

THE STANDARD

Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

VOLUME XXXVI

JANUARY 15, 1960 — GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

NUMBER 8

MEDITATION

THE BOUNTIFUL HOST

"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies: Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over." PSALM 23:5

"A Psalm of David."

Yes, this would be of David. It certainly is his style.

There are two main parts to this psalm: the Shepherd and His sheep; and the Host and His guests.

The contents is the same: the care and the feeding of the Shepherd; and the feast of the Host and His guests.

The meaning? After length of days under the loving care of God, we go through death to God's House. And goodness and mercy now and forever.

In my particular text you may see the bountiful Host who makes a feast for the oppressed; which Host prepares the oil of gladness for the sorrowing; and who hath a marvelous fulfilment for the hungry soul.

* * * *

Here is the host.

He prepares a table before the very face of his guests. There is joy in that: it awakens the appetite.

We receive the impression that this "table" includes food and drink in plentiful quantities, and of great delicacy. In other words, a feast is spread before the very faces of the guests.

And the people who are invited to this feast are the oppressed.

Not only is this table prepared before my very face, but the host has seen to it that the same table is prepared in the very presence of the enemies of his guests.

Note the word "enemies."

Literally, according to the original, the word means "to press down, to press in, to compress, even as the grape in the winepress."

In other words, they are the people who would put me in a place that is too small for me.

The whole picture, therefore, is that my host prepares a dainty and plentiful table for me, unto the sustaining of my life which the compressors desire to extinguish.

Hence, they see that their work is vain, and that I know this.

The explanation is not difficult here.

The Host is Jehovah and the guest is God's child. The compressors, the enemies are the World, Satan and the Flesh, the three arch-enemies, compressors of the church of Jesus Christ.

The prepared table is Life for God's people, through Jesus Christ our Lord. You read of that in Col. 3:4, "When Christ *who is our life* shall appear then shall ye also appear with Him in glory."

Christ who is our life! Behold, the table of Psalm 23.

How eminently fitting! The text tells me that the table is prepared before my very face. Now read your Gospels again and see how our life is prepared before our face in the coming, suffering, death on the cross, burial, and also the resurrection and ascending of Jesus to heaven.

All is done before our faces, and . . . in the presence of my compressors.

The whole history of salvation, with the Cross and the glorious resurrection as its center, is prepared before the face of the Church, and in the presence of Caiaphas, Herod, Pilate, and the whole crowd of murderers.

And here is the hardest blow for these murderers: they ultimately see that they even must serve to have this meal prepared. Judas, the Sanhedrin, Herod, and Pilate, they all have their part to play in the drama of the ages. Such is the wisdom of God!

* * * *

And now we hear of the Oil of Gladness for the sorrowing.

Do not think for one moment that the guest escapes unscathed. O no.

Even in the very morning of salvation we have heard it already: "and thou shalt bruise his heel."

The heel of the church is bruised.

Primarily this is said by God to the devil who would bruise the heel of Jesus. And he did. He ultimately got Jesus on the Cross.

But it also refers to all the bruising of the church through the ages.

The text is imagery.

In Eastern lands the guests were anointed so that their robes emanated a delightful fragrance.

This Host does likewise. And not sparingly, because the original Hebrew indicates that. You could read the text: Thou makest my head to shine with an abundance of oil. Note the Dutch translation: "Gij maakt mijn hoofd *vet* met olie."

Oil, in God's Word, is figure of the Holy Ghost.

Thus the oil in the candlestick in the Temple. Thus in the vision of the golden candlestick in Zech. 4:1-6. And thus in Isa. 61:3. The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me because the Lord hath anointed Me.

It is rather clear why this should be so, for oil is the source of light and light is the very life of God. Thus the Holy Ghost is Workmaster of all the light and the life which is from God and which is transposed to the whole Church of Christ.

That life of the Spirit is very fragrant.

It has the power and capacity to make one glad. For instance, read Psalm 45:7, Therefore, God, thy God, hath anointed me with the oil of gladness.

Hence, the viewpoint is still the Host and His guest.

Here, at the table of the Lord, he is anointed abundantly with the oil of gladness. Therefore, he is anointed with the Holy Ghost.

And that makes all the difference in the world.

Yes, the child of God is hurt by the compressors, his enemies.

Yes, he often cries. (In reality the Christian always cries to God: O! great and glorious God! We are killed all the day long for Thy sake!)

Yes, he is bruised by the devil, the world and the flesh the whole day of his life on earth. The fight is always raging.

But in the midst of the fight the Lord anoints the guest with the Holy Ghost, and that makes all the difference in the world.

Are we dishonored? Yes, and yet we are honored.

Are we put to shame by evil report? Yes, and yet we are raised up again by a good report.

Are we called deceivers? Yes, and yet we are true.

Are we the great unknown? Yes, and yet we are well known.

Are we dying? Surely we are, we are in a thousand deaths often. And yet, behold, we live!

Are we chastened? You know we are, and yet, we are not killed.

Are we sorrowful? Oh yes, yet always rejoicing. (Let him who is wise understand this.)

Are we poor? Oh yes, dreadfully so, but we are making many rich.

Have we nothing? You know it, we are the offscouring of the world, and yet, we possess all things. See II Cor. 6:8-10.

If you do not have the Holy Ghost, you will not understand any of this.

We are at the same time the most sorrowful creatures alive, and yet, we are also the most happy of all.

While Paul was bound, in the stocks, in the dungeon, with blood seeping through his ragged, dirty clothes at Philippi, he prayed and sang the Psalms of David. That was because of the Holy Ghost in him.

When Jesus hung on the Cross He exhibited a picture of utter forsakenness, and yet, never before or after did the glory shine in Him and through Him as at that moment. His Crucifixion was His glorification.

This guest also. He is the oh so weary child of God. But he sits at the table of the Lord and is anointed with an abundance of oil of the Holy Ghost from the viewpoint of joy and gladness.

Hence, the happy song of David's Psalm belongs to the table of the Lord.

* * * *

Moreover, his cup runneth over.

What does that mean?

That is all imagery, figurative language.

The guest at this table has been pressed sorely.

He is empty, hungry, forsaken.

But the Host will take care of him.

When an Eastern host would express that his guest was very welcome, and when the host wished to express that he possessed plenty unto the comfort and happiness of his guests, he would ask the guest to hold up his cup and then he would pour the wine and keep on pouring this wine until it would overflow the cup and fall on the carpeted banqueting floor.

Then the guest knew himself to be doubly welcome.

Must I explain this figure?

Alright: here goes:

The free-will brigade always begins by saying that Jesus' blood is sufficient for thousands of worlds.

I will say that too, but I would say that His blood is sufficient for untold millions of worlds, for He sustained the *eternal wrath of God*.

It is like the sun whose light shines past our world in a thousand directions. Also where there is no earth.

Did you ever see the many hundreds of little apples under a tree in harvest time?

The river of God is full of water.

God is the overflowing Fountain of all good.

In the New Jerusalem there are twelve crops each year, for the Tree of Life gives her fruit every month for the healing of the nations.

All these things point up the inexhaustible riches of life, of life eternal, love, lovingkindness, and utter salvation of the Lord God in Jesus Christ our Lord!

Yes, from out of the depths we cry to Thee, O God!

Yes, but there is a table which will be set before mine eyes in the day of Christ. And then Jesus shall drink also of the new wine in the House of His Father. It will be a feast of plenty and it will be sweet!

G.V.

THE DEACONS' CONFERENCE

All present and former deacons are invited to the
DEACONS' CONFERENCE

January 22 at 8:00 P. M.

at the

HUDSONVILLE PROT. REF. CHURCH

The topic is:

"What are the fundamental requirements of a deacon."

Speaker: The REV. G. VOS

The Diaconate of Hudsonville Prot. Ref. Church

Secretary, P. SCHUT

IN MEMORIAM

The Consistory of our church would like to express herewith our sympathy with our fellow elder, Mr. Donald Dykstra, and his wife, in the loss of their Father,

ALBERT HOLTHOF, aged 78 years

May our Covenant God comfort the bereaved, especially the aged widow. Unto God's people to die is to be with Christ, and gain.

The Consistory of the Prot. Ref. Church
of Hudsonville, Michigan
Harry Zwak, Secretary

THE STANDARD BEARER

Semi-monthly, except monthly during June, July and August

Published by the REFORMED FREE PUBLISHING ASSOCIATION
P. O. Box 881, Madison Square Station, Grand Rapids 7, Mich.

Editor — REV. HERMAN HOEKSEMA

Communications relative to contents should be addressed to
Rev. H. Hoeksema, 1139 Franklin St., S. E.,
Grand Rapids 7, Mich.

All matters relative to subscriptions should be addressed to Mr.
James Dykstra, 1326 W. Butler Ave., S. E.
Grand Rapids 7, Michigan

Announcements and Obituaries must be mailed to the above
address and will be published at a fee of \$2.00 for each notice.

RENEWAL: Unless a definite request for discontinuance is received it is assumed that the subscriber wishes the subscription to continue without the formality of a renewal order.

Subscription price: \$5.00 per year

Entered as Second Class matter at Grand Rapids, Michigan

CONTENTS

MEDITATION —

The Bountiful Host169
Rev. G. Vos

EDITORIALS —

An Attempt at Discipline.....172
As To Being Protestant Reformed.....173
Rev. H. Hoeksema

APPEAL DENIED174
Rev. H. Hoeksema

OUR DOCTRINE —

The Book of Revelation.....176
Rev. H. Hoeksema

A CLOUD OF WITNESSES —

The Sin of Judah178
Rev. B. Woudenberg

FROM HOLY WRIT —

Exposition of Romans 14, 15 (12).....180
Rev. G. Lubbers

IN HIS FEAR —

Freedom of Speech (6)182
Rev. J. A. Heys

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH —

The Church and the Sacraments184
Rev. H. Veldman

THE VOICE OF OUR FATHERS —

The Canons of Dordrecht186
Rev. H. C. Hoeksema

DECENCY AND ORDER —

Advisory Members of Classis188
Rev. G. Vanden Berg

ALL AROUND US —

More Debate Respecting Infallibility.....190
It's Wrong But190
Rev. M. Schipper

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES192
Mr. J. M. Faber

EDITORIALS

An Attempt at Discipline

The last item of Mr. Glasgow's protest concerns the miracles of the Bible. As one illustration under this heading he refers to what Dr. Thompson has to say on the book of Jonah.

According to the latter, the possibility of the event (of Jonah's being swallowed up by the whale) is at least subject to discussion. To this Mr. Glasgow replies "that all things are possible with God, and it would be presumptuous for us to say that a miracle could not be performed." He then discusses (i.e. Dr. Thompson) the question of the allegorical interpretation. And he writes: "The time has passed when one's belief in the historicity of Jonah and the whale can be made a test of orthodoxy . . . Others point out . . . there is no historical confirmation of the conversion of Nineveh, or exact historical details in the book itself, that some of the miracles are grotesque and useless." And at the end Dr. Thompson asserts that he does "not care to argue the parabolic nature of Jonah."

My personal chief objection to such teaching in a seminary is that it says nothing but suggests everything and the suggestions are entirely negative. In other words, although Dr. Thompson does not literally say so, it is plain that he does not believe the historicity of the book of Jonah nor the reality of the miracle of his being in the whale. Such teaching is insidious. If this is meant by the repeated statement that Dr. Thompson is an able teacher, I can agree. But again I maintain that it is characteristic of an able teacher, not to be negatively suggestive, but to state his own convictions clearly and definitely.

For the rest, if Dr. Thompson does not believe that the book of Jonah is historical and that he was three days in the belly of the fish, he must deny many more things. Such is always the case with Scripture. The Bible is one whole. If you deny one part of it, you must deny more until you have nothing left. And, of course, principally you must deny that the Bible is the inspired Word of God.

Thus it is also in this case.

Deny that Jonah was a historical person, that he was called to preach in Nineveh but refused, that God made him go anyway but through the belly of the fish, that he preached in Nineveh and the city repented, — and you must also deny what the Lord Jesus said about this entire history in Matthew 12:39-41: "But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: 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. The men of Nineveh shall rise up in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas;

and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here." And the last part of this text, that about the preaching of Jonah and the repentance of Nineveh, is repeated in Luke 11:32.

Now, what follows if we deny the historicity of the book of Jonah? Many things.

1. That Jesus was in error when He spoke these words. If this was the case, then there is guarantee that he was not mistaken in regard to any other things He spoke. Then He cannot be trusted and we cannot believe in Him.

2. That Jesus knew that what He said was not the truth but that He catered to the popular notions of the people. This is just as bad as the foregoing if not worse. But in either case we cannot believe in Him.

3. That we must deny both the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ and the holiness of His human nature, for it is inconceivable that the Son of God in holy and sinless human nature should either err or deliberately speak an untruth.

4. That we deny the resurrection of Christ. For Christ, in the words quoted above definitely states that even as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the fish, so the Lord must be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. If the one is not true, then, the other is also not a fact. But why, pray, is it more difficult (apart even from the fact that the Bible presents it as history) to believe that Jonah was in the belly of the fish than to believe that Christ rose from the dead? Is not the latter a far greater wonder than the former?

5. The only other conceivable possibility is that Matthew was mistaken and that Jesus never spoke these words. But this is equally bad as the other possibilities, for then we attack the infallible inspiration of the gospel according to Matthew and, of course, the infallible inspiration of the whole of Scripture. And then we have nothing left: no Word of God, no Christ, no gospel, no salvation.

Thus we see where we ultimately land when once we begin to deny part of the Bible.

Mr. Glasgow summarizes his protest as follows:

"1. I have here submitted Dr. Thompson's own record as written by him to 'clearly reflect' Dr. Thompson's true 'attitude towards the Bible.' This is not 'hearsay' or what 'somebody said' — but are Dr. Thompson's own statements.

"2. I have set forth some of the clarion declarations of Dr. Benjamin B. Warfield, who Dr. Lacy declares was followed by Dr. Strickler and Dr. Johnson, and whom these professors of Theology at Union, together with Dr. Smith who followed them, required all of their students to study and master. I submit that this unequivocally establishes the 'historic position' of our church on these vital issues.

"3. I have set forth in direct contrast the statements of the Bible and of our Standards for direct comparison with the statements and necessary and obvious inferences from Dr. Thompson's own statements.

"4. We are a 'Confessional Church.' We declare our unqualified, normal and sincere acceptance of that Confession. Unless we desire to support the position of the Southern

Presbyterian Church, we are free to go to the church of our choice. Simple honesty with the world and with our homes, who send their sons to our Seminaries, demands that our teaching conform to that Confession. These homes have a right to believe that our Seminaries and Professors teach the historically known and accepted interpretation of that Confession. This is not 'theology'—it is just plain common honesty.

"5. I have declared that evasion, equivocation, and ambiguity, have no rightful part in the methods of teaching employed by our Seminary Professors. The Church has a right to know, and if necessary to investigate through its courts and ascertain what is being taught in our Seminaries, and the fundamental policies being followed. I again maintain that the Assembly (and I believe a supporting Synod or Presbytery) has a right to make such an investigation as it sees fit and that Dr. Lacy's declaration is an amazing declaration: 'On Constitutional grounds, I object to an inquisition by a General Assembly.'

"6. I have set forth FACTUAL DATA which supports the charge against Dr. Thompson as evidencing our obligation that he be immediately relieved from his position of influence as Professor."

* * * *

Thus far the protest. What became of the matter?

First of all, according to the report, a committee was appointed to investigate the charges made by Mr. Glasgow, and that, too, at the request of Dr. Thompson.

According to another report, written by one who agreed with the charges made by Mr. Glasgow, that committee consisted entirely of men who were in favor of Dr. Thompson, and who determined "to whitewash the whole charges without even the formality of an investigation." Besides, it was decided that no transcript of the record of this examination would be furnished to Mr. Glasgow "as this would furnish ammunition for further 'persecution.'"

Again, Dr. Thompson was invited to meet with the committee that were to investigate the charges made against him, but he refused on the ground that "he did not feel that such a Committee was a competent body to examine him on these matters."

Further, the committee, in its report, stated from the outset that one was not obliged to agree with and conform to the Standard of the Church in every detail. This may, in itself be true, but then the question arises naturally what belongs to the details and what to the essentials. The charges made by Mr. Glasgow certainly cannot be regarded as minor details.

The conclusion of the Committee's report is as follows:

"In view of the above findings, it is the judgment of this committee: First, That Mr. Glasgow has not established his contention that Dr. Thompson is disqualified for having a place on the faculty in the Seminary in the Southern Presbyterian Church.

"Second. That Dr. Thompson, who has served the

Church faithfully and acceptably as a professor at Union Theological Seminary for more than twenty years, in addition as pastor, author, teacher and Presbyterian, is in spirit as well as in mind thoroughly loyal to the Scriptures and to the Standards of the Church; that he is entitled to the love and confidence of the Church as a Christian gentleman, a scholar, an author, and a servant of the Master, and that his presence on the faculty of Union Theological Seminary is a distinct asset to that institution.

"Third. That Dr. Thompson's Confession of Faith is an excellent summary of Christian belief, and should be published in our Church papers for the inspiration and guidance of others.

"Fourth. That this investigation (Book of Church Order, par. 183) does not find any grounds for the institution of process against Dr. Thompson by the Presbytery."

I need not comment further on this report. There is nothing to comment on except that it is perfectly evident that the committee did not consider the charges by Mr. Glasgow against Dr. Thompson and certainly whitewashed the whole matter. The reader will understand why the caption of these articles is: "An Attempt at Discipline."

The attempt failed. But the end is not yet. And I hope that I may hear further about the case. H.H.

As To Being Protestant Reformed

I will, the Lord willing, write more under the above mentioned heading. But this time I have space only to answer a question put to me by the Rev. Wm. Haverkamp in *De Wachter* of Jan. 5, 1960.

The brother read my article in *The Standard Bearer* on the name "Protestant Reformed." And at the close of his article he asks a question as follows: "Een opmerking: Ds. Hoeksema maakt niet duidelijk *waarom* voor het woord 'Reformed' ook nog het woord Protestant geplaatst moet worden. Is het niet vanzelfsprekend, dat een kerk die staat op de basis van de gereformeerde belijdenisschriften ook staat op de basis van de protestantse reformatie in de zestiende eeuw?"

I may briefly put this question in English for our readers that are not acquainted with the Dutch. The question is whether the addition *Protestant* is not superfluous seeing that a Reformed Church naturally stands on the basis of the Protestant Reformation.

Briefly, I would answer as follows:

1. First, I like to answer with a counter-question. In the name Christian Reformed is not the addition "Christian" superfluous seeing that to be Reformed already implies to be Christian?

2. Secondly we added this in distinction from all kinds of Reformed churches in this country as: Free Reformed, Christian Reformed, Reformed Churches of America. And we did not wish to leave the conceited impression that we considered ourselves the only Reformed Church in the country. H.H.

APPEAL DENIED

Here follows the decree of the Supreme Court of the State of Michigan in regard to the attempt the schismatics made to obtain the property of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids.

For the convenience of the general reader who is not acquainted with the legal terms used in this document, I will make a few introductory remarks:

1. I advise the reader to peruse this document carefully and to read it repeatedly.

2. The decree is, evidently, a reply and a denial of what the schismatics, through their lawyer, presented to the Court.

3. The Court denies three things:

a. That the first decree in the case of the First Church in 1956 was a mere injunctive decree, so that it could be continued and reopened at any time, but was adjudicatory, final and decisive.

b. That, when in that decree the Court spoke of the Synod, this was not an error but a *dictum* i.e. a judicial opinion on points that are not necessarily involved in the case and that was based on the decisions of Classis East.

3. That, as to the decisions of the re-constituted Classis East, they do not alter the right of the "Hoeksema-group" to keep possession of the property.

On the basis of these considerations the appeal was denied.

H.H.

STATE OF MICHIGAN

SUPREME COURT

FIRST PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCH OF
GRAND RAPIDS, a Michigan corporation,

Plaintiff and Appellee,

v.

HUBERT DE WOLF, FREDERICK SYTSMA,
HENRY KNOTT, WILLIAM STEURSMA,
LAMBERT MULDER, ANDREW DYKSTRA,
HENRY BASTIANSE, SIDNEY DE YOUNG,
ADOLPH VERMEER, GERRIT SIKKEMA,
JOHN BOWMAN and ANDREW VOSS,

Defendants and Appellants.

BEFORE THE ENTIRE BENCH.

Edwards, J.

This is an appeal from the refusal of the superior court of Grand Rapids to amend a decree previously entered by it and affirmed by this Court in 1956 in First Protestant Reformed Church v. DeWolf, 344 Mich 624. Appellants herein claim a change of circumstances warrants a change in the provisions of the decree which gave control of the property

of the church to the Hoeksema Consistory and denied such control to appellants.

The original litigation was an action filed by the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids as represented by the Hoeksema Consistory against another faction, the DeWolf Consistory, over control of the church property.

The case was tried in the first instance in Grand Rapids superior court before Judge Taylor. He found that the church involved was a member of the Protestant Reformed Churches of America;* that, as a result of a doctrinal dispute, the DeWolf Consistory of First Church had seized forcible control of the church property; that the Protestant Reformed Churches of America were presbyterial in character; that doctrinal issues were properly to be decided by higher church bodies; that these bodies were the Classis and the Synod, and that the appropriate Classis, Classis East, had decided the doctrinal issue in favor of the Hoeksema Consistory and against the DeWolf Consistory.

He, therefore, entered a decree giving recognition to the Hoeksema Consistory as "the legal and only board of directors" of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, and enjoining the DeWolf faction from "interfering with the plaintiff corporation, acting through its legal Consistory, in exercising its absolute right of possession and control over all of the property *** of the plaintiff corporation."

On appeal to this Court, the decree of Judge Taylor was affirmed—this Court relying on the decision of Classis East, and also indicating that evidence showed that the Synod (the highest body) had likewise "supported the suspension and deposition of the DeWolf faction."

During trial and appeal of the First Church Case, the split in the Protestant Reformed Churches of America meantime had been progressing. It spread to other churches and into both Classes and Synod. There now appeared 2 separate Classis Easts. The DeWolf faction, along with the Reverend Blankespoor of Second Protestant Reformed Church, formed what they termed the Reconstituted Classis East.

The schism also appeared at the Synodical level so that there appeared 2 separate Synods, each claiming that it constituted the lawfully designated high governing body of the entire church organization. One Synod recognized the De Wolf-Blankespoor faction as representing Classis East, the other recognized the Hoeksema-Schipper group.

The issue of which Synod was the lawful one eventually came before this Court in another case involving a dispute

*The First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids is 1 of 24 member churches of the Protestant Reformed Churches of America. The immediate governing body of each church is its local Consistory which is elected by the church membership. The Consistory is in charge of the property of the local church. The next higher governing body for the denomination is Classis. There are 2 Classes, namely, Classis East and Classis West, with 12 churches belonging to each. First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids belongs to Classis East. The highest governing body of the denomination is Synod. Synod is composed of delegates chosen from Classis East and Classis West.

between 2 Consistories, each of which sought control of the Second Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids.

Ultimately, this Court resolved the Second Protestant Church dispute by determining that the Synod which had recognized the Reconstituted Classis East was the lawful Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches of America. The basis for this determination was that the time and meeting place of this Synod was the only one under church law to which the last lawful Synodical meeting could properly have adjourned. Having established the lawful Synod, the Court stated that the disputed doctrinal issue was for that Synod to settle. Accordingly, the Court held that the Blankespoor Consistory, seated by the lawful Synod, was entitled to hold the property of the Second Reformed Church of Grand Rapids. *Second Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids v. Blankespoor*, 350 Mich 347.

After this decision was rendered, the DeWolf group, the defendants in the original First Church action, sought in the present case to amend and modify the decree issued against them. They assert that it is basically a decree providing a continuing injunction governing future events, and hence is subject to modification. They claim that events subsequent to issuance of the decree (i.e., the action of Synod in seating and recognizing Reconstituted Classis East, its action in receiving "for information" the decision of Reconstituted Classis East which reconsidered and reversed its heresy finding against DeWolf, and the designation of this Synod as the lawful Synod by the Supreme Court) render the First Church decree inequitable. The relief sought appears to be complete vacation of the decree and substitution therefor of a decree awarding the entire church property to the DeWolf Consistory.

The trial court declined to grant the relief sought, on the ground that it was powerless to modify a final decree affirmed by the Supreme Court in a *de novo* hearing of a chancery appeal.

Our conclusion as to this appeal may be stated simply. We do not construe the decree entered in the First Church Case as primarily injunctive in nature. Its decisive provision was as follows:

"Now, therefore, on due consideration thereof, it is ordered, adjudged and decreed, and this court does hereby order, adjudge and decree as follows:

"1. That the legal and only board of directors of the plaintiff corporation is the Consistory of The First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, of which Messrs. H. Hoeksema and C. Hanko were presidents and G. Stadt was secretary at the time of commencement of this suit."

This plainly constituted a final adjudication as to control of church property as between 2 competing factions as of the time concerned. In its decision, the court did not attempt to determine which faction followed the true doctrine of the church. The court relied primarily upon the action of Classis East which had heard the dispute and had held DeWolf and

other defendants guilty of heresy and advised the Consistory of First Church to require apologies or to oust them. Thus, the court followed long-standing precedent (much of it written as a result of other schisms in this church) requiring the courts to accept the decisions of appropriate higher church bodies in determining property disputes between church members in churches of a presbyterial character. *Borgman v. Bultema*, 213 Mich 684; *Holwerda v. Hoeksema*, 232 Mich 648.

See, also, *Van Vliet v. Vander Naald*, 290 Mich 365.

We do not regard the injunctive portion of the decree as its controlling feature. It restrained DeWolf and his associates from denying to the Hoeksema Consistory the right to control church property which the adjudication referred to above granted. The relative insignificance of the injunctive relief is indicated by the willingness of plaintiff (during hearing of this petition) to stipulate to the elimination of any injunction, and defendants' evident unwillingness to accept the offer.

Nor does the factual record presented here warrant relief even if we did construe the prior decree primarily as a continuing injunction. This record does not purport to present any new decision of Classis or Synod pertaining to a new dispute or disputes over control of the property of First Church. What we do have is an admonition from Synod (after schism at the Synodical level) indicating "incorrectness" of language from the First Church opinion of this Court which stated "Synod *** supported the suspension and deposition of the DeWolf faction," and a record of the action of Reconstituted Classis East reconsidering and reversing the finding of heresy against DeWolf.

As to the first action by Synod, we regard the language complained of as dictum since the decision in First Church was planted on the action of Classis East. As to the action by Reconstituted Classis East reversing the finding of heresy and recommendation of ouster against Reverend De Wolf, nothing contained therein disputes the right of the Hoeksema Consistory to continued control of First Church property. In short, neither the Synodical nor the Classical action calls for the relief sought by petitioner which is complete vacation of the prior decree and a new decree ousting the Hoeksema Consistory and turning the church property over entirely to the control of defendants.

We recognize the validity of the equitable principle relied upon by defendants and appellants:

"A continuing decree of injunction directed to events to come is subject always to adaptation as events may shape the need." *United States v. Swift & Co.*, 286 US 106, 114.

See, also, *Township of Erin v. Detroit & Erin Plank-Road Co.*, 115 Mich 465; *Edlis, Inc. v. Miller*, 132 W Va 147 (51SE2d 132); *Ladner v. Siegel*, 298 Pa 487 (148 A 699, 68 ALR 1172).

For the reasons we have indicated above, however, we do not deem it decisive of this appeal.

Affirmed. Costs to appellee.

OUR DOCTRINE

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

PART TWO

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The Beast out of the Earth

Revelation 13:11-18

11. And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.
12. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.
13. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men,
14. And he deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live.
15. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.
16. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads:
17. And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.
18. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.

We have discussed the first beast, that came up out of the sea and that combined within itself the appearance of a leopard, a bear, and a lion, that had the ten horns and the seven heads. We came to the conclusion, in the first place, that this beast is the symbol of a great political world-power, as is evident from the passages in the book of Daniel that refer to similar beasts. We found that it is not merely a king or an emperor or government that is here pictured, but that the beast represents the entire power, the government and its dominion, and that they belong together inseparably. We also found that this world-power is universal in its sway. It has dominion over all nations and tongues and tribes, and that not by main force but by free alliance of all the nations together. For they all wonder after the beast, think him great, admire him, and subject themselves

to him willingly, offering him even their worship. But universal this kingdom also is, we saw, because it has absolute sway over all things in its kingdom, over industry and commerce, over science and art, over religion and philosophy, and over all the powers and talents of creation.

As to its spiritual character, we found that this kingdom is anti-God and anti-Christ, anti-kingdom and anti-saints. This was plain from the fact that the beast received his power and throne from the dragon, the old serpent, the devil, the incurable opponent of the Most High and of His Christ. This is clear also from the fact that he bears names of blasphemy on his seven heads, that he has a mouth to blaspheme, and that he opens that mouth actually to blaspheme the Most High and the saints of Christ in His tabernacle. This is clear, in the third place, from the fact that he kills and persecutes the saints who refuse to worship the beast. And finally, this is evident from the fact that he himself allows himself to be worshipped as God instead of the Most High. Thus the kingdom of man under Satan is complete. It is a kingdom that has sway over all the universe, over all men, over all the powers of creation, a kingdom in the which man worships his own work and in the which the devil is lord supreme.

As to the historical realization, we pointed out that it is already in the world as to its spiritual principle, and that it is in the making all during the history of the present dispensation, revealing itself more or less boldly at different stages of history. In the second place, we warned that you must not imagine that it has already reached its full manifestation and that Revelation 13 has already been fully realized. But, in the third place, we also pointed out that for him that has understanding and that can at all read the signs of the times it is plain that the time is at hand and that all things develop very fast in the direction of this fascinating world-kingdom.

Now the text speaks of a second beast. And to prevent any misunderstanding at all, let me say from the outset that there is a definite relation between the first and the second beast. We must not have the impression that in the first part of the chapter Antichrist was pictured in its full manifestation, and that now in the second part we have the representation of something quite different. But much rather we must maintain that in the entire thirteenth chapter of Revelation we have the picture of Antichrist. The two beasts together form the picture of the full and complete antichristian power. But the first beast pictures it in its political aspect; the second beast deals with its religious and moral and scientific forces. The first beast tells us that this kingdom has sway over all men and over all things; the second beast rather explains to us how this first beast exercises his authority.

It is clear from a glance at the text that the symbolism of the first part is simply continued. In the preceding part of the chapter we found the picture of a beast rising up out of the sea, with seven heads and ten horns, and appearing

like a leopard, a bear, and a lion, all in one. In that first part of the chapter we found things that were really unintelligible without the second. And therefore, to complete the picture we must really insert the picture of the second beast into that of the first. The full symbolism is as follows. The first beast is followed by a second, that rises up out of the earth. He is less formidable in appearance. Nor is his origin in the stormy sea, but from the more quiet and more stable earth. He looks like a lamb, it seems, for he has horns as of a lamb. But when he speaks, he reminds one of the awful red dragon. He stands in a very definite relation to the first beast. Repeatedly this is indicated in the text. He exerciseth all his authority in the sight of, in the presence of, in behalf of, as servant of the first beast. All that he does he does in the presence of the first beast. And therefore, the purpose of this second beast lies in the service of the first. And this soon becomes apparent. For the second beast causes the inhabitants of the world to wonder after the first, admire him, and worship him. This second beast makes man build an image of the first beast, in order to worship the beast through his image. This second beast makes that all the worshippers of the beast receive a sign that distinguishes them from those that refuse to worship the first beast, in order that they may be killed. This second beast is therefore, as it were, the actual power of the first; and the first works and exercises his power through the second. The first beast could not exist and could not exercise his authority and would not be worshipped without the work of the second beast. And the second beast would have no reason to exist and to work, were it not for the fact that this first beast must reach its full power.

Thus is the picture. What now does this second beast represent? It is plain from what we have said that it cannot represent a second kingdom. True, in Daniel, as we have said, the beasts are symbols of kings together with their kingdoms. And also here we have the picture of a beast. But let me call your attention to the fact, in the first place, that this second beast makes a radically different impression from the first and from the beasts that are pictured in Daniel 7. There we have the wild animal,—leopard and bear and lion, and all combined into one. But here we have an entirely different picture. This beast evidently makes one think of a lamb first of all. He has horns like those of a lamb, though he speaks like the dragon. In the second place, let me call your attention to the fact that evidently his power is quite different from that of a king. A king commands, makes laws, and thus exercises authority. But this beast, although it exercises authority, even the same as that of the first beast, does not exercise his power by commands, but evidently by persuasion. He speaks. And what this speaking of the second beast implies may become plain from the repeated indications in the text concerning the manner of his work. We read that he makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the beast, that he deceives man by the great signs and wonders which he performs, that he says to

them that dwell on the earth that they should make an image. He causes all that worship the beast to receive a sign. And therefore we receive the clear impression that the beast here mentioned does not work like the first beast, but that he is of a different character. He comes by speaking and doing great signs and wonders. He comes therefore with the persuasion of a prophet. He does not force, but convince. He does not command and issue laws, but he wins the hearts of men. And if we add to this that we read repeatedly that this second beast works in the sight of and in the presence of the first beast and that he does all he can for the power and maintenance of the first beast, it is plain that this second beast represents some power in the kingdom, some tremendous influence in that great universal kingdom which we have pictured to you according to the first part of the chapter, through which the hearts and minds of men are influenced and bewitched and charmed, so that they worship the beast and admire him and submit themselves gladly.

What power, then, does this second beast represent? We will find no difficulty to identify him. Scripture itself tells us. In the nineteenth chapter of the book of Revelation we find that this same beast is referred to. And there we read: "And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet, that wrought the signs in his sight, wherewith he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast and them that worshipped his image: they two were cast alive into the lake of fire that burneth with brimstone." And in Revelation 20:10 we find mention of him once more: "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where are also the beast and the false prophet." The identity is unmistakable. The beast that is mentioned in these passages is evidently the first beast; and the false prophet is none other than this second beast, with the two lamb's horns, that speaks as the dragon. And therefore we come to the conclusion that this second beast is called the false prophet. What is a prophet? We must banish from our minds the popular conception that a prophet is chiefly a man that foretells the future. True, a prophet also foretells the future. But that is not his only work. We find from Scripture that a prophet is characteristically a person that speaks for someone else. Aaron is called the prophet of Moses when they two together go to Pharaoh and Aaron expresses the message instead of and for Moses. So are the prophets of God among Israel. They are men that speak for God and bring His message, that appeal to the minds and hearts of men, of Israel, in behalf of Jehovah and His covenant and cause. They teach and speak and reveal the will of God and try to persuade men that they may embrace Jehovah's cause. Now this second beast is also a prophet: he speaks for someone else. He tries to influence the minds of men, to persuade them, to gain them for the cause of him in whose interest he speaks. But he is a false prophet. He does not preach the truth. He speaks the lie. He persuades men and teaches them, and by doing so deceives them, so that they believe the lie.

H.H.

A CLOUD OF WITNESSES

The Sin of Judah

"And Judah acknowledged them, and said, She hath been more righteous than I."

— GENESIS 38:26

There are certain portions of Scripture which are very difficult to read. It is not the language that is hard; it is the content. They tell of things which we do not care to know, of things which are repulsive to our sense of propriety, of things which we ordinarily would never think of talking or writing about. We would not think of selecting these portions of Scripture to read in public, we hesitate to read them in the home when children are present; even in our private reading we do not choose to dwell very long upon them. They discuss sins in terms that tend to shock us. At times we may even wonder why the Holy Spirit has thought well to have recorded them in the Scriptures. Such a portion of Scripture is that found in the 38th chapter of Genesis concerning the sins of Judah and his sons. The fact of the matter is that this and other portions like it, have a very definite purpose to serve. There is something amazing and truly wonderful about the fact that sins are so consistently and accurately recorded for us in the Bible.

In our study of the history of the Church as recorded in Scripture we learn to know the saints that have lived in former years. The more we study their lives the more we begin actually to experience a oneness of life with them. In their experiences we see our own lives clearly reflected. Their joys and sorrows, strengths and weaknesses, victories and sorrows, loves and hatreds are essentially the same as ours. They arouse within us a spiritual sympathy. In essence we travel the same road as Abram coming from Ur and Moses through the wilderness; we fight the same battles as Joshua and David; we defend the same truth as Elijah and Elisha. When in the pages of Scripture we hear them speak in faith, the confession of Ruth re-echoes in our own heart, "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." The communion of saints binds us together in the body of Christ, spanning all time and space.

As we study these lives recorded for us, we are often inclined to picture them in our minds as men far more perfect than they actually were. We see them in their strength and tend to minimize their weaknesses. We are apt to forget that they also were mere men with all of the weaknesses, temptations, and sins with which we have to struggle in our own flesh. We are rather naturally inclined toward hero worship in which we take mere men and in our minds raise them to positions of absolute perfection. It is then disconcerting to come to chapters such as the one which we are now considering, chapters which point out in sharp terms

that also the saints of former days were sinners. They could be guilty of the grossest sins. The Scriptures tell us time and time again of sins, terrible sins, of which some of the greatest saints in the history of God's Church have been guilty. There is hardly a precept of God's law which can not be found to have been transgressed by one of the saints in Scripture.

This fact is for us of considerable importance. In the first place, it prevents us from idealizing men. There is no room found in Scripture for the worship of mere men. There is only One who is worthy of being worshipped and that is God. Whenever you have mere men, you have sinners. That fact the Word of God will not let us forget. In the second place, it is a warning against hypocrisy. If the Holy Ghost had recorded for us only the virtues of these saints, we might easily come to the conclusion that to be a child of God we have to lead perfect lives. Since we could only appear to do this through the means of hypocrisy, the results of this for us would be disastrous. But God tells us that His children are not perfect; they also are yet sinners. We need not be afraid of admitting that this is true of ourselves. In the third place, it reveals to us the universal need which God's people have for atonement. There is no man who is righteous of himself. Even the fathers of the Church were by nature men of corruption. If anyone is to appear righteous before the sight of God, he must be robed in the righteousness of another, and that can only be in the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. In the fourth place, this can keep us from discouragement. It is a hard thing for a child of God to have to live in the constant awareness of the corruption which asserts itself in his own flesh. If we could know only about our own lives, or if we could only judge by what actually comes to light in the lives of our fellow saints, we might easily become totally discouraged as to the possibility of our own salvation because of the sin which we always see in our own inner lives. The record of God assures us, however, that sin has been the constant reality in the lives of all of His people. Finally, this is for us a warning against self-confidence. Let us never look at ourselves and think that we are free from the possibility of gross sins. Some of the greatest of the saints have fallen deeply into sin. There is not one of us that is in himself one bit stronger than they. We may all well take warning and look to God and pray, lest we fall into temptation.

Furthermore, this fact that so many sins are so accurately recorded is one of the great assurances we have as to the divine authorship of Scripture. If the Bible were a mere work of men, it would never be so. The world's history and even its mythology always tend to the glorification of favored men. Of George Washington there is hardly any record left of anything that he did which was bad. Lincoln's every utterance and deed is considered nigh unto sanctimonious. And every nation does the same with its heroes. Even in the Church we rarely escape the tendency to emphasize the

virtues and soft-pedal the weaknesses of such men as Calvin and Luther. But this God never does. His record of the church's history is very accurate. When He records a man's life, He records it as it was with all of the weaknesses and sins which are important for us to know. There is no gloss. The Bible's record concerning man is just as it took place with sins as sin, and virtues as virtues in all honesty and truthfulness. This complete honesty is one of the greatest testimonies to the divine authorship of Scripture.

This all is very clearly exemplified in the Genesis 38 record concerning Judah and his children. Judah was in the promised line of the covenant. From his line of generations was to come the Christ. Were the Old Testament merely a record made by the historians of Israel, we may be sure that he would have been presented solely as a man of virtue. Surely the events of this chapter could easily have been passed over. But God's ways are different than man's. He would not suppress the truth, even concerning the line of Judah. Rather it was God's very purpose to reveal that Christ did come from a line of sinners. The glory of Christ is not contingent upon the glamour of His forefathers as is so with the heroes of men. His greatness is purely in the love of the triune God Who sent Him to be born to men guilty and lost in sin. Because the Scriptures are not mere history but the revelation of God's grace in salvation, this fact for us is important.

Consider once how differently we might look upon Judah if we did not have the record of this chapter. Then the chief basis for our evaluation of him would be based on the plea in behalf of Benjamin before the face of Joseph (Gen. 44). That was surely a most beautiful plea manifesting great love and spiritual courage. It testifies to the fact that Judah was a true and excellent child of faith. We might, in fact, easily conclude that the promise was given to the line of Judah due to his moral superiority over his brothers. But God has given us also a record of his relations with Tamar, and our evaluation of Judah becomes much more accurate. Although this in no way may be allowed to detract from the excellency of the plea which he made before Joseph, neither must we think that his selection to be the father of Christ was due to the fact that he was any less a sinner than his brothers. God's selection was not based on the works of Judah but only upon His own eternal good-pleasure.

Still another reason for the sin of Judah with Tamar being recorded is to be found in the immediately following history. This event reveals very clearly why it was necessary for God to provide for the children of Israel to be taken into Egypt. The reason is that Jacob's children were falling far too much under the influence of the Canaanitish people. Abraham and Isaac had kept themselves comparatively free in their life times from the inhabitants of the land walking as strangers and pilgrims within Canaan. When Jacob returned from the land of Canaan, however, this changed. The people of the land were quite willing to make friendship with

Jacob's children, and they had not the strength to refuse. They began to live like these peoples. How great these sins became, we learn in this chapter. In the first place, Judah went out from his father's house to go and live with the Canaanites. This in itself was a great sin. Abraham and Isaac, his fathers before him, had done their utmost to keep themselves free from the influence of the Canaanites. This discretion Judah now completely neglected. Then he married a Canaanitish woman. Esau had been severely condemned by Isaac in former years for having done this very thing; now Judah, of the promised line, went out and did the same. In addition he gave his son to marry a Canaanitish woman also. Finally the two oldest of his sons were slain in judgment by God for the extreme wickedness in which they engaged. From a human point of view it would have been impossible for the covenant line to have continued in such an environment for even a few more generations. The children of Jacob were much too susceptible to the friendliness of the world. It was the grace of God which removed them to the land of Egypt where the people of the world were much less desirous of their friendship. There they could develop into a nation free from the temptations which they were not strong enough to withstand. Only after Canaan was ripe for judgment would they be brought back.

One thing which we should not fail to note concerning Judah, however, is the fact that he was, in spite of his many sins, a child of God. We might be inclined to conclude after a superficial reading of this chapter that he was yet an unregenerate man. There is one fact that reveals that this is not true, that is the fact that when Tamar showed to him his sin he was willing to confess that he was guilty. He was not indifferent to his sin; nor did he attempt to excuse it. He confessed, "She hath been more righteous than I." Although the Scriptures tell us no more, we would believe that from that time his life did proceed in a more sanctified way.

In conclusion there is one more thing which we would like to say about the contents of this chapter generally. It might be thought that because this portion of Scripture describes sins which ordinarily we do not feel free to discuss openly, it constitutes a justification for the modern literature which floods our land today under the name of "realism." Actually the two are in direct contrast. Modern literature treats sin, and in this treatment it glamourizes it. Its descriptions go far beyond propriety. It enlarges upon the emotional passions that motivate it. It makes man a helpless victim of his feelings for which he ought not be held responsible. Quite different is the treatment of Scripture. Its descriptions go no further than is necessary to point out the nature of the sin. It makes no allowance for the emotions or feelings of men. Sin is treated as sin, that which is abhorrent before the sight of God and to the sanctified conscience of His people.

B.W.

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of Romans 14, 15

XII.

(Romans 15:14-21)

The last time we wrote on Romans 14, 15 was in the December 1st issue of *The Standard Bearer*. The attentive reader will have observed that we devoted two articles to the Gospel narratives dealing with the birth of Christ.

We now resume our series on the two aforementioned Chapters of Romans.

We hesitated to write on the remaining section of Romans 15, because in it Paul no longer deals with the subject of the matters which are "adiaphora" and their Scriptural motivation. What we really have recorded is an "Epilogue," a conclusion of Paul to the entire epistle. It is not simply some concluding remarks to the Chapters 14 and 15.

A rather superficial reading of this section, when compared with Chapter 1:8-16 will show that in it Paul refers to the same matters. It deals with Paul's relationship to the Romans by virtue of his office. Thus it is in both sections.

In this section here in Romans 15:14-33 Paul touches upon the following matters, which we will here briefly state as follows:

1. He first of all expresses his fullest confidence which he entertains toward his readers, concerning his goodness, their being filled with knowledge, and their ability to teach each other. Verse 14.

2. He justifies his boldness of speech to them, as he had done in part in this letter, appealing to his calling and office of apostleship to the Gentiles. Verse 15.

3. In so doing, his only boast is in what Christ has wrought through him in the gospel! He dares boast in nothing else. Verses 16-19.

4. He mentions his plan to come through Rome, a long-time purpose of his, when he would go also to Spain to preach the Gospel, and of his desire to meet the brethren, and be sent by them on his journey westward. Verses 20-24.

5. He prays the church at Rome to remember him in their prayers, that, when he delivers the collections in Jerusalem from those of Macedonia, he may be delivered from those who are disobedient to Christ and the gospel. Verses 25-33.

In our present essay we would limit ourselves to the verses 14-21. This passage reads as follows: "*And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye yourselves*

are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another. But I write the more boldly unto you, in some measure, as putting you again in remembrance, because of the grace that was given me of God, that I should be a minister of Christ Jesus unto the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be made acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit. I have therefore my glorying in Christ Jesus in things pertaining to God. For I dare not speak of any things save those which Christ wrought by me, for the obedience to the Gentiles, by word and deed, in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Holy Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about even unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ; yea, making my aim so to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, that I might not build upon another man's foundation, but, as it is written, They shall see to whom no tidings of him came, and they who have not heard shall understand."

In verse 14 Paul expresses his own personal and complete confidence in the readers, the church at Rome. He singles out their "goodness," their being "full of knowledge," and the resultant effect that "they are able to admonish each other." That the believers at Rome are full of "goodness." The term in the original for "goodness" is an exclusively biblical term. It possibly refers to the fundamental *uprightness of heart and life* of the believers at Rome. They hate all that is false and vain. Since they are full of goodness, they can also be full of *knowledge*. They are instructed in the full counsel of God, concerning their redemption in Christ Jesus. The Word of God dwells richly in them. Hence, they are *willing* and *able* to admonish each other. The term for *admonish* in the Greek really means to *place in mind*!

Paul assures the believers that this fact concerning them has his fullest confidence. Up till this present moment Paul never entertained any doubts on this score. It appears from Chapter 16 that Paul is personally well acquainted with the members of this church. He mentions them by name, often stating his former relationships to them. Does he not mention such well-known former associates as Priscilla and Aquila. Compare Romans 16:2 and Acts 18:2, 26! He is fully persuaded concerning the integrity and ability of such people as Aquila and Priscilla, former teachers even of Apollas, the Alexandrian Jew. Had they not taught Apollas more accurately the truth, as it is in Christ's death and resurrection and His baptism?

Having removed all thoughts that the motive of his boldness in writing the Roman believers was their lack, he can the better and more effectively point to the pure motive of writing, which follows from his God-given office as apostle of Jesus Christ!

The reason for writing is *because of the grace given him from God*. Surely this "grace given" him does not exclude the personal grace given him in the forgiveness of sins, and that he was the chief of sinners in that he had persecuted

the church of God. See Acts 9:1-19. How often does not Paul refer to this persecution as being evidence of the great mercy of God toward him. I Tim. 1:12-17. However, equally as often as Paul speaks of this office this office is *per se* a grace of God. It is not simply a work, a calling; it is the grace of apostleship. That is what keeps Paul humble, and yet makes him bold in Christ. His is not an office of weakness, but of power and of sobriety. In that consciousness and power Paul has written this great letter to the Romans. Paul magnifies his office. Romans 11:13; I Cor. 3:10-15.

Because of this office Paul is a minister of Christ Jesus. Christ had placed him in this office. God had separated Paul from his mother's womb unto this office. On the road to Damascus God's Son was revealed in him. Gal. 1:15, 16. To him was revealed the truth that the Gentiles are fellow-heirs with the Jews of the promise, as had been revealed to none other. Eph. 3:1-13.

What an exalted and God-glorifying view of this office!

Paul labors in a priestly manner. His "ministering" of the Gospel is like that of a priest in the temple. It is a service at the altar, so to speak. He is not simply a steward of the people. His is not a public office of the people, *for* the people and *by* the people! He ministers, indeed, for the needs of the Gentiles. Is he not their debtor, a debtor of both the Greeks and the Barbarians, both of the wise and of the unwise? Rom. 1:14. But he is then a debtor who ministers to their needs as did the priest in the temple in the name of God! Verse 16.

Such is the motive of Paul writing this grand treatise, the epistle to the Romans!

But not only so. Paul also knows that through the power of the Holy Spirit the fruits will be for the altar, a sacrifice well-pleasing to God. When the Gentiles turn to God in faith and conversion such turning in praise and thankfulness is the fruit which the Lord has prepared for Himself upon His holy altar.

And upon this altar no strange fire may be burned. We know what happened to the sons of Aaron, when they brought in strange fire. They were rejected from the priesthood. All the fruit of Paul's labors is of the fire of the Holy Ghost in the church! Nothing else! No more and no less!

For this reason Paul asserts in verses 17, 18 that he dares not speak of any *things* save those "which Christ wrought by me." Yes, Paul actually boasts. He *actually* glories. More often he writes of this glorying, does he not? Thus in II Cor. 1:12 he writes: "For our glorying is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and sincerity of God, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we behaved ourselves in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward."

In this passage of Rom. 15 Paul glories especially in

the things pertaining to God in Christ. The work of God in the efficaciousness of the Gospel. It was the *gospel of Christ that was fulfilled* in the whole world. The translation which we quoted above reads as follows on verse 19: "I have fully preached the gospel of Christ." On this passage Beza comments: "I have executed the commission of preaching" the gospel of Christ from Jerusalem, and all the regions round about until Illyricum. Luther translates "completely preached the gospel." We believe that Paul means to express more than the simple universal preaching of the gospel. He used a very peculiar construction in this connection. He really does say that the gospel was fully *preached*. Fact is, that he does not use the term "to preach" at all. What he says is that the "Gospel was fulfilled" by me. According to the context, where Paul speaks about glorying alone in what "Christ wrought by me" this must mean that the gospel as a power of God unto salvation of every one that believeth "was fulfilled" in this power, as it accrued in giving faith to all the called, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus we read in Acts 6:7: "And the word of God increased," and, again, in Acts 12:24 we read: "But the word of God *grew* and *multiplied*." See also Acts 19:20.

Who caused it to grow and increase? None other but the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Christ.

This is, incidentally, corroborated by what we read in verse 20: "Yea, making my aim so to preach the gospel, not were Christ was already named, that I might not build upon another's foundation." It is exactly here in Paul's labors that we see the fulfilment of the gospel. The gospel realized faith. God called, through the Gospel, the things that are not as if they were. And here it was emphatically demonstrated that Christ *wrought* faith through the gospel, causing the gospel to be fulfilled. And thus Paul glories in the Lord. And that alone is permissible. Our faith does not rest in the wisdom of words, but in demonstration of power by the Holy Spirit. I Cor. 2.

Such is the fulfilment of the Word of God in Isaiah 52:15, where we read, "They shall *see* to whom no tidings of him came"!

It is this that is the final clinching evidence in this letter to the Romans concerning the Gospel being a power of God unto salvation!

Paul returns in this section to the fundamental point of departure in this letter. He had shown the misery of man, his being sold under sin; the great righteousness of God in Christ, and our being raised with Christ in newness of life. Now he makes clear once more that the *gospel*, which surely is not an offer of God unto all who hear it, is the power of God unto salvation.

Thus alone he that glories will glory in the Christ, who causes the gospel to be efficacious unto salvation!

G.L.

IN HIS FEAR

Freedom of Speech

(6)

The improper use of freedom of speech, which is afforded us in this land of ours, places upon those who speak the truth the solemn obligation and calling to speak it boldly and repeatedly. When speech is multiplied to undermine the faith of God's people, the efforts to counteract this spread of the lie must also be doubled and trebled. In His fear we may not be silent. For that reason we will add to what we wrote last time about this evil of relegating the Word of God to a secondary place, so that it must be reinterpreted to harmonize with "scientific" findings of those who hate and deny that Word of God.

Last time we made mention of the fact that to reappraise the stand of the Church throughout the ages in regard to the length of the creation days and the age of this world in which we live, in order to harmonize our stand with the discoveries and theories of sinful, atheistic men, should not stop there but by all means reappraise also the Church's stand in regard to the wonder of the incarnation and of the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Is it scientific and scholarly to deny the one miracle because of certain findings of men and then disregard utterly the findings of these men as far as other wonders are concerned? Is it reasonable to apply human reason to the one work of God and to say that we need not apply it to another work of the same nature? And we asked, What do we gain by such tactics? Have we really exalted the Lord by such doings? Have we demonstrated before the eyes of men His majesty and divinity? In all this are we showing that reverence and respect for Him as GOD that gives us ourselves the confidence of doing this in His fear?

There are so many other things that can be added to the above. And no doubt in process of time these also will be treated as man becomes bolder in his unbelief, and in the wrong freedom of speech it will be published and be brought more widely to our attention. The thoughts are already there and must be there. Having left the line of the truth in the matter of the creation days one must either retract and honor the Word of God above the theories of men — which by the way they cannot prove, as we wrote before in another connection, for they know nothing of conditions before the Flood — or they must continue to proceed step by step, faster and faster until by human reason they have also "explained" the incarnation away and the resurrection of Christ from the dead. You are, perhaps, aware of the attempts of higher criticism to deny the miracles of Jesus. Jesus' feeding of the five thousand with five loaves and two fishes is explained as an application of Jesus' teachings rather than as an actual miracle of feeding and nourishing so many with so little.

Jesus taught the people to do unto others as they would have them do unto them. He taught them that it is more blessed to give than to receive. And so, having broken the bread and given it to His disciples, they gave it to those on the edge of the crowd. Each man, applying Jesus' teachings, passed his piece on to the next man and so on till the other edge of the crowd where the disciples picked it up. There were twelve baskets full of fragments left! O, indeed, but that was not literally true. Twelve is a symbolic number of God's kingdom and covenant, and so it simply means that His teachings were received and put into practice by the whole audience. So the miracle of Christ becomes the work of man instead. Or again, that wonder of Jesus walking on the sea in the midst of the storm. Really, He did not do that. It can be demonstrated scientifically that this is impossible. But He was walking on the shore. To the disciples it looked as though He were walking on the water. Let us be reasonable about such things!! So the unbeliever who poses as a student of the Scriptures will "explain" the Word of God so that it harmonizes with the limits of the human mind. How amazing! How utterly void of the fear of the Lord, to limit the Almighty and Infinite God in His works to the limits of man's mind. If man's little mind cannot solve the problem of carbon-14, of the formation of coal, of the Grand Canyon, the location of Niagara Falls so far up the gorge and the like, then he will question the wisdom of the infinite God. He will put a limit on God's mind and accuse Him of not being able to express in word and writing the actual fact of the creation of the world. God's freedom to speak intelligently and correctly will be questioned. And where will the end be? Or shall we put it mildly? God purposely speaks in veiled language so that only the big minds of the world can understand Him. The truth of Scripture is only for the learned; and those poor illiterate people of the Old Dispensation including Adam and Eve, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob died believing the lie. They died believing that the world was created in a week of days that were each only twenty-four hours long, while actually they were billions and billions of years long. And Adam died with the mistaken notion that he was the first man while actually there were many, many thousands before him. And Moses, though he was skilled in all the knowledge of the "universities" of Egypt also died with the mistaken notion. For when he wrote the first five books of the Bible and gave Israel the law from Mount Sinai, he, too, thought of days in a different way than God actually meant it. The fault is not with God, the fault is with man who had not advanced yet to this age of brilliant minds and bold hearts who dare to relegate the Word of God to a place where it must be harmonized with man's theories. The fear of the Lord is not the beginning of knowledge (but see Proverbs 1:7), but this is knowledge and this is wisdom: Listen to the theories of unbelieving men as to how the things God created and as to the ways in which He works and then interpret His Word so that it does not deny the "findings" of the unbeliever.

And indeed, continuing on that path of reappraising the Church's stand in regard to the length of the creation days and the age of this world will bring man to question the way and the time of the appearance of man upon this earth. We understand that there are already voices raised, in circles that have not as yet discarded the Bible, even though they have questioned the infallibility of parts of it, and so opened all its pages for the same questioning, voices that question already whether Adam was the first man upon this earth. Moses could have been wrong on that score too. Of course! If the half life of carbon-14 is 5,568 years more or less, so that in that period of time half of the given amount of this material that is found in a certain substance will have disappeared and then in another 5,568 years half of the amount left again disappears and in 5,568 years half of this amount disappears and so on till all is gone, then man must have been here a long, long time, and the sixth day must have been millions of years long. And is that the next step in this process of evolution? We mean this process whereby those who say that they believe that the Scriptures are the Word of God develop and finally evolve also into this denial of what the Word of God says about the creation of man.

To our great regret we misplaced the article we had read in which one of the scientists of our land either discovered or posited the theory that the radiation of a nuclear blast alters the age of carbon-14. We do not recall whether the article stated that this added to the length or shortened the age of this material; but the point is the same: Some scientists concede that given different circumstances than are our lot at present carbon-14 will be altered as to the length of its life. And we repeat, no man living can prove that conditions before the Flood are the same as those of the world we know today. Whether that is the solution to the problem or not makes no difference, there is a solution even though we with our little minds and limited span of years cannot discover it; and we keep the Word of God as indeed the word of *God*, and we seek to harmonize all scientific findings with it and not that Word with all scientific findings.

Otherwise, what will we say presently to the achievements of the biochemist, Sidney W. Fox? In a simple four-step process he has synthesized thousands of "spherules" which show cell-like organization so that each one even includes membrane and a nucleus. These he produced out of simple inorganic chemicals which according to the theories of the evolutionists existed billions of years ago on the lifeless earth. Man waits now to see whether he can produce life in a test tube. Mr. Fox intends to take one more step and by this fifth step demonstrate that these cell-like spherules can divide and reproduce. If that can be achieved by further treatment upon these spherules man has discovered(?) how life began on this earth. Well, let us assume that Mr. Fox is able to do that, let us assume that God is pleased to lead him to find a way to induce these spherules to undergo some process that in a crude way at least resembles division and

reproduction, must we quickly revise the Church's stand throughout the ages in regard to the creation of life by God and the creation of man? Will we have to harmonize the Scriptures with this new theory of man as to the way in which life began on this earth? Why not? If the carbon-14 theory demands(?) it, why not each and every other theory of man?

And so one can continue. What about the Flood? Reason would show you that all these animals — two elephants alone have a tremendous demand for food — and man could not live in an ark of that size together with all the food required for a year and ten days! And if the six days of creating are each millions of years long, how come the seventh which still belongs to the creation week suddenly becomes twenty-four hours? It must have been twenty-four hours and there surely could not have been — according to that other theory that dares not make these days anything else than twenty-four hours each, but puts long periods between each day — there could not have been a long period between the sixth and seventh days. For then the testimony of Scripture in Genesis 5:5 is in error. Adam must have been one million nine hundred and thirty years old when he died rather than nine hundred thirty years old.

Nay, let us approach this whole matter in His fear. Let us bow before Him as the wise, almighty God that He is. Let us not bow before the theories of sinful men and give their word the preference. And indeed "science" is so indefinite about these things. Some say billions and others millions and no one knows! In His fear let us rather say to all these things that are problems for our minds, There is a solution; there is an explanation even though I cannot see it; but I am convinced that the evil doer, the unbeliever who denies God does not have the answer. In His fear I will let God's Word speak. I will not deny Him that freedom of speech; and I myself will in the true freedom of speech declare HIS praises.

J.A.H.

IN MEMORIAM

The Mary-Martha Society of the Hope Prot. Reformed Church of Redlands extends its sincere sympathy to Mrs. Edwin Gritters in the loss of her mother-in-law,

MRS. BEN GRITTERS.

Ps. 23:4: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me."

Rev. H. Veldman, President
Mrs. G. Feenstra, Secretary

P.S. Please, send all announcements to Mr. J. Dykstra.

H.H.

Contending For The Faith

The Church and the Sacraments

VIEWS DURING THE THIRD PERIOD (750-1517 A.D.)

THE SEVEN SACRAMENTS

MATRIMONY

(continued)

In our preceding article we quoted at length from *The History of the Christian Church* by Philip Schaff, setting forth the dreadful decree of the Romish Church, with all its accompanying horrors, which not only forbade the clergy, etc., to be married but also annulled the marriages in existence. On the one hand that Church does not hesitate to champion and defend the sanctity and permanence of the marriage bond, declaring that even adultery cannot break the bond of marriage; on the other hand this same Church did not hesitate to annul and declare void hundreds and thousands of existing marriages, marriages which had occurred before the face of the living God. We now wish to continue our discussion of this seventh sacrament of Rome.

Before we proceed I would make a comment on what I wrote in my article of Dec. 15, 1959. I refer to the following statement: "But in spite of the fact that the state of marriage is a bond which remains in effect 'until death doth us part,' Rome did not hesitate to issue a decree which annulled all marriages which involved the clergy, in order to set forth its doctrine of celibacy." The reader will notice the words which appear in quotation marks in this quotation. This was done intentionally because the undersigned did not know whether these words also appear in the marriage form as in effect in the Roman Catholic Church. However, we have since learned that these words do appear in the Roman Catholic marriage form. And yet the Romish church did not hesitate to set aside thousands of marriages. The words: "until death doth us part," evidently did not apply in all these hundreds and thousands of cases. And Rome surely also violated this word of Scripture: "What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." Rome, we know, did not hesitate to "put asunder."

First, I wish to call attention to Rome's version of Eph. 5:32 as its translation of this text appears in the decrees of the Council of Trent. This translation as appearing in these decrees reads: "This is a great sacrament, but I speak in Christ and in the Church." This is not a correct translation. We do not read literally: "but I speak *in* Christ and *in* the Church," but "I speak with respect to Christ and with respect to the Church." Hence, what we read in Eph. 5:32 is not a sacrament that is in the Church, but something that refers to Christ and to the Church.

Secondly, it must be very evident that Eph. 5:32 does not speak of a sacrament. It is simply a fact that the word, "sacrament," does not appear in this Scripture. Now we all know, I am sure, that the word, "sacrament," appears nowhere in Holy Writ. There are other words, besides the word "sacrament," which do not appear in Scripture and which are nevertheless used extensively among us, such as: trinity, providence, attributes. The word, "sacrament," is not a Scriptural expression either. Rome regards the sacraments as means of grace in themselves, apart from the Word, and also that these means of grace are such only as inseparably connected with the clergy. The word which appears in Eph. 5:32, translated by Rome as "sacrament," is the word: mystery. It is undoubtedly true that the early Church (I mean "early" here as referring to its New Testament infancy) used the word, "mystery," in connection with the sacraments because of their mysterious and hidden character. However, it is also true that that early Church also used the word, "mystery," in connection with various doctrines and ordinances of the Church. Now Rome retained this word, "mystery," in connection with the sacraments, and maintains therefore that Paul is speaking of a sacrament in Eph. 5:32. This, however, is obviously untenable. In the first place, the apostle is not speaking here exclusively of the state of marriage, but he writes that he speaks with reference to Christ and the Church. We read literally, do we not: "This is a great mystery: but I speak with respect to Christ and the Church." And, secondly, we do not read of a sacrament here but of a mystery. Now the same word also appears in I Tim. 3:16, where we read: "Great is the mystery of godliness." Not even Rome would have the boldness to assert that the manifestation of God in the flesh is a sacrament in the ecclesiastical sense and meaning of the term.

Finally, we would insert here a brief observation in connection with Eph. 5:32. Eph. 5:25 and 32 are quoted by Rome in support of its contention that matrimony is a sacrament. These verses read as follows: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it: This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church." It is clear that verse 32 is Rome's sole proof for its contention. And this, we have already observed, is no proof. Fact is, even Roman Catholic authorities will concede that Rome lacks Scriptural proof for its view of the seven sacraments. On the other hand, we understand, Rome does not need any proof from Scripture. Statements from the holy Fathers, the Councils, and the traditions of the universal Church are placed by Rome on a par with Holy Writ. What, then, is the great mystery which the apostle mentions in this text of Eph. 5? The word, "mystery," refers to that which is hidden, which lies beyond all human life and understanding. Without entering into a detailed discussion of this entire passage, Eph. 5:22-33, we must bear two thoughts in mind. On the one hand, the apostle is speaking here of the wonderful relation between Christ and His Church, of the wonderful love of Christ for and to His

Church. Christ loved His Church, the Church did not love Him. Christ sought His Church, the Church did not seek Him. And Christ loved His Church, even to the extent of giving Himself for it into the fearful death of the cross, and this He did in order that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, in order that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. And, on the other hand, the apostle is speaking in these verses in Eph. 5 of the state of marriage, the relation between a man and his wife. And it is also evident that the apostle views these relationships in the light of one another. Hence, what else is this great mystery than exactly this relationship between an earthly marriage on the one hand, and the marriage relationship between Christ and His Church on the other hand? This is surely a great mystery, a "hidden thing," which could never enter into the heart and mind of man but must needs be revealed to us by the living God.

THE TIME OF THE REFORMATION

VIEWS ON THE CHURCH

Until now we have called attention to the history of doctrine, as in connection with the doctrine of the Church and the Sacraments, during the first three periods. We have now come to the time of the Reformation. And we plan to call attention, in the first place, to the history of doctrine as concerning the Church.

The main principles of the Reformation.

The Reformation is unquestionably the greatest movement, the most important single event in the history of the Church of God in the New Dispensation. It is very clearly not to be identified with or put into the same class as the movement which is known in history as the Renaissance and which occurred especially in the fifteenth century. According to the literal meaning of the word, the Renaissance was a rebirth. Although it is true that men as Wycliff in England and John Huss of Bohemia were imbued with the spirit of the Reformation, they must be regarded as forerunners of this great movement, and the beginning of this tremendous movement is generally regarded as occurring in the year 1517, when Martin Luther nailed the ninety-five theses to the church door at Wittenberg. And the beginning of the Renaissance is placed in the year 1453, when Constantinople was captured by the Turks. The fall of Constantinople led many Greek scholars to flee to the West and seek an asylum in Italy. These movements are not to be identified. The Reformation was surely not the product of the Renaissance although it is undoubtedly true that the latter served the former even as all things must and always do work for the good of God's Cause in the midst of the world. It is not difficult to understand that the invention of the printing press, for example, also served the spreading of the gospel,

although the inventors of this machine did not purpose at all the gospel of the living God. The distinction between them may be stated as follows: the Renaissance was a rebirth purely in the natural sense of the word; the Reformation was a rebirth in the spiritual sense of the word. The Renaissance was a rebirth and revival of natural art and learning; the Reformation was other-worldly, from above, a spiritual awakening within the heart of man, the product of God's wonderful and irresistible grace. It is true that the Renaissance was in violent conflict with and in opposition to Rome as Roman Catholicism shackled the hearts and minds of men and demanded that men bow in all matters before the Church of Rome. However, it is just as true that this movement also was in violent opposition to and in conflict with the Word of God, and that it exalted Human Reason as the sole Criterion of all doctrine and walk. Rome advocated the Church as the sole Criterion of all doctrine and walk; the Reformation bowed exclusively before the Word of the living God; the Renaissance bowed before Human Reason as the sole determining Criterion of all conduct and walk and doctrine.

It was the year 1517, and the date was Oct. 31. The day after, Nov. 1, was All Saints' Day. This was a holy day of the Church, a day when the relics in the churches were solemnly displayed also in the church at Wittenberg. Luther was in violent disagreement with the scandalous traffic in indulgences, the sale of the forgiveness of sins. On Oct. 31 he posted his objections to this nefarious activity in the form of ninety-five theses which he nailed to the church door of Wittenberg. In this way he made public his views about indulgences. This was a common practice in those days. The door of the Castle Church at Wittenberg served as a university bulletin board. In posting these theses Luther invited any doctor of theology to debate with him publicly on the subject of indulgences. This bold act on the part of the German Reformer was surely the spark that ignited the Reformation. It was an act for which the bold and fearless and intrepid German monk had been prepared by the living God. The timid and fearful John Calvin, timid and fearful by nature, was not the man who would have committed this act.

The main principles of the Reformation are usually considered to be two, namely the formal and the material principle. Let us look at these two principles, the Lord willing, in our following article.

H.V.

IN MEMORIAM

The Eunice Society of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids wishes to express its sincere sympathy to one of our members, Mrs. Sidney Newhof in the loss of her sister,

MRS. J. M. (FRANCES) STARK

May our Heavenly Father comfort the bereaved through His Word and Spirit. II Corinthians 5:1.

Mrs. D. Jonker, President
Mrs. H. Velthouse, Secretary

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

Article 14 (continued)

Previously we have seen that the key of this entire article lies in the words, "It hath pleased God." It is simply the divinely appointed method of operation in the work of salvation to use means, the means of grace. We have seen too that therefore God has bound His people to the use of these means. Outside of them and apart from them He does not save His people. We must remember too, however, that this at the same time means that these means and their use are never in vain. God has not only bound His people to the use of these means. He has, as it were, bound Himself to the use of them, and will therefore surely employ His own means unto the salvation of His own.

This pleasure of God to use the means of grace in the work of salvation is said, first of all, to be true in regard to the beginning of the work of grace in us. The Holy Ghost works faith in us through the preaching of the gospel. We need not go into detail concerning this element of Article 14 since this is simply a repetition of the truth already expounded in Article 17 of the previous chapter. However, we may notice that in this connection the article speaks only of the preaching of the gospel, not of the hearing, reading, and meditation thereon, as it does in connection with the work of preservation. And we may notice that this is quite in harmony with reality also, particularly in the sphere of the covenant. It is through the preaching of the gospel that the seed of the covenant experience the beginning of the work of God's grace in them. And it is only after that beginning has been consciously wrought that they consciously persevere and continue in the faith through their hearing, reading, and meditation upon the Word, with its exhortations, threatenings, and promises. For the rest, the fathers mention the beginning of the work of grace in us simply for the purpose of the comparison drawn in this article. God does not begin by using the means of grace, and then continue the work of grace without means. The line follows through. What is begun mediately is also continued and preserved and perfected mediately. The latter follows from the former. In fact, we may make the same comparison with our natural life in this instance as is made in III, IV, 17, and say: "As the almighty operation of God, whereby he prolongs and supports this our natural life, does not exclude, but requires the use of means, by which God of his infinite mercy and goodness hath chosen to exert his influence, so the supernatural operation of God, by which he preserves, continues, and perfects the work of grace in us, in no wise ex-

cludes, or subverts the use of the gospel, the food of the soul."

In the second place, the article makes a distinction in the work of preservation in the broader sense, and speaks of three aspects of this work of God: He preserves, continues, and perfects the work of His grace in us. God keeps the new life in us alive, keeps it in existence, through the means of grace. Secondly, there is also progress: that new life must continue and advance. It must grow in grace. This also takes place through the divinely appointed means. And finally, that life must be completed and perfected. The beginning, the continuance, and the end of the work of grace is all God's work, and it is accomplished to the very end through the means of grace. When the child of God is on his deathbed, then he still is in need of God's Word to strengthen and comfort him; and he lays hold on that Word even though perhaps he is no longer able to read it, drawing upon his memory, in order to meditate on its precious promises.

We must notice now, however, that the article gives us valuable instruction concerning the means of grace in connection with this work of preservation. As we have remarked already, it does not only speak of the preaching of the Word, but pointedly of the *hearing, reading and meditation* thereupon. God's people must have His Word. And the church must indeed be busy in the ministry of the Word. The Word must be preached, in order that the Word may be heard. A moving and emotional address will not do. The saints cannot be preserved in the faith by means of so-called topical preaching, in which a Scripture-text is used only as a sort of hook on which to hang up and display some nice thoughts or attractive philosophy that have nothing to do really with the Word of God. The Word of God must be expounded and applied. For that Word itself must speak! Through the means of that Word preached the life of faith is strengthened and built up. That Word, as we shall see presently, in all its fulness, with its exhortations, threatenings, and promises, must be proclaimed. And it must be proclaimed as accompanied by the administration of the sacraments, the holy, visible signs and seals which God hath appointed to the end that He may more fully assure us of the promise of the gospel.

But notice, if you will, that the terms used by our fathers all emphasize the activity of the saints themselves. They emphasize in this connection *our use of the means*. We must *hear* the Word of God. We must *read* the Word of the gospel. We must *meditate* upon the gospel of salvation. Undoubtedly this also is presented in this fashion in order to gainsay the Arminian heretics, who always wanted to present the Reformed picture of the Christian as that of one who is entirely passive. O, no! God has appointed means. And He has appointed such means as imply and require the conscious activity of His people. They must *hear* the Word preached. For to that preaching the Lord has attached a rich blessing. Without it the saints cannot expect to persevere and to continue in the faith, to grow in the

grace and knowledge of Christ, and to be perfected. It is indeed a sad phenomenon when people of God fail to take advantage of every possible opportunity to hear the Word of their salvation, when they become irregular and indifferent with respect to this means of grace, or when, though they attend divine worship, they do not come to *hear*, — for that is also possible, and that too, in various ways. Such a policy can only lead to serious spiritual consequences, to a weakening of our faith, to a slackening in our strength and courage for the battle of faith in the midst of the world, and, ultimately, to our downfall unless God graciously forbids it. Moreover, the fathers emphasize the necessity of *reading* the Word. This certainly does not imply that such reading may be substituted for the hearing of the Word. There would be no Word to read were it not for the preaching of the Word. The Word which we read is but another aspect of the preaching of the Word as the primary means of grace. And therefore also the *reading* of the Word follows upon the hearing of the Word inevitably. There should be an open Bible in our families and in our homes, so that we read God's Word together at fixed times, and that too, not out of mere custom and habit, — a habit that we satisfy as hastily as possible, — but out of a sincere desire and purpose to be instructed and with a real striving to understand and comprehend it. Besides, such reading includes within its scope not only the Bible itself, but such reading material as is related to the Scriptures and which edifies us by explaining and elucidating the truth of the Word of God. And this may well be emphasized in our day. How much time do we actually allow ourselves for such reading? We are too busy? Or do we deliberately make ourselves so busy that we have no time for *important reading*, reading that will benefit us spiritually? How much attention do we pay to the reading habits of our children? We are concerned that they shall learn to read. And that is good. But what do they read? Do we teach them by word and example to read the Scriptures and to study them personally? How early in their young lives do we go about teaching them to pick up the *Beacon Lights*, yes, and *The Standard Bearer*? How much do we insist that they study the Word of God in preparation for catechism and society? Or are we ourselves often so lax and unconcerned about these matters that our example would belie our words? Finally, in close connection with the preceding, the article speaks of *meditation*. Ah, but is that not well-nigh a lost art in our day? Yet we may well emphasize this strongly. It is not enough that we hear and read; we must meditate upon and contemplate and study the Word of God! This cannot be stressed too strongly in a day when Christians are willing to exert themselves but little to receive the Word of God. But Scriptural this idea certainly is. The psalmist of old meditated in the night watches. He had God's law for his meditation day and night. And frequently today the church must have its spiritual food spooned in, and not in too rich a concentration. It must not require too much mental exertion, and it must be interesting and pleasant to

hear or to read. Let us remember we are not fed magically in our spiritual life. We must eat and digest and assimilate the Word of God. And it is through such meditation that the Lord God preserves and continues and perfects the work of His grace in us.

For that Word, whether it exhorts or threatens or promises, is always the Word of God's grace to His people. The distinction made here by Article 14 is a relative one. Fundamentally the whole Word of God has as its content the promise. The Lord exhorts His people, but always upon the basis of the gospel of grace and with the purpose of realizing in them through such exhortations the work of grace. In a sense it may be said that God threatens His people. But this must be understood pedagogically. Paradoxically speaking, God threatens them in His grace, to warn them of the dire consequences of the way of sin and iniquity, to call them away from the darkness. In the sense that He is of bad intentions toward His people, or even means to frighten them into heaven by poising the whiplash of hell-fire over them, the Lord does not threaten His saints, however. Always His Word is a Word of grace to His own, and always He is graciously inclined toward His people, even in the so-called threatenings of the gospel. And therefore, attached to the exhortations and threatenings of the gospel are also the abundant and precious promises of salvation for our encouragement and comfort and to serve as incentives in the struggle to persevere to the end. In fact, the Lord has provided for His people richly. For He has added to the Word the holy sacraments as an additional means of grace for the strengthening of our faith. And of all these means the people of God in the midst of the world, struggling and striving toward Zion that is above, must make diligent and regular and consistent use.

Nevertheless, when all due emphasis has been laid upon the responsibility of the people of God with respect to these means, let us not forget that the fruit of these means of grace is not dependent upon our use of them, nor even a matter of cooperation between God and man. It is not merely thus, that God provides the means, but that we must use those means unto our salvation. Then we after all entertain the Arminian view. No, the fathers tell us here that *God* preserves and continues and perfects the work of grace in us. The Word and the sacraments are means of grace, provided by God Himself. But also our hearing, reading, and meditation on the Word of the gospel are means, equally provided by God, which He uses for the preservation, continuation, and perfection of His work of grace in us. It is all of Him! He preserves, and we persevere. He continues His own work of grace in us, and we continue and grow in grace and in faith. He perfects, and we are perfected and endure to the end. And it is all a work of His own grace, wrought not merely *upon* us, but *in* us as His conscious and willing people, and wrought through the means which it has pleased Him to ordain and to use, the best possible means to the highest end!

H.C.H.

DECENCY and ORDER

Advisory Members of Classis

"Where in a church there are more ministers than one, also those not delegated according to the foregoing article shall have the right to attend classis with advisory vote."
—Article 42, D.K.O.

The proposed revision of the above article by the Synod of the Christian Reformed Churches leaves the article substantially unchanged. The only difference worthy of note is that the revision speaks of an *"advisory voice"* while in our Church Order the phraseology is *"advisory vote."* The Holland speaks of *"een adviseerende stem."* The wording of the revision is to be preferred if for no other reason than that ministers attending Classis under the stipulations of this rule have really no *"vote"* at all. They are given the right to speak. They have a *"voice"* in the Classis but not a *"vote."*

The reason for the provisions of this article is to be found in an attempt to meet, as much as possible, some standard of equality and fairness in the churches' representation at the Classis. Whereas the previous article of the Church Order stipulated that each church shall delegate a minister and an elder or, in the case a church is without a minister, two elders, the question arises whether this is really fair in view of the fact that some churches are numerically very small while others have large numbers. A church, for example, that has twenty or twenty-five families has as much voice and voting power at the Classis as a church numbering three or four hundred families. If then, representation at the Classis is to be calculated on the basis of the number of families in a given church, a rule would have to be adopted according to which each church would be authorized to send one delegate to Classis for each certain number of families in its membership. If this figure is set, let us say, at twenty-five families, a consistory of a church numbering two hundred families would send eight delegates to Classis while a congregation of thirty families would have only one delegate to represent it. This arrangement is not agreeable with the Reformed conception of the church and could, therefore, not be adopted. For principle reasons it must be rejected. Hence, we have the preferred provision of Article 42.

Another thing that has considerable bearing upon the occasion and necessity of the provision is the historical circumstances out of which this need arose in the sixteenth century. During that century the more educated and capable ministers served in the larger churches while many of the smaller congregations had ministers who had rather meager training and little knowledge of church government. The result of this was that when each church sent two delegates to the Classis, the business of the Classis was conducted largely by those who were least qualified to perform the work and the

services of many capable men went to waste. Besides, the problems confronting the churches in those years were many and difficult to solve. The Reformed churches were in their formative years. The leaders of these churches could not look back to an age of experience or learn from history's mistakes. In 1581 the Synod was overtured to remedy the Classical situation by giving all the ministers of the churches decisive vote at the Classis. The Synod, however, rejected this proposal and matters remained as before. Again in 1597 the matter was considered again but left undecided. Then it came up before the historic Synod of 1618-19 and there it was decided to give all the ministers decisive vote. Churches that had more than one minister received as many votes at the Classis in all matters except those that concerned their own churches or persons. The latter provision was intended to protect the churches from any possible domination or unfairness. This decision, however, was not above criticism and although it stood for almost three hundred years, the churches in the Netherlands in 1905 reverted back to the decision of 1578 as found in Article 41 of the Church Order and that stipulates that each church shall delegate one minister and one elder to the Classis. In 1914 the Christian Reformed Church in this country adopted the same position. It is easily seen that this position is in direct conflict with that taken by the Synod of Dort in 1618-19 or rather that Dort in these years took a position in direct conflict with Article 41 of the Church Order. However, the removal of this contradiction did not solve the real problem and so the provision was added in Article 42 by which ministers not delegated to the Classis would be given advisory voice. The services and talents of capable men would then not go to waste but at the same time all of the churches, regardless of size, would be equally represented in the *decisive vote* on all matters brought before the Classis.

For several reasons this rule is a very good one but we question the fairness of limiting this provision to ministers of the Word. Would it not be possible to extend this privilege of advisory voice to elders as well or at least, as was once the practice in Reformed Churches, to those elders of the places where the Classis meets? For example, there may be one church that has twenty-five elders and another church that has only two. Both delegate one elder to the Classis. This hardly seems fair. In the larger Consistory where it is assumed the Classis meets four times a year, an elder would be delegated to Classis only once in six years and, consequently, with the term of office three years, many of them would never attend. On the other hand, in the smaller consistory each elder would be delegated to the Classis six times during his three-year tenure of office. Of course, the practical difficulty with a provision giving all these elders advisory voice is that the Classis becomes too large a body. In a large Classis it can easily be seen that this is not in the best interests of the Classis or the Churches and it is likely for this reason that such provision is not made. In our churches, however, the problem is not too

serious. Our Classes are small and most of our consistories are small. Besides, it is not said that all the elders would be present or be able to be present at the meetings of Classis. It is not likely then that too many would be present so that the work of the Classis would be impaired but because of this very real possibility it is probably better that Classis by special motion grant an advisory voice to elders present as the occasion and need may arise.

The *principle* reason that delegation to Classis is limited to one elder and one minister from each church and that, therefore, other ministers are given only "*advisory voice*" is that under the Reformed set-up the Classis is composed not of individuals but of churches. The churches, not the ministers and elders, constitute the individual unit in our Classical organization. This is not the case, for example, in the Presbyterian Church. Monsma and Van Dellen point out in "*The Church Order Commentary*" that "according to Presbyterian practice a minister becomes a member of his Presbytery, or as we would say, Classis. He presides over the Session (Consistory) of the church with which he is connected and is called "Moderator" of the Session, but he is not a member of the church which he serves. He is a member of the Presbytery. According to Reformed church polity, however, no individual is, strictly speaking, a member of Classis in. A minister or elder can only be said to be a member of Classis in the sense that his church has delegated him to represent it at a certain Classical meeting."

On the basis of this principle the only equitable way of determining the delegation of Consistories to Classis is that all shall be equally represented. Arbitrarily this has been fixed at the number two but there would be no principle objection to having two elders and the minister from each church provided all the churches are represented alike. And, as far as the objection is concerned that this is not fair to the larger churches, the authors of the above quotation suggest that the proper way to correct this "inequality" is that the overly large churches be divided into two or more smaller churches. But the main point remains "that every church unit is a self governing manifestation of the body of Christ standing on a par as to rights and authority with every other church."

Finally, a word about "*advisory vote*"! A minister who attends the Classis and is given this privilege is one who has the right to speak on all issues and problems that are taken up by the Classis but he has no voice in the vote that is taken and by which these matters are finally decided. It is sometimes asked whether the term "advisory" implies that one should refrain from speaking until his advice is sought by the Classis? Should he speak only when asked to give advice on a certain matter or is he free to participate in all the discussions as much as he desires? Evidently the latter is meant so that the idea is that when he speaks he does so only in an advisory capacity. This, of course, is true also of the voices of those delegates to Classis who are fully

authorized to take part in the deliberations and transactions of that body as long as they are merely participating in the debate and discussion of the issues. When the latter speaks in the vote that is finally called this is no longer the case. Then their voice is *decisive* and in this capacity the "advisory delegate" to Classis cannot speak. He has only one voice and that is "advisory." He speaks in an advisory capacity but his advice does not have to be solicited. It may come voluntarily. It may be added, however, that the privilege of advisory vote can also be abused and that liberty to speak freely at all times does not mean that one may dominate the discussion. He should speak only as the occasion necessitates and for the rest leave the matters of the Classis in the hands of those who are fully delegated to transact them. Failure to do this is to misuse one's rights while the careful exercise of this privilege will tend toward making the advice given more respected.

G.V.d.B.

So like the sun may I fulfill
The appointed duties of the day;
With ready mind and active will
March on and keep my heavenly way.

— ANONYMOUS

IN MEMORIAM

At this time we would like to express our sympathy to the family of

ALICE REITSMA

May this memoriam be a token of our gratitude for the years of dedicated service, given to our school, by our beloved sister, now in the bosom of our Heavenly Father.

"He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds."
Psalm 147:3

The Hope Prot. Ref. Christian School P.T.A.

The Hope Prot. Ref. Christian School Teachers & Student Body

The Hope Prot. Ref. Christian School Alumnae

The Hope Prot. Ref. Christian School Circle

IN MEMORIAM

Our Society would herewith express its sympathy to our fellow members, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Zwak, in the loss of their Mother,

MRS. MARTHA ZWAK, aged 56 years.

May the God of all consolation comfort their hearts in these days of special grief, and direct their eyes to the glorious resurrection.

The Hudsonville Mr. and Mrs. Society

Rev. Gerrit Vos, President

Mrs. Harold VanOverloop, Secretary

ALL AROUND US

More Debate Respecting Infallibility

From time to time we have reported in recent months on the debate in the Christian Reformed Church on the proposition respecting the infallibility of the Scriptures.

This debate had its occasion in the publication of two articles appearing in a publication of Calvin Seminary called *Stromata* in which a student, now a minister in the Christian Reformed Church, posited views on inspiration which evoked considerable comment and criticism. In fact, the Synod of 1959 of the Christian Reformed Church spent much time with the question of infallibility as a result of the debate. Apparently, however, the debate continues as is evidenced in the articles appearing in the January, 1960 issue of *Torch and Trumpet*.

Both the Rev. Joseph A. Hill and the Rev. H. J. Kuiper take Dr. George Stob to task for the views he expressed on the subject in a lecture delivered at Trinity College in Worth, Illinois on November 11, 1959 which was sponsored by the Chicago Chapter of Calvin College Alumni Association. The Rev. Hill, who claims to give a rather accurate report of the lecture, is especially critical of Dr. Stob's quotation of Dr. Edward J. Young's view of inspiration expressed in work written by the latter relative to the Biblical Doctrine of Inspiration. While the Rev. Kuiper in his *Timely Topics* expresses alarming disfavor to the entire approach of Dr. Stob to the subject of infallibility.

Rev. Kuiper does not purport to give a complete evaluation of Dr. Stob's position. He gives only some of his first reactions. He intends to write more later.

However, Rev. Kuiper pulls no punches in his first reactions. Severely he criticizes Stob's position, and accuses him of denying Plenary and Verbal Inspiration. Further, he accuses him of not being in line with Reformed tradition in quoting writers to support his views.

Most serious of Rev. Kuiper's remarks we find in the conclusion of his article when he accuses Stob of violating the promises made when he subscribed to the Formula of Subscription. It is the claim of Rev. Kuiper, and we believe correctly so, that before Dr. Stob may publicly in speech or writing propagate his views on inspiration which militate against the Forms of Unity, he must first reveal his sentiments to the Consistory, Classis, or Synod "that the same may be there examined, being ready always cheerfully to submit to the judgment of the Consistory, Classis, or Synod, under penalty in case of refusal, of being by that very act suspended from our office."

This oath of office Rev. Kuiper claims Dr. Stob has violated.

At this point Rev. Kuiper makes the following significant statement:

"Anyone who denies the full inspiration of the Bible, contradicts the plain teaching of our Belgic Confession on this point. We do not admit that there is room for a difference of opinion on what our Confession teaches on Scriptural inspiration. The pronouncements of Articles III to VII are so plain, unequivocal, and emphatic that only one interpretation is possible, namely, that 'Scripture in its whole extent, in all its parts, and in all its words, is the infallible and inerrant Word of God.' That is the interpretation given by the Ecumenical Reformed Synod of South Africa (Acts, 1959, 2 B 1 "e"), adopted by our Synod of 1959, and accepted by Seminary President Dr. John H. Kromminga even though he held to a different interpretation before Synod met."

It will be interesting to see whether Dr. Stob will reply to this, and still more interesting to see what his reply will be. We will report any further developments as we see them.

It's Wrong, But . . .

Christian Economics of December 29, 1959 presents among other interesting and instructive articles one under the above title which I thought our readers would enjoy reading in its entirety. It was written by Rev. Francis E. Mahaffy of the American Evangelical Mission, Sanafe, Eritrea, East Africa. We liked the article because of its practical value and application to our times.

"There is no lack in the world of calloused individuals who are completely unconcerned about moral issues. They approach problems from a purely pragmatic point of view. If a particular action accomplishes the results which they deem desirable, they support it regardless of the harm inflicted to individuals. But there are, on the other hand, many people of a more tender conscience who are concerned about the morality of their actions. They are aware of the fact that there is such a concept as right and wrong. They hesitate to approve of the wrong when they clearly see it to be such. Yet how often among such people, people of high morality and even professing Christians, we hear the expression, 'I know it's wrong but . . .' followed by rationalization for their action or approval of what they themselves judge to be unethical. There is, in fact, in all of us this same tendency. Even though we do not verbally express this rationalization for our conduct which is contrary to our own knowledge of the moral standard, it forms the conscious or unconscious ground of our behavior. 'It's wrong,' we admit, but . . ."

"There are various motives at work influencing us in our rationalization for conduct contrary to the moral standard. A prominent one is fear. Some twenty years ago when I was working in a factory, a group of the workers went on strike and forced the plant to close. While riding the street car to the plant wondering if there would be work or not, I was joined by a fellow worker and we discussed the union

rather fully. Both of us were agreed that it would be wrong to join the union. However, the instant he left the car, he was surrounded by a mob of men who pressed a union card into his hands and demanded under threat of violence that he sign. Fearful of physical violence he joined the union. A few minutes previously he had stated his opinion that it was wrong to do so but because of fear acted contrary to his convictions. In our international relations also, fearful of the consequences of an alliance of various countries with Russia, we compromise our principles and support socialism in these countries with the unfounded hope that thus we are preventing a greater evil.

"We rationalize our unethical deeds by considering only their short term consequences. A fellow minister once wrote me that although there were many things about social security that he did not like, he felt it would be doing an injustice to his family to fail to avail himself of these benefits for them. Another spoke favorably of social security because he felt it would relieve the church of a burden in caring for its poor. Both of these men in looking at the short term benefits of social security failed to realize that in the long run this non-funded scheme of old age benefits would accelerate the trend toward capital depletion, result in greater poverty and much harm to everybody. They failed to realize that the psychology of something-for-nothing would destroy the roots of true charity in the church and thus deprive her of one of her graces. It was wrong, they knew, but blinded by the hope for short term gains, they compromised their better judgment.

"Convinced of our inability to change the trends, we throw the blame for socialistic legislation of which we disapprove on Congress and fail to take due cognizance of the fact that Congress is a fairly faithful mirror of public opinion. Or we rationalize our negligence in seeking reform by the argument that although it is wrong yet nearly everybody does or approves it and we are afraid to swim against the current.

"Another motive behind our rationalization for our conduct and views stems from sympathy for the underdog. Recently we entertained a guest in our home who was a stalwart member of the English Socialist Party. His approval of socialism stemmed from his deep sympathy for his characterization of the plight of the common man. He could see that many of the actions of the party were contrary to God's law but felt that their good ends justified the means. He failed to understand the best way to help the mass of men was to give them freedom accompanied by Christian charity in times of special distress.

"Recently I read an article in a Christian magazine in which the author spoke very highly of the regime of Mao in Communist China. While granting that Mao is not a Christian and that he does not have Christian ethics and that he has been ruthless while consolidating his power, yet

he feels that he has brought to China the best government she has ever had. He speaks in glowing terms of Mao's accomplishments. 'Under no dynasty has there been such progress as in the last decade . . . he has abolished many evils in China. There are no beggars on the street of any city, where beggars once flourished in mobs. There are no dogs in China, and with them have gone untold numbers of vermin. There are few flies left in the great cities . . . Most important, there is no graft or corruption among officials.' The author of this article lightly passes over Mao's responsibility for the murder of millions of people, his defiance of God, his attempts to destroy the church of Christ, and rationalizes his conduct by pointing to what he considers valuable contributions he has made. Aside from the question of the accuracy of the facts, the acknowledgment of the fact that Mao's conduct is at variance with Christian ethics should in itself have led him to a radically diverse evaluation of Mao and his regime.

"Perhaps this sort of rationalization evidenced by the expression 'It's wrong, but . . .' springs from the tendency of our age to exalt man at the expense of God. We have forgotten that God is God. We no longer believe that to defy the law of the eternal, absolute, holy God must inevitably bring with it God's judgment. As the night follows the day, defiance of God's law is the cause that must be followed by the effect of His curse. Compromise with the moral law by the individual or by society will be followed by disastrous consequences for both. We may be sure that our sin will find us out. When the church catches a glimpse of God's holiness and sovereignty, she can again regain her position of leadership in the realm of morals.

"Only when we learn to say, 'It's wrong therefore I cannot do it' may we expect God's blessing upon our endeavors."

We are not told the author's religious background, nor is his particular faith indicated. Whatever these are, he surely paints a correct picture, first of all, of a very common characteristic of modern man, be he religious or not. Moreover, in the second place, he also presents a true concept of God Who is not the figment of our imagination, a dumb idol, but the only true and living God. The author surely does not present a god who by the general operation of his spirit retards the development of sin, but the God Who judges righteously all the conduct of men, all men. Indeed, God is God. And to defy or compromise with His law must bring disastrous consequence.

M.S.

When Thou shalt revive us Thy Name we will praise,
And nevermore, turning, depart from Thy ways;
O Lord God Almighty, in mercy restore.
And we shall be saved when Thy face shines once more.

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

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

January 5, 1960

Rev. G. Vanden Berg declined the call from Hull; Rev. R. Veldman declined the calls from Randolph and Grand Haven. Edgerton's trio consists of the Revs. R. Harbach, R. Veldman and B. Woudenberg; Randolph's trio includes the Revs. H. Hanko, M. Schipper and G. Vanden Berg.

Seminarian J. Kortering, temporarily stationed in Hull, exchanged pulpits with Rev. G. Van Baren, of Doon, the afternoon of Jan. 3. Rev. Van Baren thereby was privileged to install the office bearers chosen to serve the congregation of Hull.

The Young People's Societies of Hull and Doon have decided to meet in joint sessions in the coming year, meeting alternately in their own churches. This decision was reached that the young people might enjoy the benefits accrued from larger gatherings.

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema was elected to the chair in the Men's Society of First Church. He will lead the society in the discussion of the Book of Galatians, and in the after recess study of the Belgic Confessions.

Excerpt from Holland's bulletin of Dec. 27: We welcome Rev. Lanting into our midst as he officially takes up his labors among us. We pray for the blessing of the Lord upon his labors, and that we may receive him as a gift from God's hand and as the mouthpiece of our Lord Jesus Christ in our midst.

The Ladies' Aid Society of Redlands has donated a pulpit Bible to be used in their public worship services.

Rev. H. Veldman delivered his first lecture as the pastor of Redlands Church, Wednesday, Dec. 9. The lecture, sponsored by the Men's Society, was on the subject, "The Signs of the Times in Our Daily Lives."

Rev. G. Vos, of Hudsonville, suffered a severe sore throat which prevented his conducting services Dec. 20. Elder H. Zwak conducted reading service in the morning, and Missionary G. Lubbers preached for them in the afternoon.

Hudsonville's Mr. and Mrs. Society was host to the Men's and the Ladies' societies of their church at their Christmas week meeting. After the Bible discussion the host society rendered a musical program.

The congregation of Hope was privileged to hear an exposition of I Peter 4:8 by their pastor on the first Sunday of the new year. Would that we all would resolve to heed the admonition therein as our "New Year's resolution."

Among the host of greeting cards received at the home of Rev. and Mrs. H. Hoeksema was one addressed to Prof.

H. Hoeksema, Prot. Ref. Seminary, Grand Rapids, Mich. The sender: Yosuji Morii, of the Kyoto Reformed Church, Kyoto, Japan. He evidently is the minister of that church for in the card he expressed his appreciation for the "works" of the Rev. H. Hoeksema which he was studying with much satisfaction. It seems that Yosuji Morii agrees with the words of Joseph Addison, "Books are the legacies that a great genius leaves to mankind which are delivered down from generation to generation as presents to the posterities of those who are yet unborn."

January 5 was the date of the Office Bearer's Conference held in First Church. Prof. H. C. Hoeksema spoke on "The Calling of the Elders as Watchmen on the Walls of Zion" specially treating that aspect of his rule over the preaching of the Word, and over the church. The speaker, upon the authority of the Catechism, Neth. Confession, and the Church Order, defined the position of the elders as co-equal with the ministers of the Word, having the double duty of watching upon the walls of Zion in regard to the preaching and to the discipline of the church. The elder's rule over the preaching was described as that of preventing error and false doctrine from gaining entrance, and that of maintaining sound doctrine to the spiritual edification of the flock of God. He further exhorted the elders to be diligent in giving counsel to the ministers in regard to the needs of the flock that the preaching may be most effective towards their growth in grace and in the knowledge of God. Further, that the rule of the elders is only through, and accompanied with, the Word of Christ. "Thus saith the Lord" is the content of the elder's message in all his instruction and disciplining of the members of the congregation. And finally, that Family Visitation, in the Reformed system, is the duty of the elders, which when properly conducted should serve to instruct, encourage and exhort the flock of God to walk in a new and Godly life which is the fruit of their regeneration. The subject of the speech was so broad that the several aspects were only touched upon and might well serve for subjects of future conferences.

The Hope Choral Society rendered their annual Christmas program, Dec. 27. The program was given after the evening service to a capacity (wall-to-wall) audience, and was a fitting climax to the season's activities celebrating the Birthday of the King.

From the Jan. 5th issue of the *Grand Rapids Press*: "The Michigan Supreme Court upheld the right of the so-called Rev. Herman Hoeksema faction to retain control of the First Protestant Reformed Church The ruling upholds retired Superior Court Judge Thaddeus B. Taylor in a decision several years ago in which he ruled in favor of the Hoeksema consistory because Classis East . . . had decided in favor of the Hoeksema group in a doctrinal dispute leading to a contest for the property"

. . . . see you in church.

J.M.F.