have *permitted* it. For he did not lay down a law about divorces, so as to give them the seal of his approbation, but as the wickedness of men could not be restrained in any other way, he applied what was the most admissible remedy, that the husband should, at least, attest the chastity of his wife. For the law was made solely for the protection of the women, that they might not suffer any disgrace after they had been unjustly rejected. Hence, we infer, that it was rather a punishment inflicted on husbands, than an indulgence or *permission* fitted to inflame their lust. Besides, political and outward order is widely different from spiritual government. What is lawful and proper the Lord comprehended under the *ten words*. Now as it is possible that many things, for which every man's conscience reproves and charges him, may not be called in question at a human tribunal, it is not wonderful if those things are connived at by political laws." Harmony, Vol. II, pp. 381, 382.

Keil, in his commentary on the Old Testament, speaks also of the fact that this is in some sense a concession to sin on the part of Moses. But he adds two points which are worthy of note. In the first place he remarks, and correctly so, "Divorce is not established as a right; all that is done is, that in case of a divorce a reunion with the divorced wife is forbidden, if in the meantime she had married another man . . ." Pentateuch, Vol. III, 416, 417. The meaning is that Moses does not say anything about the right of divorce, nor does he approve of it. He simply establishes a law concerning the remarriage of persons who have once been divorced. Secondly, and in connection with this, Keil points out that because the divorced woman, who was divorced for some "uncleanness" and is defiled by her second marriage is really guilty of adultery. "Thus," Keil concludes, "the second marriage was placed *implicite* on a par with adultery." Idem, p. 418.

With this interpretation we are inclined to agree.

There is however, one other consideration, which in our opinion ought to be considered. This is the fact that there were certain evils which were never as such condemned in the Old Dispensation. While these evils were never approved, they were also never condemned in explicit language. Per-

haps this was the case with the prevalent evil of polygamy. While it is emphatically true that God never condoned polygamy, and in fact that those who married more than one wife suffered untold grief in their households, it is nevertheless not condemned by any definite law. The same thing is true of divorce as it was practiced by some Jews. Certainly frivolous divorces were severely condemned, and, in fact, when divorce for any reason other than fornication was practiced it was never approved by God. And certainly when either party remarried, they lived in an adulterous relationship. Nevertheless, we never read that it was condemned in the explicit language of a precept or law.

What may be the reason for this?

It is striking that there is not one instance in Scripture of anyone ever divorcing his or her marriage partner. It must have been practiced, for the practice is referred to, but we never read of any case either among the saints or the apostates in the nation.

I think that the reason why such a practice of divorce and remarriage was never forbidden by explicit law is to be found in the fact that the covenant of marriage is a picture of the eternal covenant of grace which God has established with His people in Christ. However, this glorious covenant of grace realized in the solemn marriage of God to His people could not be and was not fully realized until Christ came into our flesh. Only when Christ suffered and died on the cross for the sins of His people and arose from the grave in Joseph's garden for their justification, could this covenant be fully realized in all its blessedness. In the Old Dispensation it was always by promise. In the New Dispensation it is fully realized through Jesus Christ who is the Bridegroom of the church.

And therefore while every marriage consummated in life is a picture of the relation between Christ and His church, this was preeminently true of the marriages in the Old Dispensation. The marriages of the saints were pictures and types of the coming marriage when the Bridegroom would come into our flesh and suffer for us and die for us to take us into the embrace of His loving arms and make us His wife forevermore.

And so, with all the types of the Old Dispensation, this type also was imperfect. It pointed ahead to a reality that was to come. But in pointing ahead, it fell far short in imperfection. As long as the glorious reality was not fully realized, the shadow of the reality could not be perfect.

But now the true marriage has been realized and the church looks forward with eager anticipation to the time when her Bridegroom shall come again to take her into His perfect covenant in glory. And so what stained the type and made it imperfect before this reality, must now be taken away. While divorce and even remarriage under certain conditions were never condemned in the Old Testament, it must be severely condemned in the New. We live no longer in

that eerie shadow of types. We live in the glorious light of the full revelation of Jesus Christ. What was not and could not be expressly condemned then, is now condemned in no uncertain terms. As we never would consider living in polygamy in the New Dispensation, so also we may not and cannot consider it ever proper to divorce our spouses to marry another. Now we live in the more perfect marriage bond, for it is the more perfect reflection of that blessed relation between us and our Lord.

This we must do. Hallowing the sanctity of the marriage bond, we hold forth the picture of the glorious covenant of grace into which we are taken. In the shadow of the cross we live in an adulterous world that destroys marriage and the home. But such should not be the case with us.

H. HANKO

CONTRIBUTIONS

History of the Protestant Reformed Church

This is a brief summary of the past history of the Loveland Protestant Reformed Church and the events that led to our affiliation with the Protestant Reformed Churches. The congregation prior to becoming Protestant Reformed was known as the HOPE REFORMED CHURCH of Loveland, not affiliated with any church body. We were served by a minister from the Evangelical Reformed denomination. This minister served our congregation from the late 1930's until 1954, even though he had never been officially installed here, as he was an ordained minister of a congregation in a nearby town. The consistory was of the opinion that there was no reformed preaching anymore and thus was at a loss as to what to do.

In the summer of 1954 one of the elders went to visit relatives in Isabel, South Dakota, and while there attended the Isabel German Reformed Church there. Rev. H. Mensch, who was then serving this congregation, was absent from his pulpit that Sunday. The elder of Loveland made himself known and inquired about their minister and left his name with them. When Rev. Mensch returned to Isabel and heard about this, he wrote the brother in Loveland and offered to come to Loveland to get acquainted and also to preach here if so desired. Although only three of the five consistory members were in favor of such action, Rev. Mensch was asked to come to Loveland and also preach for the congregation. Rev. Mensch complied and it became evident after he preached here twice, that there was an element in the consistory and the congregation who did not care for the Reformed truth. Rev. Mensch then visited with the group that was in favor of his preaching. They inquired of him as to the possibility of becoming affiliated with the Classis that he was affiliated with, namely, the Eureka Classis of Dakota. Rev. Mensch advised this group against such action, but on

the contrary advised them to contact the Protestant Reformed Churches of Michigan. It was the preaching of Rev. Mensch that caused the division to become evident in the congregation. Rev. Mensch then returned to Isabel, S.D.

There he contacted the Home Missionary of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

In the spring of 1955 Rev. Mensch and Rev. Lubbers returned to Loveland and at this time Rev. Lubbers became acquainted with the congregation in Loveland. Reverends Mensch and Lubbers then left Loveland.

It then was evident that the Hope Reformed Church of Loveland was sharply divided to the point where there could be no fellowship with each other anymore. A special congregational meeting was called, at which the Consistory was asked to seek the services of a different minister. Rev. Mensch was notified of this action and was asked for advice and how to get in touch with the Mission Committee of the Prot. Ref. Churches. Rev. Mensch then forwarded the request to the Mission Committee.

Reverends Lubbers and C. Hanko then came to Loveland and the latter remained and preached on Sunday to the entire congregation. After the service the consistory met, but could not come to an agreement, as the group which was against Rev. Mensch's preaching insisted that they wanted to keep their old minister.

The group which was in favor of Rev. Mensch's preaching, and by this time also with the teaching of the Prot. Ref. Churches, were told to resign from their office. This they refused and again called Rev. Lubbers and told him of the developments. Rev. Lubbers then offered to meet with the Mission Committee to see if they could come to the aid of Loveland.

After Rev. Lubbers came here to begin his labors, the group that had contacted him was notified that they no longer could use the church building and the locks on the church were changed to keep them out. Preparations were made to rent a school building. This was done and Rev. Lubbers began his three and one half years of labors here. The group which had forbidden us the use of the building was contacted, and after fruitless efforts to meet with them the split was evident. The matter of the church occupancy was then presented to the civil court for action. After much preparation and time the trial was held. The decision of the judge was of such a nature that it was impossible to carry out. He requested the two groups to go back together, elect a new consistory and call a new minister. The group which later became the Prot. Ref. Church of Loveland then decided to give the others the church property, remain in the school building and continue under the teachings of Rev. Lubbers.

In March of 1958 Rev. Lubbers finished his labors here and left our midst.

In June of the same year Loveland became officially affili-

ated with the Prot. Ref. Churches and was taken in as a sister congregation.

By this time Loveland had greatly enjoyed hearing the Reformed truth and was blessed with Classical appointments until November, 1958, when Rev. H. H. Kuiper accepted our call. He has served us since that time.

During the period of a little over a year of Rev. Kuiper's labors among us, some changes have occurred. The Catechism Class, formerly the whole congregation as a unity, has been divided into proper age groups, using the books written by different ministers in our denomination. Also the Sunday School has been revised so as to properly teach each group by its own teacher. The method is quite similar to that in our other churches, with what we believe to be the beneficial difference that we here also have an adult class.

Due to the fact that a part of our congregation lives in Denver, a distance of some 55 miles from Loveland, two catechism classes and an adult Bible Class are held there each week. In Loveland Catechism classes are held Wednesday afternoon and evening. An adult Bible Class is also held here on Tuesday evening. These Adult Bible Classes are similar to the Mr. and Mrs. Societies in our other churches. At present we are studying the Epistle to the Romans. The Young People's Society, studying the book of Acts, meets Sunday afternoon. This little group of eight is led in their study by the pastor.

Viewing the various activities above and conscious of the regular preaching of the truth twice each Lord's Day (all of which are well attended) the Consistory expresses its thanks to God for the gift of our pastor and for His providence whereby the riches of His mercy have become a reality among us. A word of gratitude is also due our Home Missionary for his faithful labors, the Mission Committee for their aid and advice and the different congregations for the use of their ministers during the time of our vacancy. Finally a word of thanks goes to Rev. Heys, who advised and helped us as our moderator. And now, with our undershepherd, we look to the future in the confidence of faith. May the Lord supply faithfulness to continue in the way of His truth that all praise and glory may be to the name of our wonderful covenant God.

Consistory of the Loveland Prot. Ref. Church,

Wm. A. Griess, Clerk

Announcement

The Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School will be in need of teachers for grades 2, 3, 4, and 5, 6 and 7, for the school year 1960-1961.

Contact Mr. D. Meulenberg

1743 Moelker, S. W.

Grand Rapids 4, Michigan

AR 6-3742

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 1 (continued)

As we remarked earlier, the fathers in this article clash head-on with the Arminian error, and that too, in regard to the most fundamental aspect of the truth of perseverance and the Arminian denial of the same. They turn immediately to the question of cause and source. Is perseverance an effect (fruit) of election, or not? Is perseverance a gift of God, or is it the work of man alone? Is this perseverance gained by the death of Christ, or is it obtained by man through the fulfillment of a condition? These questions, you understand, go to the very heart of the matter. And this is to be expected. After all, the basic Arminian error was the denial of sovereign election. And since all the blessings of salvation flow forth from election as their cause and fountain, the Arminians are compelled in their denial of election to do violence to the relation between those blessings of salvation and election. They must at each stage deny the proper relation. They must reverse it. Thus it is here with regard to the perseverance of the saints: the Arminian denial of sovereign election leads inevitably to a reversal of the relationship between election and perseverance, and this leads in turn to a denial of the certain perseverance of the saints.

Let us notice the various elements in the Arminian error here rejected. The negative side of that error, first of all, contains three elements. The Arminians deny that the perseverance of the true believers is an effect (fruit) of election. Secondly, they deny that the perseverance of the true believers is a gift of God. And thirdly, they deny that the perseverance of the true believers is gained by the death of Christ. These three elements in themselves are quite clear, and they need no further elucidation. We may observe, however, that they stand closely related. If you deny that perseverance is an effect of election, you must needs deny that it is a gift of God and that it is gained by the death of Christ. The solid ground of the truth that salvation, including the blessing of perseverance, is a gift, a matter of grace, merited by the death of Christ, is always the truth of sovereign election. Deny the latter, and you are shut up to the view that salvation is a matter of works and of human achievement. This we ought always to remember. Arminian-

ism, no matter how nicely it is garbed, no matter in what Scriptural terminology it is clothed, no matter how it may mouth such terms as "election" and "gift" and "grace" and "atonement" and "the death of Christ," is an essential denial of free salvation.

As to the positive error that is rejected here, we should observe that the Arminians employ the usual complicated language to cover up their error. First of all, they speak of perseverance as a condition of the new covenant—a covenant that is essentially a covenant of works, not of grace. It is in this way that they succeed in denying that perseverance is a gift of God that is gained by the death of Christ, while at the same time they continue to speak of the death of Christ. We must remember what they taught concerning the death of Christ. Its purpose (*Canons* II, B, 2) was not that he should confirm the new covenant of grace through his blood, but only that he should acquire for the Father the mere right to establish with man such a covenant as he might please, whether of grace or of works. In the second place, they taught, according to *Canons* II, B, 3, that Christ by his satisfaction merited neither salvation itself for anyone, nor faith, whereby this satisfaction of Christ unto salvation is effectually appropriated, but only that he merited for the Father the authority or the perfect will to deal again with man, and to prescribe new conditions as he might desire, obedience to which, however, depended on the free will of man, so that it therefore might have come to pass that either none or all should fulfill these conditions. We may note here that in connection with perseverance this article means too that a man might for a while fulfill these new conditions of a new covenant and then cease fulfilling them, or he might continue to fulfill them to the very end,—all depending on his own free will. Thirdly, according to *Canons* II, B, 4, the new covenant of grace which God the Father, through the mediation of the death of Christ, made with man, does not herein consist, that we by faith, in as much as it accepts the merits of Christ, are justified before God and saved, but in the fact that God, having revoked the demand of perfect obedience of faith, regards faith itself and the obedience of faith, although imperfect, as the perfect obedience of the law. And here again, the Arminian multiplies conditions. Not only faith and the imperfect obedience of faith are conditions of salvation, but also perseverance in the faith and in the imperfect obedience of faith is a condition unto salvation. One might fulfill the condition of faith for a while, and thus also have salvation for a while; but he must also persevere in the faith to the end, or else he loses the salvation which once he possessed. And once again, this perseverance is a condition, not a benefit of the death of Christ.

All this, in turn, stands in close connection with the Arminian view of perseverance and election. Before man is decisively justified (and therefore saved), and before man is decisively elected, he must of his own free will meet the

condition of persevering to the end. This decisive justification and election comes, therefore, at the moment of his death. Up to that time the possibility exists that he will through negligence forsake again the first beginnings of his life in Christ, return again to this present evil world, turn away from the holy doctrine delivered him, lose a good conscience, and become devoid of grace. (Remonstrance, Art. V.) But let us notice in this connection that the fathers call our attention to the complicated Arminian view of election by which they always attempted to deceive people. The Arminians could never get away from the fact that in Scripture the idea of absolute certainty and decisiveness, finality, is always associated with the idea of election. Hence, in their presentation they somehow had to leave this same impression of certainty and finality. And at the same time they had to keep the notion of conditionality and uncertainty. Hence, as we learn from *Canons* I, they devised a clever and complicated way of doing this, to which the fathers refer when they say: "which man before his decisive election and justification (as they speak) must fulfill through his free will." Instead of teaching that election, the only election that there is, is decisive, they speak of a decisive election. But that was only one kind of election; there is also an indecisive election. This is their error in *Canons* I, B, 1 already: "The will of God to save those who would believe *and would persevere in faith* (italics supplied, H.C.H.) and in the obedience of faith, is the whole and entire decree of election unto salvation." To maintain this they had to come to the view condemned in *Canons* I, B, 2: "That there are various kinds of election of God unto eternal life: the one general and indefinite, the other particular and definite; and that the latter in turn is either incomplete, revocable, non-decisive and conditional, or complete, irrevocable, decisive and absolute. Likewise: that there is one election unto faith, and another unto salvation, so that election can be unto justifying faith, without being a decisive election unto salvation." This is further explained in *Canons* I, B, 5. It is here that you find the error that occurs again and is condemned in the article under discussion. On the one hand, the Arminians taught that "the incomplete and non-decisive election of particular persons to salvation occurred because of a foreseen faith, conversion, holiness, godliness, which either began or continued for some time." This, of course, was an election that was revocable and that could and would be recalled as soon as one's faith and conversion ceased in God's foresight. One who was elect in this sense could at any moment become non-elect, or reprobate. But was there also a complete and decisive election in any sense? Yes, but that point of decisiveness was never reached until one had actually persevered unto the end. And if God foresaw that one would persevere to the very end, then He elected one in the decisive and absolute sense of the word. This is the election which the Arminians denoted as "complete, irrevocable, decisive, and absolute." But notice that even the Arminians in I, B, 2 do not call that an *unconditional* election. Why not? Because at

that point of decision it would be folly to speak of any conditions or lack of conditions any more. The point of decisiveness is the point when one has persevered unto the end. It is the end, namely, death. Then at last the decision falls. Besides, this so-called decisive election is itself conditional, that is, it is preceded by the condition of perseverance. Hence, as I, B, 5 has it: "The complete and decisive election occurred because of foreseen perseverance unto the end in faith, conversion, holiness and godliness." Here you have exactly the same error as in V, B, 1, only treated from the viewpoint of election. That this is true is plain from the rest of I, B, 5: "and that this is the gracious and evangelical worthiness, for the sake of which he who is chosen, is more worthy than he who is not chosen; and that therefore faith, the obedience of faith, holiness, godliness and perseverance *are not fruits of the unchangeable election unto glory, but are conditions*, which, being required beforehand, were foreseen as being met by those who will be fully elected, and are causes without which the unchangeable election to glory does not occur." Such is the Arminian position. They follow a very circuitous path. But it all comes down to the very opposite of the Reformed position. The Arminian says: perseverance is the cause, and the unchangeable election unto glory is the effect. The truth is: perseverance is the effect, and the unchangeable election unto glory is the cause that produces that effect. The Arminian says: perseverance is a condition, required beforehand and *foreseen as being met by those who will be fully elected*. The truth is: perseverance is a gift of God, gained by the death of Christ, for those who have been elected unto glory and given to Christ. The compromise of these diametrical opposites is impossible!

For the Scriptures are the court of appeal in this matter, and they are clear. Election is always the starting-point in them. Thus it is in Romans 11:7, the first text cited: "The elect obtained it, and the rest were hardened." Detailed exegesis here is not necessary. Suffice it to say: 1) That the apostle is speaking here of perseverance, of the *obtaining* of the promise and of righteousness. 2) This obtaining of the promise and of justification is ascribed to election. 3) The Arminian would have to change this around and say: those that obtained it, that is, those who persevered unto the end, will be fully elected. And the passage from Romans 8 is equally clear. Concerning it we remark: 1) That its main thought is: no one shall separate us from the love of Christ. 2) This is attributed not to the believer himself, but to Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension and sitting at the right hand of God. 3) That also here the final cause is election: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" And it requires the grossest kind of opposition to the Scriptures to read anything else than this simple truth in the passages mentioned.

H.C.H.

DECENCY and ORDER

Church Visitation

The 44th Article of our Church Order reads as follows:

"The classis shall authorize at least two of her oldest, most experienced and most competent ministers to visit all the churches once a year and to take heed whether the minister and the consistory faithfully perform the duties of their office, adhere to sound doctrine, observe in all things the adopted order, and properly promote as much as lies in them, through word and deed, the upbuilding of the congregation, in particular of the youth, to the end that they may in time fraternally admonish those who have in anything been negligent, and may by their advice and assistance help direct all things unto the peace, upbuilding, and greatest profit of the churches. And each classis may continue these visitors in service as long as it sees fit, except where the visitors themselves request to be released for the reasons of which the classis shall judge."

The above article, though quite lengthy, consists of only two sentences. In the Christian Reformed proposed revision of the Church Order, the first sentence of this article is left unchanged but the second sentence is made to read: *"Permanency in the committee is to be sought, so that continuity of supervision may be obtained."* And, to the article the following new element is added in the proposed revision: *"The churches are free to call on their church visitors whenever serious problems arise."*

Our churches have appended to Article 44 of the Church Order the following decisions:

"Church visitation which is required to be done in the congregations, requires for its efficient prosecution the following:

1. Each classis shall appoint from her midst at least two ministers and their alternates.

2. The visitors shall give the congregations at least eight days' notice of the day and hour of the proposed visit.

3. The consistory shall see to it that all the consistory members are present at the meeting which is appointed for church visitation. Any member failing to be present shall be required to give the meeting good reason for his absence. If one-half of the members are absent the visitation cannot be carried out.

4. The consistory shall see to it that the record books are at hand for the inspection by the visitors.

5. Of the visitors, one shall function as chairman and the other as secretary. They shall record their findings and actions in a book, which can be consulted at the next visitation, and which can be kept in the classical archive.

6. After completing the visitation of all the congregations, the visitors shall with requisite discretion, compose a report of their activities to be delivered at the next following classis."

In addition to all of this, we find on pages 59-61 of our Church Order, a list of some thirty-six questions that are asked by the church visitors of the consistories they visit. To these questions we will refer a bit later for in the light of all of this material we are to discuss the important matter of church visitation.

The readers of our *Standard Bearer* will perhaps recall that about a year ago the Elders' Conference of Classis East requested Rev. H. Hoeksema, the editor of our paper, to answer a question regarding the origin and history of this article of the Church Order. Thereupon the consistory of the First Church asked that his answer to this question be published in *The Standard Bearer*. This it was and those who are further interested will find this instructive article on p. 198 of Vol. 35 of our periodical. We intend to incorporate some of the pointers of this article in our future comments on this article.

In his mimeographed notes on *Church Right* the Rev. G. M. Ophoff also makes several striking observations on the matter of Church Visitation. For the benefit of our readers we will reproduce these notes in full here before we proceed to treat the contents of Article 44 and related matters. Rev. Ophoff writes:

"1. The character of the function of the church visitors. The church visitors form a committee of two appointed by the Classis. We thus deal here with a committee of the Classis. Thus the church visitors no more than the classis are a higher power over the churches. They are not vested with key-power over the churches. They cannot place members of the consistory or the whole consistory under the first, second and third step of censure, depose them from office and excommunicate them in a body or singly out of the Christian church. Hence, the church visitors are not a substitute of the monarchical bishop in the Roman Catholic Church. Like the classis they can only advise the churches. In and through these visitors the churches take heed to one another as autonomous members of the church federation.

2. The function of the church visitors. Their function, as stated by Article 44 is to take heed to the churches and the office bearers thereof and to admonish the negligent, and advise, assist, and help.

3. Their purpose. Their purpose is to help direct all things unto the peace, upbuilding, and greatest profit of the churches.

4. The question whether the institution of church visitors had the sanction of the Scriptures. We believe that it has. As it is the calling of all the common members of the church to take heed to one another and admonish one another if there is need, so certainly it must also be the calling of all the churches of the same household of faith to take heed to one

another and to be of mutual spiritual help to one another without the one setting itself up as a higher power over the other, or over the others.

5. The article requires that the church visitors be at least two of the oldest, most experienced, and competent ministers, the reason being that the task that must be performed is a weighty one.

6. The church visitors are not appointed by the president of the classis but they are chosen by the whole classis.

7. There is the question whether the coming of the church visitors should be announced to the congregation. Some say it should be announced and give their reason that the common members in the congregation, if they have a grievance against the consistory, should have opportunity to reveal the same to the church visitors in order that the difficulty may be settled and removed. We do not favor this view. Certainly such members must first reveal their grievance to the consistory and from the consistory the way leads not to the church visitors but to the classis, and the classis meets four times in the year.

8. The question might also be asked why the churches should be visited by the church visitors, seeing that the Classis could place these very questions to the consistories on the classical meeting and actually does put some of these questions to them. The only answer is that our Reformed fathers deemed the institution of Church Visiting necessary.

9. The complaint has often been made that church visiting is so mechanical and bears so little fruit. To the complaint that church visiting is mechanical, it may be replied that this is not the fault of the institution but of the church visitors and the consistories. Church visiting, like family visiting is exactly what men make it. The question put must be truthfully answered and the consistories admonished according as there is need. In the degree that this is done, will church visiting bear fruit.

10. Should the church visitors report to classis their findings? Ordinarily not. But certainly serious cases of disorderly behavior on the part of a consistory that will not mend its ways after having been admonished by the church visitors should be reported to the classis."

Apart now from various questions and problems that may arise in connection with the subject of church visitation, we may observe in the light of all the above that this work is of a very serious and important nature. We do not mean that it is serious simply because it may involve the churches in the expenditure of a rather large sum of money. That too, of course. Any work of the church that involves large monetary costs must certainly be important. No church may spend large sums for non-essentials.

We have in mind, however, that it lies in the very nature of the work of church-visiting that it is a serious work. The task of the classis is the task of all the churches

and to this belongs the function of exercising mutual supervision over one another. The necessity of this follows from the Reformed conception according to which one church does not stand above another but all are equal in rank and autonomy. In a federation of such churches there must be some form of supervision but since there is no *higher ecclesiastical order* above the local church to enact this, the only way it can be done is by mutual agreement and the mutual delegation of authority which is done through the Classis in the appointment of church visitors. And the purpose of this work, as the Article itself states, is "*the upbuilding of the congregation.*" This spiritual aim or objective must be constantly kept in mind because where it is ignored or forgotten the work of church-visitation will be unfruitful regardless of how it is performed and if it is properly kept upon the foreground, many of the problems, difficulties and questions that frequently arise in connection with this work will dissipate.

If, therefore, the church visitors are regarded as a couple messenger boys who are sent around to all the churches to simply ask of each consistory a series of form-questions, it is certainly far better that these questions be printed in the form of a questionnaire and either mailed to each church or distributed to the delegates at the classis.

If, on the other hand, the church visitors are erroneously regarded as a super-power in the church sent to lord it over consistories and to introduce tyranny in the church of Jesus Christ, it would be better if they were not given so much as a hearing for such evil cannot possibly serve the spiritual welfare and upbuilding of the congregation.

Neither must the church visitors be regarded as "trouble-seekers." Although it is unavoidable that they will be confronted with problems and troubles that exist in the churches, their aim is not to see how much trouble they can uncover. Their primary purpose is not to *investigate* but to "*help direct all things unto the peace, upbuilding, and profit of the churches*" by their advice and assistance.

Regarding these brethren then as competent, experienced advisors who are authorized and empowered by all the churches to perform this work of mutual supervision in which the welfare of the churches is sought, the labor will be performed with joy and profit. Then they will not be bound to a set of stereotyped questions and the consistories will not feel that they are overstepping their bounds when they inquire into matters that are not specifically mentioned in the "book." There will be a certain measure of latitude in this work which will be healthy for all concerned and the danger of its becoming a meaningless, mechanical process will virtually be obliterated.

G.V.d.B.

A "quiet thought" found in Southwest's bulletin: "Criticism of another's garden will not keep the weeds out of your own."

ALL AROUND US

"Making Molehills out of Mountains."

Such is the title of an interesting and timely editorial appearing in *The Banner* of February 5, 1960, written by the Rev. John Vander Ploeg.

The editor begins by reminding his readers that things formerly were in reverse. It used to be that they "made mountains out of molehills." He cites an instance out of the past where at a congregational meeting a warm and animated debate was had on the subject "whether or not it was wrong to have fire insurance on the church property." Those against fire insurance argued that it was in defiance of Providence. The minister, who otherwise was quite level-headed and calm, at last could not contain himself "and in Dutch he exploded, 'If that's true then you may not even pluck a louse off your head.'" The editor informs us that "Fortunately, the advocates of fire insurance carried the day, either at that meeting or later. Of course, they were right, and moreover their foresight was justified when several years later their church buildings were reduced by fire to a total loss."

He continues, "How times have changed. *We* have changed and the *church* has changed, in some respects for better, and in other respects for worse.

"The danger today is that we make molehills out of mountains, whereas years ago the church had a weakness of making mountains out of molehills.

"Old-timers still tell of this. The innovation of English instead of exclusively Dutch services, individual communion cups, and also other changes encountered stiff opposition which was sincerely believed by some to be a matter of principle.

"Third-generation members of the Christian Reformed Church may be amused at all this. We have come a long way from the conservatism of grandpa and grandma and from the heated controversies about picayune matters which agitated our denomination of half century or more ago. At times they made mountains out of molehills.

"But it could have been worse. Let's not be too sure that it may not actually be worse in our time. Our forebears wronged both themselves and the Lord's cause when trivialities led to hot heads and cold hearts as they made mountains out of molehills. But we shall wrong ourselves and His cause even more if we now go to the opposite extreme of making molehills out of mountains."

The reader understands of course that the terms "mountains" and "molehills" are used figuratively. Rev. Vander Ploeg has in mind especially two mountains which he claims attempts are made in our day to make molehills of them. The first is the mountain of moral standards; the second, the

mountain of sound doctrine. Concerning the first, he insists that moral standards are being flouted. Concerning the second, sound doctrine is disparaged.

Under the sub-title "Moral Standards Flouted," the editor writes:

"Mention may very well be made of three aspects of contemporary life as evidence that the moral standards of God's law are being flouted, and that in so doing our generation is guilty of making molehills out of mountains.

"1. A look at the field of entertainment is immediately at hand. The recent exposé of rigged TV quiz shows revealed much that is morally unpalatable, not only about those who did the deceiving, but also about others who are unconcerned that they have been deceived.

"There are those who frankly make no bones about it to say that they see no moral issue involved in all this. Incapable of moral indignation themselves, they blandly dismiss all the fuss and the fury as making a mountain out of a molehill. It was good fun while it lasted, and as long as everyone had a good time, what's the difference?

"'We are at one of those critical junctures of history,' says someone, 'where men have discovered the almost rightness of a great deal that is wrong, and the almost wrongness of a great deal that is right.'

"The report has gotten around pretty well by this time about the school teacher with a class of young people, some of whom could see nothing wrong in rigging a TV quiz show.

"Giving a very difficult test, the teacher slipped the answers to three members of the class. Imagine the disappointment of the class when almost everyone, including the top students, flunked the test, with the exception of those three.

"And then try to imagine their resentment and howl of protest when thereupon the teacher admitted to them what he had done. Let's hope he got his point across.

"2. Or take the case of *modern fiction*. Talk about flouting moral standards and making a molehill out of the mountain of right and wrong, here is one that takes the prize, if the prince of smut has one to offer:

"'My novel,' says Robert Graves of his latest (the choice of a book society), 'is full of sex, drink, incest, suicide, dope, horse racing, a scandalous legal procedure, with a good public hanging attended by 30,000.'

"Object to such putrid slop, and you run the risk of being ridiculed as being 'priggish' or 'Puritanical.' Muddle-headed Bohemians, who pride themselves on being sophisticated in this, may even try to justify what they are reading or writing by an appeal to common grace, meanwhile confusing it with common garbage.

"The need for talented writers of respectable Christian fiction in which moral standards are held in honor is positively acute. The responsibility for the fearful harvest of moral insensitivity and loose living is one from which the purveyors

of printed filth can by no means dissociate themselves. And by all means, may their tribe decrease!

"3. Another area in which secularism is determined to make molehills out of the mountains of the moral standards of God's law is that of *marriage and divorce*.

"According to *The World Almanac*, 1959, the approximate ratio of divorces to marriages in the United States in 1890 stood at 1 in 17. Thirty years later, in 1920, it was 1 in 7½, and in 1957 it was 1 in 4.

"Someone reports that the Arabs have a unique and very interesting approach to the divorce problem. The judge orders the couple seeking a separation to live for a time with some elderly man of the tribe, someone both wise and austere. Being thus under observation, at the close of which period a report is to be made to the judge as the basis for his decision, both husband and wife are at their best to prove that the fault lies on the other side. The results are very gratifying, the honeymoon starts all over again, and harmony is frequently restored.

"The Arab method has much to commend it, but meanwhile Scripture still provides the only real solution to the distressing problems of marriage and divorce. Husbands and wives must make sure that they are living with God, and that He is really living with them. Courtship and marriage are successful and yield happiness only to the extent that the parties to them regard one another and live together in the consciousness of 'Thou God seest me.'

"The moral standards of God's ordinances governing matters of sex and marriage are as lofty and enduring as the mountain on which the Divine Lawgiver once gave them on two tables of stone. All the carnal efforts of the godless to throw down these lofty heights to the level of molehills can have only one result — moral bankruptcy and trouble always going from bad to worse."

Under the sub-title "Sound Doctrine Disparaged," the editor writes:

"Doctrine and denominationalism both have fallen upon evil days in our time in that the importance and necessity of them are widely disparaged. The following lines of Robert Loveman strike a responsive chord in many and are eagerly endorsed by them:

What care I for caste or creed?
It is the deed, it is the deed;
What for class or what for clan?
It is the man, it is the man . . .

"But *what* does the Bible say? Anyone who takes Scripture seriously soon discovers that doctrine, or rather *the* doctrine, looms there as high, as solid and as massive as a mountain. Anyone bent upon making a molehill out of Christian doctrine must first give the lie to the Word of God.

"In the New Testament one may find the term *doctrine* or *teaching* 48 times, the same word being used in English for two Greek words. It is important to note that the New Testament places before us a very specific kind of doctrine

or teaching. Paul mentions 'sound doctrine' in I Timothy 1:10 and 'good doctrine' in I Timothy 4:6, clearly implying that there can be no substitute for this.

"The doctrines of creation, providence, divine sovereignty, the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture, heaven and hell, sin and grace — these and all other doctrines revealed in the Bible and set forth in creeds founded on the Bible are indeed like a mountain towering over all the wrecks of time.

"Any offhand or deliberate attempt to disparage or to make a molehill out of *the* doctrine of Scripture — which we believe Reformed doctrine to be — is nothing less than an attempt to sabotage the church of Jesus Christ.

"The sound doctrine of Scripture is disparaged not only when one snipes at it or makes an open attack upon it, but also when anyone who professes to believe it, simply remains indifferent with respect to a careful and prayerful study of it.

"A United States Senator in a press release of a few days ago relates the following experience of an American exchange student at Moscow University.

"He was vacationing last summer at Sochi, a resort on the Black Sea. Relaxing on the beach, he and some of his friends saw a group of some 100 Chinese students, dressed in very heavy clothes.

"They lined up on the beach, and for one hour did exercises in unison. Thereupon, hot and tired as they were, instead of going swimming, they formed a circle to discuss the principles of Marx and Lenin for another hour.

"This was their concept of recreation."

"What a challenge! Not only to study the principles of democracy, but above all to explore, to know and to find our safety in the mountains of Christian doctrine as we are guided by the living Word that does not pass away.

"Our security and future are to be found only in the mountains or everlasting hills to which God directs our eyes. To insist upon making molehills of these is suicide!"

The undersigned said at the beginning that he believed the editorial quoted almost in its entirety was both interesting and timely. The serious-minded reader will no doubt agree.

We were impressed especially by the last part which dealt with sound doctrine. The thought could not be suppressed, "Would to God that all our people, especially the young, would take it to heart." Would that in and under the preaching they would understand that sound doctrines are the everlasting mountains of God's Word. Would that in catechism and in the societies of our churches each one would consider the importance of knowing and professing these eternal truths. And would to God that the spiritual lethargy and indifference to sound doctrine were disparaged. Perhaps this is the reason for the controversies that characterize the history of the church, that she may be alerted once more to the importance and beauties of the everlasting mountains.

M.S.

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

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

Feb. 19, 1960

The congregation at Hull has named the following trio from which to elect a man they shall call to come over and help them: Revs. G. Van Baren, M. Schipper and R. Veldman.

Doon's consistory has decided to conduct an adult Bible class Friday evenings. Rev. Van Baren will treat the material found in the catechism book, "Essentials of Reformed Doctrine." The method of teaching will be that of lecture and discussion. The consistory invites all confessing members who seek a better understanding of the basic doctrines of the Scriptures and the Reformed faith. At their second meeting the discussion was on the determination of the canon of Scripture, and on the questions of inspiration and infallibility.

Doon is one of our churches, though they do not have a Sunday School, yet give Sunday School papers to the children each Sunday. The Prot. Ref. Sunday School Association, as in past years, sends out weekly papers to all who ask for them. Is your church taking advantage of this privilege?

First Church's bulletin reveals that the annual family visitation has been completed. The committees report, "That the Lord is blessing us as families as well as congregation."

Feb. 15 Rev. G. Lanting and his Men's Society travelled from Holland to Grand Rapids to meet with First Men's Society. The visiting Chairman conducted the after recess program which consisted of a paper read by Mr. Elzinga of the Holland society. The paper was an interesting account of the history of the beginning of the Reformed Church in Germany, including the authorship and the compiling of the Heidelberg Catechism, so dear to all of us.

First's Ladies' Aid Society, in a February after recess program, discussed the question of singing hymns in our worship services; and also considered the moral issues involved in the growing practice of giving and receiving prizes for making purchases at the neighborhood merchants, as they answered the question "Should Christians participate in numbers contests?"

Rev. H. Hoeksema conducted a Question Hour for a Mr. and Mrs. Society recently. The Reverend answered the question of the possibility of breaking God's covenant as described in Jeremiah 31:31. He also explained the figure, found in the same chapter, of the setting on edge of the teeth of chil-

dren whose fathers ate wild grapes. Many more questions were answered in the hour, but the one that received the lion's share of examination was that which dealt with the events which precede the Judgment Day as delineated in Revelation 11, I Cor. 15, and I Thess. 4.

Like all of our churches, Hope also studies the Heidelberg Catechism by preaching on the subject material of one of the Lord's Days each Sunday. Feb. 7 was Preparatory Sunday and the schedule called for the discussion of Lord's Day Thirty which treats the Sacrament of Holy Communion, giving the pastor, Rev. H. Hanko, the opportunity to preach a sermon under the theme, "True Self Examination."

In our next issue we should be able to give you some news regarding a missionary project in the form of radio broadcasting. Hudsonville's consistory has accepted a suggestion from their Mr. and Mrs. Society and is proposing the adoption of it at a mass meeting of the congregation scheduled for Feb. 19. The radio station they would use is situated in the nearby city of Holland.

South Holland's Men's Society, in their first February meeting discussed the text, "Let your moderation be known to all men. The Lord is at hand," found in Paul's Epistle to the Philippians.

On the Sunday that Rev. Harbach treated Lord's Day 49, Lynden's bulletin requested the members to memorize this verse: "The burden of the sorrowful the Lord will not despise; He has not turned from those that mourn, He hearkens to their cries. His goodness makes me join the throng where saints His praise proclaim, and there will I fulfill my vows 'mid those who fear His name."

Have you noticed that *your* church's news does not find its way into this column? Perhaps it's due to the fact that your bulletins do not find their way here. Society secretaries please note: Send in the news from your society which might be of interest to, or inspiration for other societies' program committees.

Scanning the bulletins we perceive that many opportunities are provided our membership "That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." All of our societies are busily engaged in the study of the Scripture which "is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

This issue's Proverb is found in the third chapter, verses 5 and 6: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct thy paths."

. . . see you in church.

J.M.F.