

THE STANDARD

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MEDITATION

THE VISIT OF THE WISE MEN

"Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem. Saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the East, and are come to worship Him." MATT. 2:1, 2

Well, the time has come for all of us to again go to Bethlehem.

The wicked, but also the good; the heavens with their star, together with the representatives of the Gentiles wend their weary way West in order to find the King of the Jews.

And ever since, the whole Christian world has gone to Bethlehem during the warmest period of the Christian year.

The days of Christmas are happy days for us.

O, I know that every day is good; for God is for us. But we are very human, and the human being likes his feasts and his special days. I find no quarrel with our holy days. They are days when the high-lights of the Christian calendar receive their proper emphasis.

And so we will wend our way to Bethlehem.

To see the King of the Jews and to worship Him.

* * * *

There came wise men.

How many?

We do not know, the Catholic Church notwithstanding.

And you need not be a Roman Catholic in order to think and to speak of three wise men. I catch myself in the same mistake. For mistake it is. No one knows how many wise men from the East travelled to Bethlehem almost two thousand years ago. It makes no difference either. If it did, God would have revealed it.

Neither do we know from where they came, except that it was from the East. Also that information is immaterial for our moment. Suffice it that all these questions will be answered in the Judgment Day.

But this we know: they were Gentiles.

And that is important. It bodes well for the Gentile world that their representatives are sent by God from the far East to Jerusalem, and later, to Bethlehem. It is wonderful that the heathen may join in the worship of the Son of God, appearing in the flesh.

Yes, they went to Jerusalem. Of course they did. Jerusalem is the city of the King. If anywhere, there they would be able to answer the burning question of these heathens: Where is He that is born King of the Jews?

Jerusalem is the city where the Temple of God was built, and where the house of the Kings of Israel stood. There are the wise and the prudent, the masters of Israel.

Certainly, Jerusalem will know.

And there they come. Indeed it is late after the birth of Jesus, maybe even two years after the angels sang, the shepherds worshipped, and the world forgot.

But, never mind all that, they are here.

They pause and ask; they stop again and wonder; they repeat their wonderful question: Where is He?

* * * *

Yes, it is a wonderful question.

They are Gentiles, born and living in a great darkness which had lasted four thousand years, far from the dear children of God, far from the fathers that were so beloved of God. While Israel had dwelled in the midst of beautiful light and splendour, they were Gentiles, heathen, dogs, cast off. God allowed them to wander and stagger in filthy darkness and ignorance.

But wait a minute: they are Gentiles alright, but they had seen His star!

Look at that last clause or sentence and ponder a while.

How did they know that the star they saw in the East was *His* star?

There is only one possible answer, and that is: God must have shown it to them. They must have had access to the Old Testament Scriptures. And that is very easy to believe, for there was the eastern dispersion. Many, oh so many Jews had gone east, and stayed there. But wherever they went, they took with them the Holy Scriptures.

And God must have revealed to them that the strange star they saw was the star that heralded the birth of Christ.

O yes, these blessed travelers had seen the Star; they had received the Scriptures, and they also had received personal revelation from God. To run ahead a little: did you note how God contacted them on the way to Bethlehem?

Listen: they *knew God!*

* * * *

Can you imagine the disappointment of these strangers when they arrived at the City of the King?

There is no feasting, no rejoicing, no gladness in Jerusalem.

What do they find? "Business as usual!"

What did they really find there? A troubled Jerusalem and a troubled, hateful king Herod. They find deceit, hypocrisy, a murderous lot.

But the trusting souls did not see this at once. O no. They trust the king, the chief priests, and the scribes.

They receive all the information they wanted, and they wend their way to Bethlehem. Micah had written.

And they go to Bethlehem, eager to see the King of the Jews, in order then to return and tell King Herod, so that he also may be able to go and worship.

And still, I think that they were quite disappointed. They had imagined it all so different. And I tell you why I think this. Did you note how strongly the Holy Ghost emphasized their subjective condition when they saw the star on the way to Bethlehem?

Notice: "they rejoiced with exceeding great joy!"

The Holy Ghost could have written: they saw the star and *rejoiced*. Or, they saw the star and rejoiced with great joy. But no, the Holy Ghost tells us that they rejoiced with *exceeding great joy*. That shows clearly that their faith had been severely tested in Jerusalem. And that now everything was made clear again.

That bright and twinkling star in the clear heavens gave them the trust and repose they needed so sorely. Why, it was the answer of Jehovah Himself! O, can you not *see* them? They stop dead in their tracks, they look and smile, nay, they shout and cry: There is that Star again, brethren! All is well! God is in His heaven and moves the very

heavens to our help and His excellency in the skies! What wondrous happiness for the rest of the journey.

They approach the little village of Bethlehem; they look and see the Star stand still, exactly above the house in which the little Jesus lay.

* * * *

One of these wise men knocked on the door of the house where the Holy Family dwelled. The door opens and the delegation of blessed Heathens enters the house where God dwelled in human garb. Let's enter with them.

O, but these men have thorough knowledge of Theology! Look! After introducing themselves to Mary and Joseph, and the owners of the house where Jesus lay, they *fall down!*

That action shows that they knew God!

Did you ever notice how angels and the souls of men made perfect behave in heaven? They do as these wise men: they fall down with their faces to the ground. Even angels do. And they never sinned.

Here is the fine point: they know God!

You know what this meant? It means that they have learned the first and the most fundamental law of the Kingdom of Heaven: *humility*.

Do you want to be a man, a woman, a child after God's own heart?

Fall down before Him!

God loves little people. And I don't mean physical stature when I employ the adjective *little*.

* * * *

Now apprehend their further behaviour!

They worship the Child. And that is heaven, that is eternal: it shall have no end. In all the countless eternities before us, this worship will go on and on. It will make heaven musical forever. Singing, dancing, making music on the harps of God: it is all worship, adoration, ecstasy, heavenly splendour.

Worship, what is it?

Worship is when you catalog all the graces, the beauties, the wonders of God.

Worship is when you tell Him carefully how adorable He is in all His virtues.

I will give you an example from Holy Scripture.

"The Lord is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy." Psalm 148:8.

And here is a verse from the New Testament: "Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honour and glory, and blessing." Rev. 5:12.

Note the wonder of the moment: The Heathen are bowing down and giving worship to our Jesus! It is surpassing in beauty.

* * * *

But there is more.

They open their treasures!

And they give to Jesus their gifts!

Gold! What it means? It means that they indicate that this Child will have Royal honor! Is this Babe not the King of kings and the Lord of lords? O, these Heathen know their theology!

Frankincense. What is it? They confess in that gift that He should be worshipped unto all eternity by the whole Universe. He is so worthy of it, for He is to be slain, but shall rise again: Christ Triumphator!

Myrrh. Ah, but this tells a gruesome story. Myrrh tells of His suffering and death. He shall be ground to powder. He shall be spent in eternal death.

But wonder of wonders: it shall be a fragrance, unto God a sweet smelling savour. God loves Golgotha.

Go then, go to Bethlehem!

Fall down after you have found Jesus.

Open your treasures and give Him gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Worship Him unto all eternity. Amen.

G.V.

Announcement

Classis East of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet, D.V., on Wednesday, January 6, at 9 A.M. in the First Prot. Ref. Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan. Delegates from the respective churches of this classis will please take notice.

REV. M. SCHIPPER, *Stated Clerk*

What wondrous things the Lord hath wrought!
The stone the builders set at naught,
Established by no human hand,
The chiefest corner-stone doth stand.

In this the day the Lord hath made
To Him be joyful honors paid;
Let us Thy full salvation see,
O Lord, send now prosperity.

Hosanna! Praise to Him proclaim
Who cometh in Jehovah's Name;
May blessing from God's dwelling place
Descend on us in boundless grace.

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EDITORIALS

As To Being Protestant Reformed

We said last time that one of the distinctive doctrines which the Protestant Reformed Churches maintain concerns their view of the covenant.

All Reformed churches consider the covenant idea important.

But they do not all have the same conception of that covenant. Among recent theologians Dr. A. Kuyper Sr. defines the covenant as an agreement between two parties, God and man, against a third. Although he first based the covenant idea on the trinity, and even spoke of it as a relation of friendship, yet later he defined the covenant as an agreement. Dr. H. Bavinck speaks of the covenant as a way along which God leads His people to eternal glory, although he, too, first speaks of the covenant relation as being rooted in the life of the triune God.

According to Prof. W. Heyns, usually followed by the Liberated in the Netherlands, the essence of the covenant is the promise: "I will be your God." He wants something that may be applied to all the children of the covenant or to all the seed of believers, to all the children of and in the church without distinction. And this he finds in the promise: "I will be your God." This promise is for all the children of the covenant individually, head for head and soul for soul. In the Baptism Form the church confesses:

"Holy baptism witnesseth and sealeth unto us the washing away of our sins through Jesus Christ." This is the promise and this concerns all the children that are baptized.

Again the same form has it that "when we are baptized in the name of the Father, God the Father witnesseth and sealeth unto us, that he doth make an eternal covenant of grace with us, and adopts us for his children and heirs, and therefore will provide us with every good thing, and avert all evil or turn it to our profit." This is the promise of God and the pronoun "us" refers to every individual child of the covenant and not to elect seed only.

The same form also confesses: "And when we are baptized in the name of the Son, the Son sealeth unto us, that he doth wash us in his blood from all our sins, incorporating us into the fellowship of his death and resurrection, so that we are freed from all our sins, and accounted righteous before God." Also these words refer to the promise of God and must be applied to all the baptized children, so that the pronouns "we," "us," and "our" in these words include the carnal as well as the elect seed of the covenant. The promise is for all without distinction.

The same is true of what the Baptism Form says about the work of the Holy Ghost in connection with baptism. We quote: "In like manner, when we are baptized in the name

of the Holy Ghost, the Holy Ghost assures us by this holy sacrament, that he will dwell in us, and sanctify us to be members of Christ, applying unto us, that which we have in Christ, namely, the washing away of our sins, and the daily renewing of our lives, till we shall finally be presented without spot or wrinkle among the assembly of the elect in life eternal." All this is still the promise and must be applied to all the children of the church without exception. And if you would ask Heyns how it is possible that all the baptized children are not saved when the Holy Spirit dwells in them and applies all the blessings of salvation to them, he replies that the Form does not state that the Holy Spirit dwells in them but that He *will* dwell in them, presupposing, of course that we must also will it.

Here, then, is something objectively sure: the promise of God for all the children of the covenant. Here we do not deal with supposition, such as presupposed regeneration, but with objective facts: the covenant is the promise.

Nor must this promise be identified, according to Heyns, with a mere offer of grace and salvation. The latter comes to all men, but the promise of God comes only to the children of the covenant and is far more than an offer. It is a bequest. God bequeaths upon all the children of the covenant all the blessings of salvation. He gives to them all the right to the blessings of salvation so that they are heirs and have the right to eternal life.

But, as you have already surmised, this promise of the covenant is conditional. If it were not, the only conclusion to which we could possibly come is that all that are born in the church would be saved. And Heyns also knows better. Hence, the promise is not absolute but conditional. In all covenants, according to Heyns, there are two "parties." In the covenant of grace these parties are God and man. God's is the promise and He will surely fulfill it but only on condition that man, as the second party fulfills His demand. This demand is: "Walk before me, and be thou upright." Such is the condition which man must fulfill.

But can man fulfill the condition?

Some answer: no but God Himself fulfills the condition by implanting faith in the heart of the sinner by His sovereign grace. But this does not solve the problem.

Is not the promise general and is it not for all the children of the covenant in the outward sense of the word, head for head and soul for soul? Does not the promise include the gift of the Holy Spirit, that "he may dwell in them and sanctify them to be members of Christ" on condition of faith or on condition that we walk before God and be upright? If, then, the promise is general, why does not God fulfill the condition in all the children of the church? He evidently does not for many are lost.

This, therefore, cannot be the solution of the problem.

Either the promise is general but on a condition which all the children of the covenant must themselves fulfill, and this is not Reformed but Arminian; or the promise is par-

ticular, is only for the elect, God surely fulfills it, and there are no conditions. This is Reformed.

Heyns felt the difficulty and, therefore, invented the theory of a certain pre-venient grace. According to this theory, every covenant child receives a certain grace from God by which he is able to bring forth good fruits of faith and obedience but which does not prevent him from rejecting the promise and bringing forth corrupt fruit.

By this grace, therefore, the covenant child really receives a free will, which is not Reformed but Pelagian.

Needless to say that this is not the Protestant Reformed view of the covenant.

That this is true may be shown from the "Declaration of Principles" which the schismatics rejected, but which our churches adopted. This declaration was composed at the time especially because some favored the covenant view of the Liberated which is virtually the same as that of Heyns.

In this declaration we read:

"Seeing then that this is the clear teaching of our confessions,

"A. We repudiate:

"1. The teaching:

"a. That the promise of the covenant is conditional and for all that are baptized.

"b. That we may presuppose that all the children that are baptized are regenerated, for we know on the basis of Scripture, as well as in the light of all history and experience, that the contrary is true.

"c. The teaching that the promise of the covenant is an objective bequest on the part of God giving to every baptized child the right to Christ and all the blessings of salvation.

"B. And we maintain:

"1. That God surely and infallibly fulfills His promise to the elect.

"2. That when He so fulfills His promise and established His covenant, the elect are not mere stocks and blocks, but obliged and willing to fulfill their part of the covenant, to love the Lord their God with all their heart and mind and soul and strength, to forsake the world, crucify their old nature, and to walk in a new and holy life.

"3. That the ground of infant baptism is the command of God and the fact that according to Scripture He establishes His covenant in the line of continued generations."

This, then, is the officially adopted doctrine of the Protestant Reformed Churches concerning the promise of the covenant.

H.H.

An Attempt To Discipline

From an organized group of Presbyterian laymen in the Southern Presbyterian Church I received an interesting and very important pamphlet which all our readers ought to read

because it reveals that there are others, outside of our churches, that still fight for the truth of Scripture and the Confessions. The reader may secure a copy of this pamphlet by writing to the following address: Presbyterian Laymen, Inc., Box 396, Selma, Alabama.

On the title page of this pamphlet there is the following statement, printed in capital letters:

"Every member of the Southern Presbyterian Church should read this factual account of how a small group of liberal ministers have gained control of the organized leadership of our church, and are fast destroying it as a spiritual organization by turning it into a political and social organization."

The chief contents of this pamphlet consist in a protest against Dr. E. T. Thompson, professor in the Union Theological Seminary, by Mr. Tom Glasgow, elder of the church in Charlotte, N.C.

In an introductory statement to the whole pamphlet, however, we read that Dr. Thompson c.s. also made a direct attack, through the General Assembly, upon the Confessional Standards of the Southern Presbyterian Church, particularly (as might be expected) upon the doctrine of predestination. We quote:

". . . They are openly attacking, on the floor of the General Assembly, the Standards of our Church, which they avow they believed, such as the doctrine of predestination. The recent General Assembly authorized the Moderator (Dr. Thompson) to appoint an Ad-Interim committee to study the matter and report its findings to the next General Assembly. This Ad-Interim committee, as were all the appointments by Dr. Thompson, is composed of all liberals, so that we can be assured that their report to next year's Assembly will weaken our Standards from what they are now concerning the doctrine of predestination."

Of this there can be no doubt. If liberals get their hands on the Confessions of the Church, particularly with respect to the doctrine of predestination, they certainly will "weaken" them. And it stands to reason that the only possible way they can "weaken" them is to deny the true doctrine and to adopt the Arminian conception instead.

One thing I do not understand and that is how so many liberal ministers can occupy pulpits in the Southern Presbyterian Church that they, together with Dr. Thompson, control the entire General Assembly. Two things, it seems to me are apparent. The first is that these liberal ministers are dishonest and wholly disregard the vow they took at their ordination. And the second is that it reveals a woeful lack of discipline both by the local churches and by the broader gatherings. If discipline had been exercised properly and in time, a situation as now exists in the Southern Presbyterian Church could never have arisen.

About the protest by Mr. Glasgow I hope to write next time, D.V.

H.H.

OUR DOCTRINE

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

PART TWO

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The Power of the Antichrist

Revelation 13:1-10

1. And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.
2. And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.
3. And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast.
4. And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?
5. And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.
6. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.
7. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.
8. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.
9. If any man have an ear, let him hear.
10. He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

I need not give a long introduction to show the connection between the present passage and the preceding text. Already we have studied three attempts of the devil to frustrate God's plan with a view to establishing His kingdom. First we saw how the devil attempted to oppose the plan of God with a view to the birth of Christ, and how he failed. Secondly, we noticed that contemporaneously with the first war on earth the devil also carried on a war with the angels in heaven for the possession of the saints of the old dispensation, and how he was defeated. Thirdly, we saw that the devil attempted to amalgamate the power of the

church and the power of the world; and again he failed, at least in this respect, that the church as such is not destroyed by him. And finally, we just mentioned that the devil determined at least to make war with the rest of the seed of the woman, that is, of the church, — with the individual believers on earth. And we already mentioned the fact that in this thirteenth chapter we would be told in what manner the dragon makes this war with the saints, and principally with the God of heaven and earth and with His Anointed, Jesus Christ our Lord.

In short, it may be said that the devil in this last attempt to oppose God's plan simply realizes his own kingdom, or attempts to realize it, and boldly sets it up. The first attempts were rather negative in nature, always aiming at the destruction of God's kingdom first of all. But this last attempt really consists in this, that the devil now ignores all that has been done by God Almighty, ignores that Christ has come and is King, ignores that the church exists and that there is already a kingdom of Christ in principle established in the world, and simply proceeds to realize and establish his own kingdom before Christ has an opportunity (speaking from the devil's point of view, of course) to do so. We have in this chapter a complete picture of the anti-christian power and kingdom and its king. There is, as far as I know, no controversy about this truth. And therefore we proceed from the assumption that this may be regarded as an established fact. He gives us a picture of Antichrist. That it is deemed of greatest importance that we should understand the picture is clearly proved by the solemn conclusion of the text: "If any man have an ear, let him hear." If we have no ear, it is, of course, quite a different question. But if by the grace of God our ear has been opened, and we may have a spiritual understanding of what God has revealed to us, let us hear, that we may be instructed from the Word of our God, and from it derive light and strength to stand in the evil day.

Let us then call your attention, in the first place, to the description of this beast as it is given in the text. John beholds how out of the sea rises a frightful monster. Very naturally it is described in the text, just as John must have beheld it in his vision. What he saw first he describes first. Naturally the horns appeared first of all; and John tells us that it was a beast with ten horns. Naturally also the heads followed; and John continues to inform us that the monster had seven heads. He further notices as details in the description that the ten horns had ten crowns, royal diadems, and that on the heads there were names of blasphemy written. And finally, he is able to give a general description of this dreadful monster, and informs us that its general appearance was like that of a leopard, while its feet were like those of a bear, and its mouth a lion's mouth. And as a detail, which at first he probably did not notice, but upon closer examination he observed, he remarks that one of the heads appeared to have been smitten in the past with a deathstroke, but that the stroke now was healed.

Let us investigate into the meaning of this highly symbolic picture. For that here we have again symbolism needs no further argument. The text itself indicates this more than plainly. The sea is the birthplace, the source, the origin, of this beast. In this case there is little doubt that it must be taken in the sense of peoples and nations and tongues as they live on earth under the power and principle of sin. We read of the sea in that sense more than once in Scripture. Isaiah says in his fifty-seventh chapter, verse 20: "But the wicked are like the troubled sea; for it cannot rest, and its waters cast up mire and dirt." In Daniel 7:2, 3 we read: "Behold, the four winds break upon the great sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another." And the entire context shows very plainly that nothing else can be meant than the troubled sea of nations. Indeed, a very fit symbol it is too. The peoples and nations of the earth as they are under the power and principle of sin and as they develop according to this principle are indeed like unto the troubled sea, war-swept, revolution-swept, plague-and famine-swept as they are. And that this same sea of nations and peoples is meant in the words of our text is clearly proved by Revelation 17:15, where the same beast, together with the harlot, is described once more, now with a view to its final destruction, and where the angel interprets: "The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues." And therefore we arrive at this conclusion, that the beast finds its origin, its source, its birthplace, from among the peoples and nations and tongues of the earth as they are developing themselves under the principle and power of sin. The picture is that this sea of nations is swept and in uproar and rages and foams till finally this beast comes up as a result.

In the second place, looking at the beast proper, let us notice, first of all, that it is a beast, and that too, a wild beast, a monster, just as the dragon was a monster. We may be more or less familiar with this figure; and in this case the Word of God gives us the unmistakable key to its interpretation. In Daniel we also read of beasts, especially of four. And in Daniel the interpretation is given by the guiding angel that directs the prophet. And this angel interprets the figure of the beast as referring both to kingdoms and kings. In Daniel 7:17 we read: "These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth." And in verse 23 of the same chapter: "Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth." Evidently, therefore, the figure of the beast represents a great political world-power, together with its government as its head. There has been a great controversy all through the ages of the new dispensation about the question whether this beast, or the Antichrist, is a person or a power or a system or a kingdom. But it seems to me that this controversy is not necessary. Daniel tells us that the beast is both, the kingdom and the king. Or to speak just a little more generally, it represents both the world-power and its government.

And I would say that this beast neither represents merely a person, who in personal power and by personal strength without any aid conquers and subdues and controls the whole world and all that it contains, nor only a kingdom or dominion, without its head and government, but that it represents both. And not only do we find it so in Daniel, but it stands to reason and lies in the very nature of the case. A king is powerless without his kingdom. And a kingdom without a king is inconceivable. The two are inseparable. And therefore, we come to the conclusion that this beast is the symbol of a political government as we know it, — I care not whether you are thinking now of a kingdom, or empire, or republic, or a worldly dominion, — as it naturally culminates and is represented by its head. Again, I care not whether you conceive of this head as a king, or emperor, or president, or even as a group or body of persons.

Let us call your attention further to the fact that this world-power as described in our passage is a consummation and culmination of all that has gone before and of all separate kingdoms that might possibly exist or have existed. It is well that we have our attention called to this feature. For it is one of the main features of our text. This power as it is here pictured is not merely consisting of one nation and one people; but it combines within itself all the kingdoms and empires and republics of the world, and at the same time it constitutes a combination and accumulation of all the power of all the empires and kingdoms and republics of the past. This is plain, in the first place, from the various beasts that are represented in this one beast. First of all, we may notice that they are all wild beasts, and therefore destructive in their nature. In ordinary circumstances they would not form a unity, but rather exist to their mutual destruction. But in the second place, it cannot escape our attention that in this wild beast we have a combination of the beasts pictured to us in Dan. 7. There also we read of the beast like a lion, and like a bear, and like a leopard, and of a fourth beast, not accurately described, but terrible. And there these beasts constitute four separate kingdoms, the fourth of which finally blends into the vision of the Antichrist in the little horn rising among the ten. Here, then, we have a combination of all these. The kingdoms of the world, ordinarily like wild animals, existing to their mutual destruction, have succeeded to form a unity. And even as the spirit of the one beast is in all the beasts, — the lion and the bear and the leopard, — and, on the other hand, the spirits and powers of these various beasts have combined in the one, so the world-kingdom that is represented by this beast is one that combines in itself all the power and glory and ambitions and spirit of all the kingdoms that have aimed at world-power in the past and that do aim at it at the present time. Secondly, this is also more or less symbolized in the ten horns and seven heads. Although we do not interpret these ten horns as representing ten different kingdoms or the seven heads as seven different kings, yet the general idea is expressed that this beast represents a combination of all the kingdoms of the world. Hence, also the resemblance

of this beast with the dragon. It is the incarnation of the dragon, who possesses all the kingdoms of the world. The dragon has ten horns and seven heads; so has this beast. And the idea is clearly that the devil, to whom the kingdoms of this world belong, who could say to the Christ, "Fall down and worship me, and I will give thee all the kingdoms of the world," now has succeeded in combining all his kingdoms under one head and inspiring them all with the same principle. The only difference is that he does not succeed in giving to his kingdom the complete and perfect aspect of the kingdom of God. Ten is the number of the world-kingdom. Seven is the number of the kingdom of God. For a long time the dragon wore his seven crowns on his seven heads. But now his authority and strength are both represented by the number ten. And though it is true that he still has seven heads, no one can mistake them for heads of the kingdom of Christ: for names of blasphemy are written upon them. And finally, that this is a world-power including all the existing powers of the whole earth is also plain from the fact that the head of this power has authority over all peoples and nations and tribes and tongues. Vs. 7. And therefore we come to this conclusion so far: the beast represents a consummation of all the world-powers that have been in the past. It combines within itself all the power of these dominions, all the glory of them, all the ambitions of them, all their aspirations and aims and accomplishments. And, in the second place, it is itself a combination, a confederation, of all nations and peoples and tongues and tribes that may exist at that time under one head and under one government.

If we understand this, we shall also be able to comprehend the significant detail of the scar this beast has in one of its heads. We read: "And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed." This does not refer to the fall of the Roman Empire or to the fall of the Grecian Empire or to the fall of the Babylonian or the Egyptian Empire, or, in fact, to the fall of any particular empire or to all of them combined. It is true that many attempts have been made to realize this great world-power in the past. Babylon made the attempt; Persia also made the attempt; Greece was filled with the same aspirations; and Rome advanced a good way to its establishment. It is also true that all failed, and that they were smitten unto death. But there are two things which lead us to the consideration that the fall of any or of all these empires together cannot be meant by this death-stroke. In the first place, the death-stroke here meant was healed; but the death-stroke of these empires was final. And, in the second place, these empires in the past consisted of the domination of one nation over all the rest of the world, and not of a combination of them all, as is indicated in this beast. And therefore there is but one thing in past history that can be indicated by this scar on one of the heads of the beast. It is the attempt in the days of mighty Nimrod and the building of the tower of Babel to establish a universal world-power. Also then it was

to be a combination rather than the dominion of one individual or group. They planned to form a mighty federation, a mighty league, with a common center in the city and tower, with common aims and purposes. But then it received the death-stroke for a time. That death-stroke consisted in the confusion of tongues and the consequent separation into nations with their national differences and aspirations and the resulting wars and strifes. But that death-stroke is now healed. After many an individual power has made the attempt to gain the world-power and to obtain control of the whole earth, the nations have finally come to the conclusion that the way of combination is the only way. National differences have been overcome; national aspirations have now been combined into the aspiration of all. No more world wars, no more strife and competition, but a great world-wide empire, including all nations and comprehending them all under one head, has now been realized. The death-stroke has been healed, and what was prevented in the days of Nimrod now is accomplished.

Let us now call attention to the power of the beast. Let me say, first of all, that the power of this beast originated in the dragon, the old serpent, the devil: "And the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority." In regard to this, we may remark, in the first place, that the dragon's power and authority itself is limited. He bears the number ten, and his kingdom bears that same number. And that number refers to God's own sovereign decree. It is well that we bear this in mind, for it is to our comfort. It assures us from the outset that the power and authority of this kingdom of the beast, however great, is not unlimited, and that Christ, Who has all power, is mightier than the Antichrist. But the fact remains that the dragon is permitted to give his power and authority and throne to the beast. He has now realized what he failed to establish when he tempted Christ. He also made the offer to Christ. You see, the devil is a spirit; and as such he cannot establish an earthly throne in person. He must have some human agent or agents that will take the position. He wants to establish a world-kingdom. For he aims at nothing short than the power of the kingdoms of the world. But he cannot rule over that world in person. He must have human beings, or a human being, to be his vice-regent. That is why he offered the position to Christ. He thought Christ was powerful and able, capable of filling the place. But there was one condition to be fulfilled: this great vice-regent of the devil had to worship and fall down before him, otherwise the devil would lose the very dominion he sought. He himself must remain lord. And this condition Christ refused to fulfill, for the simple reason that He was the anointed Vice-regent not of the devil, but of God. But now the devil has found someone. I think we must conceive of this in such a manner that in general the power of the devil is vested in the entire dominion that is pictured in the beast. For the authority and power is given to the beast as a whole. But in the second place, we must also maintain that this power and authority will be con-

centrated in the governing head of this world-power. It makes no difference now whether this governing head is a person or a group of persons, a sort of central committee, that rules the whole world. At this stage of history this is difficult to say. But the fact is that in the future there will be the full realization of a great world-power, combining in itself all powers of the earth, with a government that has all the authority of the dragon, the old serpent, the devil. That world-power in general, and that governing head in particular, we may therefore fitly describe as the very incarnation of the devil.

In the second place, the text tells us that this Antichrist, this central government, in combination with its kingdom will do great things. Do not make a mistake here. You must not imagine that the whole world will groan under the yoke of Antichrist and long to be delivered from it. That is perhaps what the devil tries to tell us, in order that we should not recognize the power of Antichrist when it is established. It will be just the opposite. This Antichrist will be attractive and inspiring. The whole world will be fond of it. The whole world will live in the conviction that this is just the thing. There will be a splendid time for the world. It will be a time of peace, all nations having been combined into one great whole. There will be no more rising of nation against nation. It will be a time of wonderful accomplishments. This central person or government will have all things under its control. It will control the powers of nature. It will control science and philosophy. It will control religion and worship. It will control commerce and industry. It will control all that this world possesses in hidden talents and powers. And the promise given to man in the beginning, that he would have dominion over all things, will be realized. I imagine that in that kingdom or world-power you will be able to scan the heavens: for the air shall have been conquered. Perhaps we shall even be able to visit other planets in the universe, as it is already attempted in this present time. In that kingdom you will be able to fathom the depths of the sea. In that kingdom you will be able to speak with its remotest inhabitant. There shall be no poor, no miserable from a worldly point of view; but all the powers of creation, come to full development under the direction and under the control of the central head, shall be at our command. In a word, it will be a splendid kingdom, and the realization of all that the world desires will there be had. No, not a heavy yoke on groaning subjects is that of the Antichrist, but a most beautiful kingdom, with peace and splendor and riches and plenty and harmony and great developments. And the whole earth will wonder after the beast. All the inhabitants will admire that state of things, and they will say, "Who is like unto this great government, and who is able now to war with us?" And in pure gratitude they will worship him and worship the devil.

That this must be so follows from the fact that this kingdom is universal in its scope. In the first place, universal because there shall be no nations that are outside and that

therefore can make war: "And there was given him authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation." All nations freely and willingly obey the one government. That one government has its own laws, that hold for all the nations of the world. It has its own police force and its own representatives, that have authority in every clime and over every nation. And perhaps it will succeed even in establishing one language. At any rate, all the nations are now one nation. There is no more competition; there is no more difference and war. It is a peaceful kingdom. And, in the second place, universal that kingdom is because all things will be under the control of its central government. If I may just run ahead for a moment, the rest of the chapter tells us that this central government has the power over buying and selling, so that you cannot buy the necessities of life and cannot do business and live along in society unless you are allowed to do so by the beast. It must be a government, therefore, that not only has complete control over all the inhabitants of the historic world, but also controls all things connected with their life and existence in this kingdom. Commerce and industry will be completely in the power of the central government. Natural resources and railroads and air roads and waterways and other roads, coal and iron and grain and vegetables, telegraph and telephone, radio and television, and all things will be in the power of this central government. Schools and universities and churches will be under its jurisdiction. It will tell you what to believe and how to worship, for it will want one science and one religion and one worship. It has power to command you to worship the beast and its image. And therefore, once more we come to the conclusion, based on the words of this passage and also on other parts of Scripture: the one final manifestation of Antichrist will be that of a great and universal world-power that will include all nations. That universal kingdom will have a central government that will have authority over all nations and over all things. That central government will control all things in the world, and will be admired and worshipped by all the inhabitants of the whole earth.

I say: by all. But that is not quite true. There is one class of people that will refuse to put their trust in this great power and to worship the beast. And that class of people is especially described as those whose names have been written in the book of life of the Lamb. In short, the people of God will still be on earth. There will be elect of the Most High, covenant people, on earth. And they will refuse to worship the beast. And this brings us to our third question: What is the spiritual character of this great and splendid world-power? The answer to this question is that it is anti-God and anti-Christ. It is anti-saints and anti- the kingdom of God. That this is so might be surmised from the fact that this world-power received its power from the dragon, the old serpent. He, as we have said before, has but one principle; and from that principle he lives. It is the principle of opposition against God.

H.H.

A CLOUD OF WITNESSES

The Dreamer

Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours.

And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.

And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more.

GENESIS 37:3-5

After leaving Bethel Jacob returned eventually to Mamre where his father, Isaac, yet lived. During that time he had been saddened by the death of his wife, Rachel. It was a grievous loss for him because Rachel had always remained the wife of his greatest love. At Mamre he was saddened once again by the death of Isaac. Many years had passed since Isaac, in anticipation of his own death, had bestowed upon Jacob the covenant blessing. However, as long as Isaac yet lived, he had remained the head of the covenant; and God had lengthened his life far beyond their greatest expectation, because Jacob was not yet ready to assume this great spiritual position. Only after many years, during which the Lord led Jacob through many hard and difficult ways, was he sufficiently matured in his relationship to God to receive the position of full covenant authority. Thus Isaac gave up the ghost and died when he was 180 years of age; and he was buried by his sons Esau and Jacob.

As the narrative of Scripture continues we find Jacob in the position of head in the covenant of God; and the account centers in the preparation of his sons to take their positions as fathers to the chosen people of God.

The youngest of Jacob's children, save one, was Joseph. The Scriptures tell us concerning him, "Now Israel loved Joseph more than all of his children, because he was the son of his old age." In our day we would put it more bluntly, although with less discernment. Joseph was spoiled. Upon Joseph, Jacob bestowed the majority of his attention. The other children had developed and begun to come to maturity during the years when first they were yet in Haran and later when they were moving and settling in Canaan. Those had been busy years when the greatest part of Jacob's attention and efforts had been engaged with caring for the matters of his flocks and herds. He had had little time for his children. He had merely as soon as possible introduced them to such work and odd jobs as they were able to perform. As each one of the children became old enough he was expected to help with the work which had to be done. Only after they were settled in the land of Canaan did this change. No longer did Jacob have to be always on the alert for the con-

niving of Laban. No longer was he always needed in the field watching the flocks and herds. His elder sons were old enough to take over the greater responsibilities, and it was possible for him to spend more time at home. And it was during these years that Joseph was coming into his maturity. Jacob was able to give to him the attention which the older children had never received. Jacob spent time with Joseph talking to him, instructing him, and just entertaining him. With Joseph, Jacob shared an intimacy such as he had never known with the other children. Joseph was the son of his old age and received a majority of Jacob's love and attention.

That this should have happened within the household of Jacob, should not surprise us. We can not excuse Jacob for his comparative neglect of his older children. Surely it was not right for him to discriminate in showing more favor to one than to the others. Nonetheless, we can understand it. Joseph was the son of his old age. It was very natural that he should receive the greatest share of his father's love. It is something which happens all the time.

There were, however, also other reasons for Jacob's favored treatment of Joseph.

One of these was the fact that Joseph was the son of Rachel. Throughout the years he had always continued to love Rachel more than Leah. Moreover, when for many years Rachel was barren; he had grieved with her because of it. He had sympathized with her and often prayed in her behalf. When finally the Lord answered these prayers and gave to her a son, that son quite naturally was received with special attention. Especially after Rachel's death, Jacob was minded to see reflected in Joseph the characteristics of the wife of his special love. Joseph in a sense took the place of his mother as the object of Jacob's greatest love.

But more important than anything else, Joseph was a son after his father's own heart, especially in a spiritual sense. In spite of his many shortcomings, Jacob had always been a spiritually sensitive person. Already in his youth, he had distinguished himself from Esau in that he loved the Word of God and the promises. A quiet person by nature, the ambitious actions of his life had always been basically motivated by a love for the promises of God. This same spiritual sensitivity lived also in the heart of Joseph. Thus there developed between father and son a deep bond of spiritual fellowship. It was possible for them to share together the deepest feelings of their hearts. They shared together a mutual love for the truth that God had revealed. In the quiet hours that they spent together in the home, Joseph loved to be instructed in the truths that Jacob loved most to teach. Joseph was a good boy that submitted himself completely to the instructions of his father. Their days in each other's company abounded in spiritual joy.

We are introduced to the life of Joseph first with regard to his seventeenth year. We are told that he was out in the field feeding the flocks with his brothers. We are not told the reason why he happened to be in the field at that time.

It might well be that Jacob decided that the time had come when Joseph should receive some experience and practice in the vocation from which he would be expected to make a living. Thus Jacob sent him from their home to be with the brothers in the field. But it might also have been the desire of Joseph. Although he enjoyed the time spent at home with his father, it seemed to lack some of the seeming freedom and responsibility of his brothers' lives. He heard them from time to time telling about the adventures which they met in the field, and, quite naturally for a young fellow, he longed to experience the same. Upon Joseph's insistence, Jacob finally allowed him to go. Whatever the reason, however, it did not go well. Joseph was quite a different person from his brothers. The brothers had been old enough to receive the example set forth by Jacob when they were still in Haran. They had seen their father in his more aggressive and possessive day and were not left unaffected by it. Moreover, when they came to Canaan, they were old enough to go out by themselves to circulate among the inhabitants of the land. But they were not properly prepared to resist the temptations of sin which they saw about them on every side. Soon they were following many of the evil ways of the Canaanites. Joseph, however, was influenced more by his father after he came to years of greater spiritual discernment. Then Jacob instructed him particularly in the ways of the Lord, all the while keeping him free from contact with the inhabitants of the land. Thus there turned out to be considerable difference between the moral standards of Joseph and his brothers. When he came out to live with them in the fields, he was shocked to see the way they lived. He saw them doing things which he knew to be definitely wrong. He heard them talking about things which they would never dare mention before their father. Embarrassed by his brothers' carnality, Joseph used the first opportunity which came to him to tell it all to Jacob. This was, of course, far from appreciated by his brothers.

Gradually there was developing within the family of Jacob a deep-seated resentment and hatred. It began with jealousy for the favored treatment which Joseph received from his father. Once this hatred had gained access to their hearts, as hatred always does, it found opportunity to grow at every occasion. Even such minor things as character and personality differences promoted it. The older children of Jacob had grown up in the open with the herds and flocks in the field. Their mannerisms were consequently more rough and hard. But Joseph spent much more time with his father being instructed in the quiet of the home. Of a quieter nature, he was more refined in his ways. To his brothers he seemed to be sissified. Again in his early life, Joseph became accustomed to receive favored treatment of his father. Under such treatment he may easily have developed a somewhat aloof and self-confident approach to life. This was actually not so much a matter of pride but merely a natural reaction to his particular situation in life such as happens repeatedly under similar circumstances. Nonetheless, to

Joseph's brothers this was offensive. They felt rejected already by the favoritism that their father showed to their younger brother. The very way that Joseph spoke and did things opened this wound anew and made them angry. It came to the point where everything that Joseph did was a new occasion for sarcastic remarks and jokes. Even Joseph's religious sincerity was to them nothing more than arrogance and pride. His moral sensitivity which prompted him to report the evil deeds of his brothers to their father, they interpreted as a matter of pride and indirect boasting whereby he exalted himself by belittling them in their father's sight. Although Joseph undoubtedly sought to please his brothers, it was impossible for him to do so. Hatred had found a place in their hearts, and it refused to think well of him. It came to the point where they "could not speak peaceably unto him."

Jacob irritated the situation even more by presenting Joseph with an elegant coat. It was not "a coat of many colors" but only a coat such as princes wore and those who lived a more gentle life. It served to distinguish them from those who wore the more crude dress of the field. Jacob no doubt felt that Joseph warranted it, but to the brothers it was but another sign of their rejection and another occasion for scorn.

The climax came to this all when Joseph received two prophetic dreams from God. In the first dream, received perhaps after a day of harvesting in the field, he saw the sheaves of his brothers bowing down to his own. Feeling that the dream was of some special import, but not comprehending that it was a revelation from God, Joseph in the unassuming way of a youth rather naively told it all to his brothers. They were willing to receive it as nothing more than an expression of the inner pride of his heart. In the second dream he saw the sun, moon and eleven stars bowing down to him. This time they were all together at home and his father was present as well as his brothers when Joseph related this dream also. Even Jacob became somewhat afraid that the dream arose from the dominion of pride in the heart of his son. With sharp words he rebuked him. "What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?" Although they scorned these dreams of Jacob openly, none was able to escape the feeling that they were of special import. The brothers, filled with hatred, were moved to envy by it; but Jacob, aware of the inward purity of his son, "observed the saying" in his heart.

The brothers of Joseph, we would believe, were at this time regenerated children of God; but hatred found a place in their hearts and led them far astray in the way of evil. We find here an example of what wickedness, hatred can do. Even as love "thinketh no evil" (I Cor. 13:5), hatred finds it impossible to think good.

B.W.

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of Luke 1:46-52

The passage on which I write this time is best known as the "Song of Mary"! In form of rhyme the church has sung this song of Mary throughout her history. And we do well to take a little bit more particular notice of the uniqueness of this song, as well in its form and content, as who it was who was singing this particular song.

The "Song of Mary" is known among scholars and students of the Bible by its introductory verb in Latin which is "Magnificat." And hence it is better known as "The Magnificat." Thus the "Song of Zacharias" is called "The Benedictus" because the Latin term "benedictus" is the first word that came from the lips of Zacharias, when he says "Blessed (Benedictus) be the God of Israel" (Luke 1:68). And, again, in Luke 2:29 we have the beautiful utterance from the mouth of the aged Simeon, which begins: "Now lettest thy servant depart in peace, Lord . . ." Since the Latin version of the Scriptures here begins with "Nunc demittis" the song of Simeon is called "The Nunc Demittis"!

This Song of Mary literally reads as follows: "*My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God, my Savior. For he hath regarded the low estate of his hand-maiden; for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name. And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation. He hath shewed strength with his arm: he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent away empty. He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy as he spake to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever.*"

There are a few *historic* (not: historical!) facts which should be kept in mind in attempting to understand and explain this Song of Mary.

In the first instance it should be borne in mind that this Song is uttered by Mary while she is still standing in the Old Testament dispensation of the Kingdom of God. She is still standing in the days of the Shadows and the Types of better things to come. Christ was not yet born, he had not yet died and arisen again, fulfilling all righteousness. Christ was not yet seated at the right hand of the Father, sitting upon the throne of His father David forever!

In the second place we should notice that Mary sings this song in the "fulness of times." It was time that the former things should pass away, and that the new should be ushered in. All God's promises should be manifestly shown to be "Yea and Amen in Christ, to the glory of God the Father." For the angel Gabriel had come to her in the little

town of Nazareth, in Galilee of the nations, and had announced to her that she would bear a Son, who would be Great, who would sit upon the throne of His father David forever, and of whose kingdom there would be no end! Did not the angel greet her with the memorable words: "Hail thou that art highly favored"? Is she not the "much graced one" among women? Is she not the chosen vessel of God from whom the Christ shall be born, the virgin who would conceive? And will this Son not be called Emanuel, God-with-us?

In the third place, does not Mary sing this song standing, perhaps, on the very threshold of the house of Zacharias and Elizabeth. Hither Mary had hastened after the angel had announced to her that she should have this Wonder-Child, and that her kins-woman, Elizabeth, who was called barren, too had conceived in her old age, and that she was in her sixth month! Had not this Elizabeth kept herself in hiding, saying: "Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men" (Luke 1:25). But Mary was told by the angel. The secret of Elizabeth, which is the secret of the Lord, is made known to Mary. And she, in faith, goes to see this thing which has come to pass; she wishes to witness the evidence that "there is nothing impossible with God"! And the evidence is far above anything that Mary could ask or think. For at the very sound of her salutation the babe leaped for joy in the womb of the aged Elizabeth. The unborn John, who will one day say to Israel concerning Jesus, "Behold, the Lamb of God," greets Jesus in this very singular and miraculous way. The unborn John the Baptist greets the unborn Jesus!!

In the fourth place, it should be observed Mary sings this Song under the power and operation of the Holy Spirit. Both Mary and Elizabeth sing songs, and both sing of *Mary's child*. They do not sing of Elizabeth's child, except in as far as he too is interested in this unborn child of Mary! But both sing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Do we not read of Elizabeth, "and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she spake out with a loud voice, and said blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the *fruit* of thy womb . . ." It was because of the "fruit" of Mary's womb that there was such great joy. For now salvation would come, the promises made to the fathers would be fulfilled.

And, lastly, Mary sings this song limited in her vision by the Old Testament revelation. She is a child of her times, first of all. Yet, limited as she is, she is led by the Spirit into the *very marrow* of the Old Testament Scriptures.

Of this latter we should take further notice in this essay. We call your attention to the following elements:

We would call attention to the fact, first of all, that the Holy Ghost led Mary to the Scriptures, to Moses, the Psalms and the Prophets. It is especially to the Psalms that reference is made throughout in this Song of Mary. We will not quote them all, but we do feel that it is in order to quote rather extensively from these O. T. quotations. Thus in verse 48 reference is made to I Sam. 1:11: ". . . if thou

wilt indeed look upon the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me . . ." This is from the song of Hannah. Again see Psalm 113:5, 6, where we read: "who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth!" And in verse 49 Mary makes reference to Psalm 111:9: "He sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant forever: *holy and reverent is his name.*" And in verse 50 of the Song of Mary who does not think of the words of Psalm 103:13 and 17: "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him," and: "But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children." And, again, in verse 51 of the Song of Mary reference is made to Psalm 89:10 where we read: ". . . thou hast scattered thine enemies with thy strong arm." Does not verse 52 refer clearly to such passages as Psalm 147:6, where we read: "The Lord lifted up the meek: he casteth the wicked down to the ground"? And, further, do not the words of verse 53 remind us of the utterance of the Psalmist in Psalm 34:10, where we read: "The young lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing"? And, finally, do not the verses 54 and 55 remind us of Isaiah 41:8 and Micah 7:20 in which latter reference we read: "Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old."

Surely, we have here the very marrow of the Old Testament Scriptures!

In it we see the great and holy Name of God extolled.

Here we see the faithful promises of God to the fathers fulfilled, and believed!

Therefore, in the second place, we would call attention to the fact that in all these passages there is a *unifying* principle. These utterances are not simply some aphoristic excerpts, haphazardly thrown together, without any relationship to each other, not having any relevancy to the actual history of the children of God in the Old Testament Dispensation, but they are a picture, a total view of the Great Works of God, in a nut-shell. Thus they depict to us that God is faithful to his people, to Jacob whom he hath chosen and loved. And, let it not be overlooked, that this is all reviewed from the vantage-point of Mary, as she sees all of the history of the people of God, as it culminates in the faithfulness of God in the Promised Son, whom she shall bring forth.

I would like to call attention to three aspects of this entire song.

In the first place, let me point out the *covenantal character* of this Song.

This appears from the very close of it. It is all controlled by the truth of the promise of God to the fathers, to Abraham and to his children forever. The song really has its "point of departure" in Genesis 17:7, where we read: "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting

covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." See also Genesis 18:18 and 22:17. In the latter passage we read: "That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore, and thy seed shall possess the gates of thy enemies."

Such is the covenantal *point of departure* in this entire Song.

In the second place, it ought to be observed that Mary sings here as the mouth-piece of Israel. She does not sing an *exclusively* personal song. She sings as a mother in Israel, yea, as *the* mother in Israel. And surely, her low estate, as mother in Israel, was the low estate of the house of Jesse! From the viewpoint of Israel's national existence, the throne of David, Israel is still virtually in bondage, a vassal people who are under the heel of the Kingdoms of the world, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and now Rome. Caesar Augustus reigns. He will have all the world be taxed. The house of David is not even in Bethlehem, but in Nazareth! And Mary's estate is truly lowly as the last representative of this royal house of David. But God has remembered her, and in remembering her He remembers the lowly plight of His people, by fulfilling in her the sign of the Virgin!

But, in the third place, this is not strange. Is not the Lord, Jehovah, her God, her Savior, and the Savior of his people. And does she not bear this "JESUS, Jehovah-saves" under her heart. Had not the power of the Highest come upon her to overshadow her. Had John, the unborn child, not just announced it to Mary! Is God not he who causes the things that are not to be, and does he not fulfill her hope against hope for the house of David according to his sure promises? And has he not all through history cast down the mighty from their thrones? Where are Pharaoh and his hosts? Were they not cast into the Red Sea, since God remembers mercy to his own people, fulfilling his word of promise? And were not ever the hungry filled with good things. Think of Israel in the desert. Manna rained from heaven! And thus the true Manna will rain from heaven in her Son.

And in agreement with this covenantal character of this song we should notice too that it is a song which has its chief *motive in God*. God must be made great. His Name must be extolled. His mercy, his power, his condescending remembrance, his faithfulness . . . The more one thinks about it, the more one's "spirit" rejoices in deep and sweet meditation. And thus Mary's soul magnifies the Lord, when all this greatness passes before her reflecting spirit.

And, finally, this song is one which has meaning for us even today. Does Mary not speak of the "From henceforth all the generations shall call me blessed"? We still sing this song. Not all the generations of the world sing this song. Not all call Mary blessed. But in the generations, thousands of generations of those who fear God and keep his commandments, this song is sung. Here its meaning is penetrated, the spirit rejoices upon God, our Savior.

G.L.

IN HIS FEAR

Freedom of Speech

(4)

It is claimed that we have freedom of speech because this is a Christian nation. Some dare even go so far as to say that it is one of the fruits of the cross of Christ, one of the many things that we may enjoy because of His cross.

Surely that cannot be the case. It would be far better to say that in a Christian nation the ungodly are not given the freedom to speak their evil minds and wicked thoughts. The Christian wants none of these evil ideas of the wicked propagated. He hates them and shudders at their utterance. He is even as the believers at Ephesus who, according to Acts 19:19, burned their books of curious arts, even though the price of them amounted to the amazing sum for that day of fifty thousand pieces of silver! And remember that last time we saw that freedom of speech as applied to the written page, to magazines and books goes under the name of freedom of the press. Does then a Christian nation behave as these Christians in Ephesus or defend the right of men to write these books, to publish their evil and for them to seek to persuade countless others also to believe the things written in them? And can it possibly be a fruit of the cross of Christ that the antichrist is able to establish his kingdom by a freedom that Christ has realized for him? We said last time that this freedom of speech which is lauded as belonging to a Christian nation is so readily and forcefully a tool for the establishment and furtherance of the kingdom of the antichrist. We like to say a few things about that at this time and show you that this freedom of speech which affords us the right and liberty to teach our children and to do our missionary work is at the same time pressed into the service of the missionary work of the antichrist. And therefore we should not brand it as such a wonderful thing, and surely should not brand it as one of the benefits of the cross of Christ. Let us look at this thing more closely and not so superficially. Let us not deceive ourselves and call that which comes in God's providence a benefit of the cross of Christ. Christ never gave them this freedom of speech but warned against it. In Matthew 18:6 He is quoted as saying, "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." By His Spirit He moved the Apostle John to write in II John 10, "If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed; For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." Shall we then give him the right and freedom to spread another doctrine? And does Christ then go to His cross so that these may have the

freedom to speak and write as they please? In Israel, which was far more a Christian nation than any nation today in that all the Israelites were in the covenant sphere, those who took the liberty to speak their blasphemy were by the command of God stoned to death, Leviticus 24:16. A Christian nation will honor Christ and forbid any antichristian speech to be spoken or published.

And though it is true that the antichrist comes by force and with the sword, he also comes by speech. And the pen is mightier than the sword. The sword can kill but does not build up the antichrist's kingdom. It only rids him of his enemies. But the pen moves men to follow him, support him, honor and worship him. In Revelation 13 where we see him pictured both from his political and social-religious aspects we see that he comes with the sword. So powerful is he with the sword that men cry of him, "Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?" And again as the beast that comes up out of the earth we read that he causeth "as many as would not worship the image of the beast" to be killed. But these same two visions clearly indicate his use of that which is lauded by some as freedom of speech. We read "there was given him a mouth speaking great blasphemies . . . and he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven." Further this second beast "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." Still further that "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." Note that he *says* to those on the earth that they should make such an image and that he gives power to this image to *speak*. Need we say more? The antichrist will make use of every opportunity and every liberty given him to speak in order to establish his godless kingdom. And he is busy at it today. John says that there are already many antichrists in the world. Forerunners these are of that final, dreadful form in which he will come at the end of time. But the freedom of the press and of speech is pressed into service today by all those who are led by the spirit of the antichrist. By speech and the printed page he gains converts. By the pen, by paper and ink he molds the thoughts of man. And who will deny that both radio and television, which are media of communication, already are molding the thoughts of men? People begin to think alike. They begin to live alike. A thought carried to the corners of our land by a nation-wide hook-up by radio and television takes hold in all these places and men's minds are molded and thought patterns are transplanted. You understand that these are not spiritually good thought patterns. In our land of freedom of speech, as is to be expected, that speech which the majority of the inhabitants of our land choose and relish is beamed to every

city and hamlet. Religious programs are tolerated—though we understand that less and less time is being given for them—but in the freedom of speech as practiced here in our land the majority gets its wish. And it is the filth and foolishness of the world that dominates the air waves. The day will soon come when only the false church will be given the freedom to speak its lie and mold man's thinking for the coming and reception of the antichrist. Soon there will be a freedom of all good speech in the sense that these things will not be allowed. One will be required to take the mark of the beast on his right hand or forehead also to be given the right to speak and write his thoughts and beliefs. By means of the spoken and written word the antichrist gathers around himself a loyal following and keeps in line those that follow him only because of fear of the consequences. And our land, too, will soon see that this freedom of speech brings an end to the freedom from fear for those who in the true freedom of religion believe in the Christ. These shall want, rather than be enjoying freedom from want. For they will not be able to buy or sell because in the true freedom of speech they dare to speak up and tell this beast, this antichrist that they must obey God rather than man. In that day men will not be so foolish as to say that freedom of speech is ours because this is a Christian land. And men will not say that this freedom of speech of the whole antichristian world is the fruit of the cross of Christ. Understand that this will still be called a Christian land, O, indeed! The antichrist will want to have his kingdom known as a Christian nation. That is exactly the way he comes into power and that is exactly the thing he has accomplished through this freedom to speak his lie and spread through the freedom of the press his propaganda. Paul tells us that. He writes in II Thessalonians 2:3-5, "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." That is why he is called the antichrist. He is against God and against His Christ; but he also sets himself up as though he were the Christ. He is the false Christ. They are not all Israel that are of Israel. Neither is all that Christian that is called Christian and that is born in the sphere where Christ has His people. The Christian is one who partakes of Christ's anointing and has the Spirit of Christ dwelling in his heart. He is a regenerated man. And we do wrong; we stand on dangerous ground; we deceive and lay a snare for our children when we call all that which is civilized, cultured, refined, polite, outwardly decent and has a willingness to let "the other fellow" speak his piece and air his views as Christianity. That is the way the antichrist speaks in order to get his following, in order to get men away from the Christ, if he can, and substitute earthly things that appeal to the flesh for the things of the Spirit of Christ. And all our freedom of speech and of the press gives him the opportunity

which he seeks to drum these things in our ears and to make us and our children receive these things in the place of the rebirth by the Spirit of Christ and the things of everlasting spiritual value before God's face.

No, we are not advocating that our government should be petitioned to withdraw this freedom of speech and of the press. Surely we do not mean that the individual citizen has the right to try to stop the mouths of the unbelievers by force. We surely do appreciate the work of God's providence, and of His grace for His Church—not for the world—that we may worship and teach our children in liberty and peace. And the withdrawal of freedom of speech would harm us more than it would harm the spread of antichristianity. The unbeliever in his lawlessness would still find a way to spread his propaganda. And the true Christian in his walk of obedience to God would find it difficult to serve God according to the dictates of His Word.

But we are advocating the abolishment from our minds the idea that what is lauded so highly in our land as freedom of speech is a Christian benefit and privilege. We would speak a warning against confusing and mixing of the things which men grant unto men simply because they find it to their earthly and material advantage and the things which are given us by the Spirit of Christ and because of His atoning blood on Calvary. Freedom of speech that is given by the Spirit of Christ and for the praise and glory of God we deeply appreciate as a gift of God's grace. But freedom of speech given by mere man for the advancement of men's ideas and philosophies, given simply with a view to life here below and its enjoyment, we fear. For it is the tool of the forces of evil to bring in the kingdom of the antichrist. And we would also speak a word of exhortation—in this true freedom of speech—that as parents and office-bearers in the church, but also as covenant people, we do all in our power to speak the truth and provide the truth for our children. Then we use this freedom of speech in His fear.

J.A.H.

Bulletin quote: "When you inquire after public news, in that wait upon God. Do it with an eye to Him for this reason: because you are truly concerned for the interest of His Kingdom in this world; and lay them near your heart . . . ask, 'what news?', not as the Athenians, only to satisfy a vain curiosity and to pass an idle hour or two, but that you may know how to direct your prayers and praises." M. Henry.

Rise, my soul! adore and wonder!
Ask, "O why such love to me?"
Grace hath put me in the number
Of the Savior's family:
Hallelujah!
Thanks, eternal thanks, to thee.

— ANONYMOUS

Contending For The Faith

The Church and the Sacraments

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

THE SEVEN SACRAMENTS

HOLY ORDERS

(continued)

We concluded our preceding article with a quotation from the Dogmatics of Dr. H. Bavinck. We will now conclude this quotation.

"This custom of the laying on of hands went over from the apostles into the Christian Church, which applied it to baptism, healing, the receiving again of those who had fallen and of heretics, marriage, penance and ordination. In the last instance (penance and ordination, — H.V.), the right to apply this laying on of hands was ascribed in later times only to the bishop and it was considered as the granting of a special official gift. After all, over against Gnosticism and Montanism the truth of the church was thereby demonstrated, that the bishops in the churches, which had been founded by the apostles, were the preservers of the pure tradition. They themselves had received this from the apostles and had delivered them undamaged to their successors. The *successio ab initio decurrens*, demonstrated by II Tim. 2:2, delivered thereunto the guarantee, for the office included the communication of a special official spirit which preserves the office bearer regardless how wicked he personally may be. The laying on of hands was surely customary in the old church at the ordination unto presbyter, deacon and the lower offices, was always accompanied with prayer and was viewed for a long time as a symbolic sign of the communication of the official gift. But gradually it was regarded as a sacrament which by an external operation yielded an indelible character. At first, the Lutherans rejected it, but later they recognized it again and ascribed a great significance to it. The Reformed people judged unanimously that the laying on of hands was not a commandment of Christ and that it was not absolutely necessary. But while some regarded it as beneficial, respectable and worthy to serve as example, others regarded it as an adiaphoron (not essential, — H.V.), and advised against its use because of the fear of superstition. It does not constitute an essential element of ordination, for no mention is made of it as used by Jesus, or by the apostles, or also by the elders, Acts 14:23, 20:28. Besides, neither can nor may it be regarded as a mechanical communication of a special official spirit. For it does not bestow but rather presupposes the special gifts which are demanded for the office by Scripture. Neither is it identical with the election or

calling unto the office, but it follows thereupon and can therefore not be anything else than a public pointing out of the one who is called unto an office, and a solemn introduction and appointment unto that office. Even as a marriage before magistrates does not constitute the essence of matrimony and the crowning does not make the king, so also the ordination, with or without the laying on of hands, is not the communication of the office or of the office bearer. It is merely the solemn, public declaration before God and His church that the one called has been legally sent and therefore sent of God, that he possesses the required gifts and as such must be received, acknowledged and honored by the congregation." — end of quote.

MARRIAGE

The seventh and last sacrament of the Roman Catholic Church is that of matrimony. Concerning this sacrament the Romish Church has also expressed itself in the Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent as follows, and we quote:

"The first parent of the human race, under the influence of the Divine Spirit, pronounced the bond of matrimony perpetual and indissoluble, when he said: *This now is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh. Wherefore a man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be two in one flesh.*"

But, that by this bond two only are united and joined together, our Lord taught more plainly, when, rehearsing those last words as having been uttered by God, he said: *Therefore now they are not two, but one flesh;* and straightway confirmed the firmness of that tie, proclaimed so long before by Adam, by these words: *What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.*

But the grace which might perfect that natural love, and confirm that indissoluble union, and sanctify the married, Christ himself, the institutor and perfecter of the venerable sacraments, merited for us by his passion; as the Apostle Paul intimates, saying, *Husbands love your wives, as Christ also loved the Church and delivered himself up for it;* adding shortly after, *This is a great sacrament, but I speak in Christ and in the Church.*

Whereas therefore matrimony, in the evangelical law, excels in grace, through Christ, the ancient marriages, with reason have our holy Fathers, the Councils, and the tradition of the universal Church, always taught, that it is to be numbered amongst the sacraments of the new law; against which, impious men of this age raging, have not only had false notions touching this venerable sacrament, but, introducing according to their wont, under the pretext of the Gospel, a carnal liberty, they have by word and writing asserted, not without great injury to the faithful of Christ, many things alien from the sentiment of the Catholic Church, and from the usage approved of since the times of the Apostles; the holy and universal Synod, wishing to meet the

rashness of these men, has thought it proper, lest their pernicious contagion may draw more after it, that the more remarkable heresies and errors of the above-named schismatics be exterminated, by decreeing against the said heretics and their errors the following anathemas."—end of this quote from the Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent.

And then follow these anathemas which this Council of Trent expressed in the following canons, or denial of errors.

Canon I. — "If any one saith, that matrimony is not truly and properly one of the seven sacraments of the evangelic law, (a sacrament) instituted by Christ the Lord; but that it has been invented by men in the Church; and that it does not confer grace: let him be anathema."

Canon II. — "If any one saith, that it is lawful for Christians to have several wives at the same time, and that this is not prohibited by any divine law: let him be anathema."

Canon III. — "If any one saith, that those degrees only of consanguinity and affinity which are set down in Leviticus can hinder matrimony from being contracted, and dissolve it when contracted; and that the Church can not dispense in some of those degrees, or establish that others may hinder and dissolve it: let him be anathema."

Canon IV. — "If any one saith, that the Church could not establish impediments dissolving marriage; or, that she has erred in establishing them: let him be anathema."

Canon V. — "If any one saith, that on account of heresy, or irksome cohabitation, or the affected absence of one of the parties, the bond of matrimony may be dissolved: let him be anathema."

Canon VI. — "If any one saith, that matrimony contracted, but not consummated, is not dissolved by the solemn profession of religion by one of the parties: let him be anathema."

Canon VII. — "If any one saith, that the Church has erred, in that she hath taught, and doth teach, in accordance with the evangelical and apostolical doctrine, that the bond of matrimony can not be dissolved on account of the adultery of one of the married parties; and that both, or even the innocent one who gave not occasion to the adultery, can not contract another marriage during the lifetime of the other; and, that he is guilty of adultery, who, having put away the adulteress, shall take another wife, as also she, who, having put away the adulterer, shall take another husband: let him be anathema." This seventh canon, we all readily understand, is a most interesting statement. Imagine, if you please, what the Church has taught here! It taught that the bond of matrimony cannot be dissolved on account of adultery. It also taught that even the innocent one cannot contract another marriage during the lifetime of the other, and that, should she take another husband, even though innocent, she

would be guilty of adultery. I repeat: this is surely a most interesting statement. To teach, therefore, as we do as Protestant Reformed Churches, in regard to the remarriage of divorced persons is not new. This same doctrine is already set forth in these canons and decrees of the Council of Trent. And we must not object that this is set forth by or in the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. The fact is that Rome sets this forth in defence of its maintaining of the fundamental truths of Holy Writ.

Canon VIII. — "If any one saith, that the Church errs, in that she declares that, for many causes, a separation may take place between husband and wife, in regard to bed, or in regard to cohabitation, for a determinate or for an indeterminate period: let him be anathema."

Canon IX. — "If any one saith, that clerics constituted in sacred orders, or regulars, who have solemnly professed chastity, are able to contract marriage, and that being contracted it is valid, notwithstanding the ecclesiastical law, or vow; and that the contrary is nothing else than to condemn marriage; and, that all who do not feel that they have the gift of chastity, even though they have made a vow thereof, may contract marriage: let him be anathema; seeing that God refuses not that gift to those who ask for it rightly, neither does *he suffer us to be tempted above that which we are able.*"

Canon X. — "If any one saith, that the marriage state is to be placed above the state of virginity, or of celibacy, and that it is not better and more blessed to remain in virginity, or in celibacy, than to be united in matrimony: let him be anathema."

Canon XI. — "If any one saith, that the prohibition of the solemnization of marriages at certain times of the year is a tyrannical superstition, derived from the superstition of the heathen; or condemn the benedictions and other ceremonies which the Church makes use of therein: let him be anathema."

Canon XII. — "If any one saith, that matrimonial causes do not belong to ecclesiastical judges: let him be anathema."—end of quote.

We wish to make but one observation in connection with this Romish conception of the sacrament of matrimony at this time. The Lord willing, we will have more to say in our following article. How contradictory is Rome in its setting forth of these decrees! On the one hand, Rome declares that the bond of matrimony cannot be dissolved on account of the adultery of one of the married parties. But, in spite of the fact that the state of marriage is a bond which remains in effect "until death do 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. But, more of this later.

H.V.

The Voice of Our Fathers

The Canons of Dordrecht

PART TWO

EXPOSITION OF THE CANONS

FIFTH HEAD OF DOCTRINE

OF THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

Article 14. And as it hath pleased God, by the preaching of the gospel, to begin this work of grace in us, so he preserves, continues, and perfects it by the hearing and reading of his Word, by meditation thereon, and by the exhortations, threatenings, and promises thereof, as well as by the use of the sacraments.

The above translation is substantially correct although it is a bit difficult to do justice to the original Latin in a smooth-flowing English translation. For the sake of correctness we will give a more literal translation: "Moreover, even as it hath pleased God to begin this his own work of grace in us through the preaching of the gospel; thus through the hearing, reading, meditation, exhortations, threatenings, promises of the gospel, and also through the use of the sacraments he preserves, continues, and perfects it."

At first glance we would perhaps be inclined to say that this article sets forth such a patent fact that it was scarcely necessary for the fathers to mention it. The article deals fundamentally with the means of grace and with the fact that God does not supply His people with the blessings of salvation except through these means. And this is such a simple and basic truth that any child of God is acquainted with it, if not doctrinally, then experientially. Every child of God knows the necessity of these means, knows that they are indispensable, knows that if he neglects these means of grace to whose use God has bound Himself in the work of His grace, his spiritual life can only suffer. And therefore the question arises: why do the fathers take pains to mention this truth in this connection?

In the main, the reason for this article is the same as that for the two preceding articles. There, as we have seen, the Arminian objection that this doctrine of certain perseverance through sovereign grace makes men careless and profane was faced by the fathers and rejected. They maintained that the very opposite was true, namely, that the certainty of perseverance leads to true piety, not to carelessness. And the fathers maintained, further, that even in the case of one who falls into sin and is restored it is not true whatsoever that the renewed confidence of persevering makes a saint careless. A careless saint is a contradiction in terms, an impossibility. Either one is careless, and then he is no saint; or he is a saint, and then he is not careless. Now here, in

Article 14, we have the same objection in a way. Only this objection is directed against the necessity of the means of grace and their use. The Arminians argued, first of all, that if perseverance is certain and is wrought certainly by God's absolutely sovereign and efficacious grace, so that it is absolutely impossible for an elect saint to fall away and to go lost, then the means of grace are not necessary. The elect will be saved, and they will surely be preserved and persevere unto the end. This is absolutely guaranteed. And therefore there is no place for the preaching of the gospel and the sacraments in this scheme of things. Even if it be granted that this salvation takes place *initially* through the preaching of the gospel, then after the saint has once come to the knowledge of Christ, since he will surely be preserved anyway, there is no more need of the preaching of the gospel. Whether that gospel is preached to him or not, he will be preserved to the end. And the Arminians argued, in the second place, that this view takes away all necessity and all incentive for the saints to be diligent in the use of the means of grace. If it be true, so they argued, that the saints are certainly preserved, and if it be true that the saints are assured of their preservation, then the saints themselves are free to take the position that the means of grace are unnecessary in their lives. They will feel that they do not need the Word and the sacraments. They will conclude that their perseverance is an assured fact whether they attend to the preaching of the Word or not, whether they use the sacraments or not. They will neglect to read and meditate upon the gospel, since they will be preserved without these very well. They will feel no need of the exhortations, threatenings, and promises of the gospel. All necessity of the means of grace, so the Arminians argued, is done away, both principally and as a matter of the practical life of the Christian. This is the doctrinal view over against which the fathers take position in the article under discussion.

And how do they answer?

Let us notice that there is a comparison in their answer, first of all. They say: "As it hath pleased God to *begin* this work of grace in us by the preaching of the gospel, thus (it hath pleased God) to preserve, continue, and perfect it through the hearing, reading, meditation, exhortations, threatenings, and promises of the gospel, and also through the use of the sacraments." The comparison, therefore, is between the method by which God begins this work and the method by which God continues this work. And there is a reference here to an earlier teaching of the fathers, concerning the beginning of this work of grace, in Article 17 of the Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine. We may remind ourselves of this by quoting the first part of this article: "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 also the beforementioned supernatural operation of God, by which we are regenerated, in no wise excludes, or subverts the use

of the gospel, which the most wise God has ordained to be the seed of regeneration, and food of the soul." And the main thrust of the article is that this manner of operation by which God begins the work of His grace in us is the same manner of operation on God's part in the preservation, continuance, and perfecting of the work of grace in us. To the details of this proposition we shall return presently.

We may take time out at this point to remark that this article furnishes no ground for the view of mediate regeneration. It is a rather sad fact that some lose sight almost completely of the fact that this article is directed against the Arminians, and turn their commentary on this article into a vehement polemic against their Reformed brethren who hold to the view of immediate regeneration. But there are some who grasp at the first clause of this article in order to prove that it is the position of our Reformed confessions that regeneration (the beginning of the work of grace in us) takes place through the preaching of the gospel. We will not take the time to enter into a detailed discussion of this matter, because we did this in connection with *Canons* III, IV, 17, to which the reader may refer if he is interested. Suffice it to say here: 1) That it certainly could not have been the intention of the *Canons* in this article to say anything about mediate or immediate regeneration. That was not the issue at that time, and it surely was not the issue in this article. This is an anti-Arminian article. 2) A glance at the context of this article, both in the Fifth Head and in the preceding chapter, will show that it surely was not the intention of the fathers to say something about regeneration in the narrower sense of the word, as it takes place without our consciousness in the depth of our heart; but the whole context is concerned with the work of grace as it is wrought in us *consciously*. And there is no argument in Reformed circles as to whether that conscious work of salvation is wrought mediately or immediately. That is always wrought through the means of grace. For the rest we will not enter into the argument at this stage.

But now let us enter somewhat into the details of the fathers' teaching in this article.

Of course, as we have indicated previously, from a practical point of view this whole article is really unnecessary. Practically speaking, this Arminian lie is as false as it is big. What real Christian is there who ever for a moment honestly thinks that the means of grace are unnecessary? No, I do not mean that there are no Christians who temporarily fall into the sin of neglecting the means of grace. And I do not mean that it is unnecessary to admonish God's people to be diligent in using the means of grace. These are different matters. They are not matters of understanding, but of ethical error. The Christian who neglects the means of grace knows better. He knows that he does wrong. But for one carnal reason or another he sins in the face of his better knowledge. And he knows too that he sins. But what I want to emphasize here is that as a matter of real life there

is not a Christian and there is not a church that would ever take the position that the means of grace are unnecessary for the preservation, continuance, and perfecting of the work of grace in God's children. And there is not a preacher who as a matter of real-life preaching takes the position that the exhortations, threatenings, and promises of God's Word are unnecessary. Take these out of the Word, and it is safe to say there is no Word left to preach!

The trouble is that we are sometimes misled in our thinking by Arminian arguments of the kind under consideration. You will even hear these arguments presented sometimes in Reformed circles and in the name of Reformed doctrine. The accusation will be raised against those who maintain the Reformed truth of efficacious grace and certain preservation that there is no room left in their view for the conscious response and activity of faith, and therefore no room left for admonition and warning. And then we sometimes begin to ask ourselves whether this accusation does not after all have some truth in it. We ask the question: why is it really that the preaching of the gospel, the use of the sacraments, and the reading of and meditation upon the gospel with its exhortations, threatenings, and promises are necessary? Mark you well, the question is not: are the means of grace necessary? But it is: why, under the view of sovereign grace, are the means and their use indispensable?

And to this our present article gives a beautiful and very final answer: "It hath pleased God!" No other answer can you really give to this question. No more final answer can you give to it. God in performing the work of His grace has been pleased to use *means*. Abstractly considered, it might have pleased God to save His people without means. But that did not please Him. And therefore God has joined together the work of His grace in us and His use of the preaching of the gospel and the sacraments. It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. And God has joined together our salvation and our diligence in the use of the God-ordained means of grace. God also maintains and realizes the inseparable connection between the two. The fact that God uses means and the fact that He requires of us to use these means does not vitiate the truth that it is He alone who saves us. But to that we must return later. For the present let us emphasize this: Let not man put asunder what it has pleased God to join together! To attempt it is folly, and it is vain, and it is sin!

H.C.H.

Gracious God, my heart renew,
Make my spirit right and true;
Cast me not away from Thee,
Let Thy Spirit dwell in me;
Thy salvation's joy impart,
Steadfast make my willing heart.

DECENCY and ORDER

Questions of Article 41

Christian Schools

"Are the Christian Schools cared for?"

This is the question with which the delegates of each Consistory are confronted every time the Classis meets. The very nature of the question, together with the real tendency in our present day to dissociate the Christian school from the church (consistory) altogether, makes it imperative to re-evaluate and explain the significance of this matter.

We are not, however, to discuss in this connection the relation between the church (consistory) and the school. This question belongs properly to Article 21 of the Church Order where the duty of the consistory is defined as "*seeing to it that there are good Christian schools in which the parents have their children instructed according to the demands of the covenant.*" We have treated this matter fully in *The Standard Bearer*, Vol. 31, pgs. 380 ff.

At present we are interested in the significance of the question that is put to the delegates of the Classis under Article 41. Historically we understand that this matter of caring for the Christian schools had real meaning to the consistories. For a long time after the Reformation, the schools were owned by the government. In countries such as the Netherlands where the government was Reformed, the management of the schools was left to the consistories. The latter functioned as School Boards. They examined the teachers, supervised the instruction, and insisted particularly on purity in doctrine in the schools. When then the question was asked "of de Christelijke Scholen bezorgd worden," the question had reference to these very things. It meant, "Did the consistory attend to these matters?"

Later, however, the government became neutral (?) and so did the schools. As a result of this, societies were organized for the establishment and maintenance of real Christian schools. This situation prevails in our day. Our schools are not owned, operated, and directly supervised by the church but by parental societies. Our position is that it is the direct responsibility of the parents to train and to educate the children of the covenant.

This raises the question whether or not this situation relieves the consistory of the necessity of answering the prescribed question? Is, perhaps, this question of Article 41 outmoded and would it be better to elide this altogether from our Church Order? Can the consistory under the present set-up still fulfill this function and, if so, what is the intent or meaning of the question?

In reply to this we stress that the consistory is certainly duty bound to support the cause of Christian education. In

fact, in view of present developments in the educational world, it may be said that this function of the consistory has become more mandatory than ever before. Although it is difficult to imagine that a consistory of a *Reformed* Church could oppose or be indifferent toward the cause of Christian education, we cannot ignore the cold facts of reality. It may be stated, however, that where such is the case there has already been a radical departure from the principles of the *Reformed* faith. Even though the name *Reformed* is retained, it is impossible to be and remain reformed and oppose the principles of Christian education. For this very reason no man who is opposed to Christian education can be considered an eligible candidate for the office of elder or deacon in a Reformed Church. Such a man cannot fulfill the obligations of the office for the consistory is bound by the Word of God and the Church Order to support, promote and care for the Christian schools.

This duty of the consistory is not fulfilled by simply making some financial provision for the Christian schools through offerings that are received in the church. Neither is the question that is asked by the Classis the same as if it were asked whether there is a Christian school in the locale and whether the parents are urged to use this school for the instruction of their children. These things may in themselves be significant and even necessary measures by which the Consistory's role in the matter of education is aided, but they do not touch upon the main thrust of the question asked. In seeking that thrust we must not forget the historic circumstances in which this question originated. It may even be granted that those circumstances in which the church directly controlled and maintained the schools was not ideal and even in principle wrong, yet, the main point evolving from the question raised in those circumstances is whether the consistory sees to it that the education which the children of the church receive is good, sound and *Reformed*? Is it *Christian education*? Does the consistory support in every possible way such programs of education? Does the consistory impress upon its membership the necessity and urgency of such a program?

That question is certainly the business of the consistory. It has its origin not in the debatable relation between the church and the school but rather in the incontrovertible question that is put by the church to the parents in the baptism of their children: *Do you promise, before God and His church, to see to it that these children, when come to the years of discretion, are instructed and brought up in the aforesaid doctrine, or help or cause them to be instructed therein to the utmost of your power?*" Monsma and Van Dellen in the *Church Order Commentary* make the statement: "Consistories should ascertain for themselves whether the instruction which the children of their church receive is Christian, or rather Reformed. Consistories must be sure that the schools which they are supporting are not merely Christian in name or to a certain extent, but that they are

maintaining their distinctive character to the very best of their ability" (pg. 188).

This is certainly true and for us that means that each consistory must promote and support as much as possible the cause of Protestant Reformed Education or desist from giving an affirmative answer to the question that is asked its delegates at the Classis. We repeat that also in this respect there is room for the president of the Classis to ask one or two pointed or direct questions in regard to the matter of Christian education. This would avert the danger of Article 41 becoming a matter of formal routine and in some instances might even reveal situations that are in need of investigation, admonition and correction before irreparable damage is done.

The Judgment and Help of the Classis

The final question that is put to the delegates of the Classis is: "Do you need the judgment and help of the classis for the proper government of your Church? — of er iets is, waarin zij het oordeel en de hulp der Classis tot rechte instelling hunner Kerk behoeven."

We may note first of all that the term *proper government* is not an exact translation of *rechte instelling*. The *Church Order Commentary* explains the difference in the following quotation: "Our term is too limited. For *instelling* refers not merely to the government of the Church but also to its organization. It seems to refer to the governmental *set-up* of the churches as well as to the proper functioning of this organization. Consistories or delegates are not expected to raise all kinds of questions dealing with interesting and perhaps important matters, but they are to limit themselves to questions which are at that time actually problems to them. The purpose of classical gatherings is to help each other in the proper government of the churches. Classis is, therefore, interested in specific cases, not abstract possibilities."

Be that as it may, we are at present more concerned with the terms "judgment" and "help" in the above question. Experience has shown that there is a difference of opinion and interpretation of this question and, it seems to me, these differences center upon the meaning of the two words mentioned above. There can be no question but that these are proper translations of the words "oordeel" and "hulp." Yet, the question has many times arisen as to just what is proper for a consistory to bring to the classis for "*judgment and help*."

It is understood, of course, that such matters must be ecclesiastical in nature (Art. 30, D.K.O.). If a consistory becomes involved in unsolvable problems due to the fact that it has meddled in unecclesiastical matters, the Classis is not going to give judgment and help but rather an admonition. This is proper and concerning this there is no dispute.

There are, however, two definite views as to when and under what circumstances the Classis gives judgment and

help to a consistory that brings before it a problem of an ecclesiastical nature. According to one view, the consistory involved must definitely decide the matter and have its decision formally recorded in its minutes before the Classis will act upon the request to give judgment and help. Consistories must not be encouraged simply to drop all their problems into the lap of the Classis and expect the Classis to solve them. Classes must not be made "question boxes." The Classis takes the position that the consistory is a self-governing body and must, therefore, make its own decisions and only then when there is doubt and uncertainty with the decision made will the Classis render assistance and give its judgment.

Although there is much merit in these arguments, there are two objections to the above position. First of all, in effect this means that no consistory will bring a problem to the Classis under the question of Article 41 except in the concrete case of a protest. If the consistory decides the matter, there is no further need to go to the Classis for judgment and help. Only if one of the members of the consistory or, if it is a matter that concerns the congregation, a member of the congregation dissents with the opinion of the consistory and considers it weighty enough to merit a protest will the matter come to Classis but even then, not under Article 41 but as an item on the Agendum. In the second place, this position makes it impossible for a consistory that really needs help to obtain it. Let me illustrate this by means of a hypothetical case. There is a consistory with four elders and four deacons. At the time this congregation is without a minister and, hence, there are only eight votes in the consistory. A certain serious problem arises concerning which the consistory is equally divided with two elders and two deacons taking opposite positions. It is impossible for the consistory to arrive at a decision and, therefore, it is decided to seek the judgment and help of the Classis in the matter. This is done but the Classis will not come to the aid of this consistory because it has not first taken a stand.

For these reasons we consider this position to be untenable but then, D.V., we will say more about this and another view of the matter next time.

G.V.d.B.

Ye people who worship Jehovah,

His praises with gladness proclaim;
His servants, and all ye that fear Him,
Sing praise to His glorious Name.

O Church of our God, sing His praises,
For with you and in you He dwells;
O sing Hallelujahs before Him,
Whose glory all praises excels.

ALL AROUND US

The Population Problem.

We have before us two articles appearing in different papers dealing with the population problem. *Christian Economics* presents a brief article written by Hugh Moore appearing in the November 17th issue and entitled: "The Population Bomb" in which the writer expresses great alarm at the fact that the world population is increasing at such enormous rates that he sees it as a threatening bomb with greater disaster potential than the atom bomb.

U.S. News & World Report, December 7th issue, also considers the problem through the eyes of Catholic Bishops who disclosed their reactions in a released publication on November 26, 1959, at the close of their annual meeting in Washington, D.C. Their report obviously does not reflect the scare others seem to have over the problem of population increase. And in no uncertain terms they decry the birth-control measures advocated by many today which is considered to be the only technique destined to keep the population bomb from exploding.

It is undisputed fact that the population is increasing with enormous pace. Hugh Moore informs us:

"Never has mankind experienced a population growth like that of the past 200 years, and especially not like that of the last ten years.

"Two hundred years ago world population numbered about 700 million.

"In the following century it increased by 400 million and in the last century—it increased 1500 million. What is particularly frightening about these figures is that the rate of increase has been growing—and is still growing. When we break down this figure of 1500 million increase in the past century into growth of the first and second 50 years, we find that the increase in the second 50 years was twice as much as that in the first 50 years. But the worst is still to come. Taking the last century by decades the first half averaged an increase of 100 million per decade and the second half over 200 million per decade. The present decade will well exceed a 400 million increase.

"The United Nations estimates that world population is now growing approximately 47 million a year or more than the population of France."

The reason for this rapid increase, according to Moore, is the "progress in medicine and sanitation" which "pushed death rates down in Europe and North America. Later, and especially after the last war, these medical discoveries and sanitary improvements were made available to the people in the less developed countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America. It is in these areas where we find the most rapid increase of population today.

"For example, Mexico has an annual birth rate of 46 per thousand population and a death rate of 13. Its annual

growth is 3.3 per cent. At this rate there will be 60 million Mexicans in 20 years compared with 30 million now.

"Many other countries have similar growth rates."

Mr. Moore's solution to the problem is birth control. Writes he, "The inescapable conclusion is that improvement of living standards in most underdeveloped areas is impossible without a slow-down in population growth. Birth rates must somehow be brought into balance with death rates."

"If we care to look, we find a spreading desire among destitute people to limit the number of their offspring. Lacking the knowledge and means of birth control they are unable to do it. We can give them the necessary knowledge and material. This is not interference in the domestic affairs of other people. We have been giving our know-how on reducing death rates. Nobody calls that interference. Likewise, giving know-how on reducing birth rates is not interference, when desired by the recipient."

It is against this advice that the Roman Catholic Bishops in the above mentioned article in *U.S. News & World Report* set themselves. Speaking for their church, here is what they say:

"For the past several years a campaign of propaganda has been gaining momentum to influence international, national and personal opinion in favor of birth-prevention programs. The vehicle for this propaganda is the recently coined terror-technique phrase, 'population explosion.' The phrase, indeed, alerts all to the attention that must be given to population pressures, but it also provides a smoke screen behind which a moral evil may be foisted on the public and for obscuring the many factors that must be considered in this vital question.

"More alarming is the present attempt of some representatives of Christian bodies who endeavor to elaborate the plan into a theological doctrine which envisages artificial birth prevention within the married state as the 'will of God.' Strangely, too, simply because of these efforts and with callous disregard of the thinking of hundreds of millions of Christians and others who reject the position, some international and national figures have made the statement that artificial birth prevention within the married state is gradually becoming acceptable even in the Catholic Church. This is simply not true.

"The perennial teaching of the Catholic Church has distinguished artificial birth prevention, which is a frustration of the marital act, from other forms of control of birth which are morally permissible. Method alone, however, is not the only question involved. Equally important is the sincere and objective examination of the motives and intentions of the couples involved, in view of the nature of the marriage contract itself. As long as due recognition is not given to these fundamental questions, there can be no genuine understanding of the problem . . .

"United States Catholics believe that the promotion of artificial birth prevention is a morally, humanly, psychologically and politically disastrous approach to the population

problem . . . They will not, however, support any public assistance, either at home or abroad, to promote artificial birth prevention, abortion, or sterilization whether through direct aid or by means of international organizations.

"The fundamental reason for this position is the well-considered objection to promoting a moral evil—an objection not founded solely on any typically or exclusively Catholic doctrine, but on the natural law and on basic ethical considerations . . ."

The R. C. Bishops believe they have a solution to the "population explosion" scare. Among the several arguments they present is the one concerning "Food and Agriculture." The argument is as follows:

"United States Catholics do not wish to ignore or minimize the problem of population pressure, but they do deplore the studious omission of adequate reference to the role of modern agriculture in food production. The 'population explosion' alarmists do not place in proper focus the idea of increasing the acreage or the acreage yield to meet the food demands of an increasing population. By hysterical terrorism and bland misrepresentation of data they dismiss these ideas as requiring too much time for the development of extensive education and new distribution methods and for the elimination of apathy, greed and superstition.

"Such arguments merely beg the question, for the implementation of their own program demands the fulfillment of the same conditions. It seems never to dawn on them that, in a chronic condition where we have more people than food, the logical answer would be not to decrease the number of people but to increase the food supply, which is almost unlimited in potential.

"We make these observations to direct attention to the very real problem of population pressures. Such remarks are not intended to exhaust this complex subject, nor to discourage demographers, economists, agricultural experts and political scientists in their endeavors to solve the problem.

"Rather our intention is to reaffirm the position of the Catholic Church that the only true solutions are those that are morally acceptable under the natural law of God. Never should we allow the unilateral 'guesstimates' of special pleaders to stampede or terrorize the United States into a national or international policy inimical to human dignity. For the adoption of the morally objectionable means advocated to forestall the so-called 'population explosion' may backfire on the human race."

In this debate we are attracted to the argumentation presented by the R. C. Bishops, and that for several reasons:

In the first place, we go along with them in their stand on birth control. However, we believe the argument can be made even stronger against proposed birth control. Not only the natural law is violated when these scientific measures are employed, but the Moral Law of God is also transgressed. Are not they guilty of infanticide who use them? The wilful destruction of the seed of generation or conception makes

one a transgressor of the sixth commandment as the out and out murderer.

In the second place, it seems to me that the R. C. Bishops are right when they point to the fact that where the number of the people is increased, the supply of food must be commensurate. It seems silly to me to talk about possible food shortages while our government is striving all the time to hold down over-production. A certain Mr. Yankus felt he had to move to Australia because he didn't want to live under a government which told him he couldn't raise as much grain as he wanted to. A short while ago I called attention to the corruption of feather-bedding in the railroad unions. But the same principle is employed by the federal government when it pays the farmer for crops he never planted or harvested. In our country they talk about possible food shortages while they are burning up the pigs and throwing all the surplus potatoes in a hole in the ground.

And finally, isn't it also true that the Lord God takes care of the surplus population, either by feeding them all or taking their lives away from them through war, famine and disease, or as Revelation has it, through the breaking of the seals, blowing of the trumpets, and the pouring out of the vials? This is God's way of taking care of the regulation of the population. Never has He charged man to take the problem in hand.

Eligible for a Call.

The Banner of Nov. 27, 1959, contained the following notice:

"Classis Minnesota South with the advice of the synodical examiners of Classis Minnesota North, Orange City, and Sioux Center declares Rev. Peter De Boer of Edgerton, Minn., eligible for call to the Chr. Ref. Churches according to Art. 9 of the Church Order. Rev. De Boer comes to us from the Protestant Reformed Church (De Wolf group) of Edgerton. Rev. De Boer is able to preach in the Holland language." The notice was signed by the Stated Clerk.

Article 9 of the Church Order reads: "Preachers without fixed charge, or others who have left some sect, shall not be admitted to the ministry of the church until they have been declared eligible, after careful examination, by the classis with the approval of synod."

We have not the space to quote what Van Dellen and Monsma have to say on this article of the Church Order, but it is interesting in view of the above case. Assuming that the classis followed the procedure prescribed by the Commentary, it would mean that De Boer came with proper credentials, applied for admittance to the church, asked to be declared eligible for a call, was examined by the classis and the synodical examiners, and was declared eligible for a call on the grounds that he had met all the requirements and passed the examination. It means also that De Boer has repudiated the doctrinal stand he professed to hold in the Prot. Ref. Churches, confessed that the doctrine of common grace is both Scriptural and Confessional, and that he has

been living all these years in the sin of condemning falsely the Church in which he now seeks membership.

One wonders how it is possible one moment to appear in court and swear up and down that he is Protestant Reformed, and the next, turn right around and profess that he sinned for more than 25 years by not being Christian Reformed. My conclusion is that such an one never had any deep convictions and does not have any now. M.S.

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

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

Dec. 5, 1959

The congregation of Hull called Rev. G. Vanden Berg from a duo which included Rev. C. Hanko. Our Missionary, Rev. G. Lubbers received the call from Edgerton. Randolph called Rev. R. Veldman from a trio which included Revs. H. Hanko and M. Schipper. Grand Haven's trio consists of the Revs. G. Lubbers, R. Veldman and B. Woudenberg.

Some "old" news omitted from this page last time: Hull's young people sponsored a Reformation Day program, inviting the Doon young folk to share with them the interesting program planned. *Beacon Lights* was the recipient of the offering taken; and, from Redland's bulletin: "The consistory wishes to thank the donor of the twenty-five new Psalters. These Psalters are greatly appreciated." Redlands is still without a janitor, the work being assigned in rotation to the men of the congregation; and, Because Rev. R. Veldman was in South Holland on classical appointment, and because Prof. H. C. Hoeksema, due to illness, was unable to preach for them Sunday morning, Nov. 15, Southeast Church held an unprecedented afternoon service conducted by Rev. C. Hanko. By evening Prof. Hoeksema was again able to occupy their pulpit.

Doon lost the Wm. Lems family to Hudsonville recently, leaving them without a "doorkeeper in the house of the Lord," the Lems family having supplied the janitor service for the past several years.

The Doon Ladies' Society invited the Men's Society and all other non-member ladies and men of the congregation to meet with them Nov. 17. The after recess discussion was on the Self Examination before the Lord's Supper.

Holland is eagerly awaiting the coming of Rev. Lanting to take up his pastoral duties among them. The delay is due primarily to the lack of success in acquiring a suitable parsonage for the Lanting family.

Did you know . . . that, the first public program whose proceeds were designated for our own Christian High School is now history? The offering amounted to \$114.51. When one thinks of the thousands of dollars needed to realize our goal one sees the \$114.51 as "a mustard seed, which when a man took and cast it into his garden, and it grew and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches

thereof." Without a doubt, the dedicatory speech at the corner stone laying will mention this first "mustard seed" offering. May our fledgelings be so lodged in the branches of that tree that they may be prepared to fly on their own with the correct world and life view.

Did you know . . . that Hudsonville's church renovation has been completed, and that many volunteers made light work of cleaning up after the workmen; that, the evening of Dec. 4 the congregation was invited to a service dedicating the new organ to the service of God; that, Mr. Alvin Ritsema, from Calvin College, was at the console of the Conn electric organ, and Arnold Dykstra gave a beautiful rendition of "Guide Me, O Great Jehovah," and "How Lovely Are Thy Dwellings"?

You'll be glad to know: that Rev. G. M. Ophoff has taken up one of the many labors laid down when struck with his illness. He is again leading the Bible discussion in the Eunice Society of First Church. Although his partial blindness prohibits any reading, his wife is the old Professor's eyes, reading the Scripture portion to him until he memorizes it; then the "Dominee" ponders over the passage, his years of Bible study experience bringing clearly before his mind the truths contained therein.

A decision was taken at Hope's Annual Congregational meeting to take monthly collections to set up a fund for the printing and mailing of pamphlets which will contain the development of the truth as we confess it, and which will be mailed to all parts of the country. Further details of that project will be made public as it progresses.

Dec. 20 the Rev. J. A. Heys will preach his farewell sermon at Hull, and he and his family will move into the parsonage in South Holland during the following week. Prof. H. C. Hoeksema will preach the installation sermon in the morning service of the 27th, and Rev. Heys will preach his inaugural sermon in the evening service, D.V.

Seminarian J. Kortering is scheduled to preach for the congregation of Hull in the seven services from Dec. 27 through Jan. 3, serving the vacant church during the busy holiday season. The Consistory has applied for Classical appointments from the Classical Committee to serve them until Classis meets in March.

Following the directives of Synod, the Mission Committee is scheduling services in South Dakota by asking different ministers to preach there for a period of three weeks. Rev. B. Woudenberg, of Creston, will be there for three weeks in December, and Rev. A. Mulder, of Kalamazoo, will take his turn for three weeks in January, D.V. Rev. Lubbers plans to occupy the pulpits of the absent ministers.

The choice proverb for this issue: "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me; lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, 'Who is the Lord?' or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain." Prov. 30:9, 10.

See you in church

J.M.F.