

THE STANDARD

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MEDITATION

THE PRAISE OF GOD'S LOVINGKINDNESS

"How excellent is Thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy house; and Thou shalt make them drink of the rivers of Thy pleasures. For with Thee is the fountain of life: in Thy light shall we see light."

PSALM 36:7-9

The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart that there is no fear of God before his eyes!

That's the beginning of this Psalm.

And the poet will enlarge upon that premise.

Those wicked men prove their own wickedness, for he flattereth himself so long in his own eyes that his iniquity becomes hateful. His words are iniquity and deceit; there is neither wisdom nor goodness; he deviseth mischief upon his bed and carries it to its baleful fruition: he abhorreth not evil.

And all this is done in the midst of the awful Self-revelation of Jehovah.

The heavens and the clouds speak of His faithfulness and mercy; the mountains tell us of His righteousness; the great deep thunders of His judgment; and the Lord preserveth both man and beast.

And all this is lovingkindness for the church. The mountains skip and the hills make their noise heard, for His mercy endureth forever.

How great, how excellent is this lovingkindness of God! Let's talk of it awhile.

* * * *

What is this lovingkindness?

It is one of God's attributes, one of His wondrous virtues. It is that virtue of God wherein His entire Being or Es-

sence constrains Him to be good and to do good unto His people, in and through Jesus Christ the Lord, and from everlasting to everlasting.

If and when God's lovingkindness is over you it is well. Then, nothing is against you; everything cooperates unto your everlasting welfare.

A striking example of such lovingkindness you find in Deut. 33:26-29.

Then the Lord rideth upon the heavens to your help and His excellency in the skies. Then the Eternal God is your Refuge, and beneath are the everlasting arms. Then the Lord precedes you in your battles and sayeth: Destroy! Then the heavens drop dew at every step you take, and He becomes and is the Shield of your help and the Sword of your excellency.

How excellent, literally: how precious, is such lovingkindness! Nothing can be compared to it. It is more precious than gold, yea, than much fine gold, and sweeter than honey and the honeycomb.

And the result is that men put their trust in Him and seek refuge under the shadow of His wings. It is the image of the protecting wings of God against the hateful birds that seek to destroy you: the hen gathereth her frightened chicks under her protecting wings.

God's lovingkindness is great over those poor chicks in the face of the devil, and all wickedness.

* * * *

Lovingkindness?

But it is so long ago that this song was written.

Two thousand years ago this song was already old. And so much has happened since it was first set to music. Oh, lovingkindness was a lovely concept to David, the servant of the Lord. But what shall we say today? In these days when we look forward to the warm days of Christmas?

Lovingkindness of our God is the Lord Jesus Christ!

And the Lord Jesus Christ today means that there are untold millions of hands reaching downward to you in your

misery. You may be lying on your deathbed, and those hands are reaching for you in order to soon lift you up to heaven's rest. Lovingkindness of Jehovah means a million melodies and a million songs that are sung about the great salvation in the blood of Jesus. How precious is that lovingkindness for you in the midst of this wicked and dreadful age. This age speaks of wars and rumours of wars as never before. The whole world is now really an armed camp.

Where shall we go?

There is no place on earth where you are safe anymore. If and when it breaks the very heavens shall be filled with fire and destruction. And you will breathe the killing atmosphere of fall-out and quick or slow death.

Do not worry. God's hands and song and music is there for you. He is filled with His precious lovingkindness. When these things begin to happen turn your faces toward the heavens, and know that your deliverance is nigh.

Seek the shadow of His wings, and take your trust there. You are safe, now and for evermore. He suffered no man to do them wrong.

When devils rage and the wicked with foot and hand devise to hurt you, when the power of evil within you threatens to devour and lay low, His lovingkindness will reach and find you. It will save you every day. It is new every morning. Jesus is always nigh unto the sheep.

Oh, how precious is the Lord's lovingkindness!

* * * *

The text is eternal truth.

Listen: "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy house!"

The House of God: what is it?

Its type was the temple on mount Zion.

Its fulfilment is Jesus our Lord.

It is the Holy Place where God blesses His people every day. Its Altar of Incense is the fellowship of prayer. Its table of Shewbread is the feeding on the Bread of Life. Its Golden Candlestick is the testimony that Jesus and His people are the very Light of the World. And once each year the High Priest went into the inner sanctuary to make reconciliation and blessing. It symbolized the blessed communion of the eternal Covenant of grace.

We have a little shadow of all these things in the places where we worship, adore God on Sunday. But also in the prayer cell, every day and every hour, the blessed God calls us effectually to prayer and worship. The time shall come, said Jesus, that God's people shall worship neither at Samaria nor at the Temple in Jerusalem, but they shall worship God in Spirit and in Truth. And that is fulfilled.

Note: the *fatness of Thy House!*

That fatness is the knowledge of our God, and the love of God from all eternity. It is the knowledge that we are justified by faith in His Son. It is the assurance that all of the children of God are being sanctified and glorified. It is the absolute assurance that we shall finally arrive in the land that is fairer than day.

God shall make them drink of the river of His own pleasures.

It shows that this enjoyment of His lovingkindness is His Own Covenant life.

Thy pleasures are the pleasures of God destined to be for you and me. God is the ever-blessed God. Psalm 42 tells us of the song of God. God is eternally happy and blessed: God is full of pleasures.

And of that flood you may drink. Its essence is the praise of God. God praises Himself, and you may sing along with God.

You will become *drunk* with spiritual happiness!

* * * *

Its origin?

Listen to God: "For with Thee is the Fountain of Life!"

Listen also to a later prophet: "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness." Zech. 13:1.

Oh yes, God is the Fountain of all this lovingkindness.

God is the Fountain of His Own life.

He is the Fountain of the life of the creature.

He is also the Fountain of the Life of Christ.

And, finally, He is the Fountain of the life of the church.

And the Water of Life bubbles forth and shall bubble forth unto all eternity.

Drink of that Fountain. Drink of that God in and through Christ Jesus the Lord.

He stood one day upon the earth, and looking at His sheep, He said: Let him that is athirst come unto Me and drink.

What opened that Fountain?

The very death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The wonder of wonders. Life came from death, which is the greatest miracle. Power through Him who is the worm. Riches through His poverty. Heaven came and comes from His hell. Understand it if you can.

Are you filled with sin and uncleanness? Is your sin so great that doubts assail you? Do you feel inclined to say with Peter: Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man?

Are your sins more than you can count, and do you feel like the poor publican who stole into the temple and dared not so much as to raise his eyes to heaven?

The Fountain cleanses you, my dear brother. It purges all your sins away, my dear sister.

It is purposely opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that it may cleanse them.

Out of it come the floods of God's pleasures. Out of it comes the precious lovingkindness of your God.

Come, see, drink and taste that the Lord is full of mercy, grace and lovingkindness.

"In Thy Light we shall see Light!"

That is the death for all filthy heresy which prattles of the will of man unto salvation.

God places us within the Light that streams from His face. And Light of God is all virtue, all beauty and splendour of the Godhead.

And standing in the shaft of His light, we see the light. We see His great salvation. We hear Him say: I love you. I loved you yesterday. I loved you before the world was born. I loved you from all eternity!

G.V.

"... there has very generally prevailed a most pernicious error that the Scriptures have only so much weight as is conceded to them by the suffrages of the Church; as though the inviolable truth of God depended on the arbitrary will of men. For thus, with great contempt of the Holy Spirit, they inquire, Who can assure us that God is the author of them? Who can with certainty affirm, that they have been preserved safe and uncorrupted to the present age? Who can persuade us that this book ought to be received with reverence, and that expunged from the sacred number, unless all these things were regulated by the decisions of the Church? It depends, therefore, (say they) on the determination of the Church to decide both what reverence is due to the Scriptures, and what books are to be comprised in its Canon."

Calvin's *Institutes*, Book I, Chapter VII

IN MEMORIAM

The Radio Committee of the First Protestant Reformed Church hereby wishes to express its sincere sympathy to one of its members, Mr. Howard Van Eenenaam, in the loss of his father,

TOM VAN EENENAAM

May our God comfort the bereaved in their sorrow.

II Cor. 3 and 4: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . who comforteth us in all our affliction.

Geo. Yonker Sr., President
Thelma Pastoor, Secretary

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EDITORIALS

As To Being Protestant Reformed

In my last article under the above heading I asked the question, What is the distinct doctrinal basis of the Protestant Reformed Churches? Do they merely deny the "Three Points" of "common grace" adopted by the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church in 1924 or do they stand on a distinctive doctrinal basis even apart from the theory of "common grace"? Have they, standing on the basis of the Three Forms of Unity, made a further development of certain truths maintained in these Confessions?

The answer to these questions is that, although the adoption of the theory of "common grace" and of the "Three Points" certainly was the immediate cause of the separate existence of the Protestant Reformed Churches, the mere denial of "common grace" is not the distinctive doctrinal basis of these churches. On the contrary, they have further developed and placed a new emphasis on certain very important Reformed truths and these belong to the basis on which they stand.

One of these truths is the important doctrine of the covenant.

We believe that, according to Scripture, there is but one covenant: the covenant of friendship of God with His people in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We believe, too, that this covenant is not a means to an end but is the end, the goal, the purpose of the whole work of salvation.

We believe also that there are no parties in God's covenant but that, although there are, as the Baptism Form has it, "parts" in the covenant of grace, God is His own party.

Let me elaborate a little on these ideas.

Reformed theologians have developed the so-called "covenant of works," although this theory of the covenant was never received in or expressed by our own Reformed Confessions. This covenant of works is usually defined as an agreement between God and Adam consisting in a condition, a promise, and a penalty. The condition is perfect obedience to God as tested in the negative probationary command not to eat of the forbidden tree; the promise was eternal life; and the penalty was death.

To this view we have several objections.

1. This "covenant of works" is supposed to be a mutual agreement between God and Adam according to which Adam agrees to obey and God agrees to give him eternal life. But in Scripture there is not one word about such an agreement. The whole so-called agreement is one-sided. God does it all. He it is that created man in His own image and by doing so already made him a covenant creature destined to live in covenant fellowship of friendship with God. He it is that

places man in the garden of Eden, with the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. He it is that issues to Adam the probationary command not to eat of the forbidden tree. And He it is that threatens death to Adam in case he should eat of that tree. There is not even a suggestion of a covenant in the sense of an agreement or in any sense in the text of Gen. 2 and 3.

2. According to this so-called covenant of works man could merit something (eternal life) with God. But this is a corrupt notion. Man is a creature and God is the Creator. The creature can never merit anything with the Creator. He owes everything to God, his body and his soul and all his faculties, his very place in creation, his food and drink, his very life and existence. He can give nothing to God whatsoever. It is true that it was his calling to serve God and to love Him with all his heart and mind and soul and strength, but this was not a work by which man would become meritorious before God, but a privilege bestowed by God upon him. Even the very name "covenant of works" is a misnomer.

3. According to the "covenant of works," that which Adam could merit by his work of obedience was immortality or eternal life. But also this is not Scriptural and, therefore, not true. That God promised Adam eternal life if he did not eat of the forbidden tree is a pure invention of the imagination. It is evidently deduced from the fact that God threatened death as the penalty of eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. It is argued that, since death was the penalty upon disobedience, Adam would have entered into the state of eternal life if he had obeyed God's command. But this does not follow at all. It is true that, in that case, Adam would not have died for death is the punishment for sin. But neither did he have the promise of eternal life. Had he obeyed, he would have been confirmed in the state of life in which God had created him. No doubt, eternal life is and can be attained only by the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a life that is not of the earth, earthly, as was the life of Adam, but is heavenly. It is a life that requires as its basis the union of God and man as it was realized in the incarnation of the Son of God. No promise of eternal life, therefore, could possibly have been given to Adam and the keeping of the probationary command was not a condition unto that higher, heavenly life in the so-called covenant of works.

Hence, for all these reasons, we do not believe in the covenant of works.

But, perhaps, you make the remark that, when I write that "we do not believe in the covenant of works," I merely express my own opinion, that this has never been adopted officially by the Protestant Reformed Churches, and that, therefore, every one can have and express his own opinion on the matter.

This, however, is hardly true.

Do not forget that our Churches adopted the Declaration

of Principles. This document the schismatics refused to adopt and, in fact, it became the occasion or rather the real cause for their departure from the Protestant Reformed Churches. For in this Declaration of Principles the distinctive Protestant Reformed truth is briefly set forth, not only over against the doctrine of the "Three Points," but also in distinction from other aberrations from the Reformed truth. This distinctive Protestant Reformed truth the schismatics did not want and do not want. No wonder that they can so easily unite with the Christian Reformed Church! They never were Protestant Reformed in their heart.

Now, it is true that also in this Declaration of Principles the covenant of works is not even mentioned. But there are two items that, nevertheless, support my contention that we, i.e. the Protestant Reformed Churches, do not believe in the covenant of works. The first is found in the introduction to this Declaration which reads as follows:

"The Protestant Reformed Churches stand on the basis of Scripture as the infallible Word of God and the Three Forms of Unity. Moreover, they accept the Liturgical Forms used in the public worship of our churches, such as the Baptism Forms, *et alii*, as confessions of a minor order."

Now, the so-called covenant of works is not mentioned at all in our Confessions and, therefore, is not confessionally Reformed. I realize that this is negative, but if anyone would subscribe to and teach the covenant of works he nevertheless, would have to remain within the boundary of the Confessions and that would be rather difficult, yea, I dare say impossible.

But, positively, I want to point out that, although the Declaration does not speak of the covenant of works, it strongly condemns all conditions and conditionality. It does this throughout. I will have occasion to quote from the Declaration in another connection and, therefore will not do so at present. But the covenant of works speaks, as we have seen, of an important condition which man had to fulfill in order to obtain eternal life. And this is not Reformed but Pelagian.

Hence, I still maintain that the Protestant Reformed Churches officially do not believe in the covenant of works.

More about the Protestant Reformed view of the covenant next time, the Lord willing. H.H.

The Question of Re-union

By the above title I am not referring to our re-union with the Christian Reformed Church, but to that of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands with the Liberated or Reformed Churches, Art. 31.

We wrote about this the last time. And I mentioned especially two items in that report as far as I then had it in my possession. The first item concerned the "terzijde stellen," the setting aside of the doctrinal decision of 1946 which, according to the decision of the last Synod, means that it still maintains the truth of the decision of 1946 but

that it no longer considers it binding upon the churches. But the second item concerns the question of discipline which the Synod of 1946 exercised over some officebearers.

At that time I did not have the complete report and did not know whether the Synod had decided anything at all about the matter of discipline. But in the issue of *De Bazuin* of Oct. 23 occurs the complete report, and in that report there also appears a paragraph about the matter of the above mentioned discipline.

I will quote the paragraph and translate it:

"The synod considers that the matter here brought up (that is the matter of the doctrinal decisions in connection with disciplinary actions, H.H.) concerns an extremely tender point. Tender for the liberated brethren, because these consider themselves attacked in what they deem their right and honor as officebearers in the church of Christ. Tender for the Reformed Churches, because in this matter they are being reminded of a painful attack upon (as they feel it) ecclesiastical faithfulness with which the liberated brethren were once connected with them, and to the keeping whereof they, especially the ministers among them, had obliged themselves in the formula of subscription. Since these convictions are so radically opposed to each other, the Synod does not consider it possible in this respect to make, concerning the past, from one side such general declarations that the truthfulness is not denied and that, at the same time, the mutual approach may be benefited."

This is all.

In other words, the Synod, evidently, still feels that in 1946 they were right in exercising discipline over ministers and other officebearers because they had broken their oath of office as expressed in the formula of subscription. But, on the other hand, they feel that they can do nothing to change the decisions of 1946 in respect to discipline over officebearers. This, to my mind, means that they still maintain those decisions.

Although we can in the main agree with the doctrinal decisions of the Synod of 1946, we cannot condone the fact that they deposed local officebearers.

But, even apart from the principle of the thing, will it not make re-union practically impossible if the Synod of the Reformed Churches does not first retract the decision of 1946 concerning the deposition of local officebearers? Many of the deposed officebearers are, no doubt, still living. If the churches re-unite what are they going to do with them? They cannot agree to re-install them in the ministry. What then? Leave them in the ministry? That is, from the viewpoint of the Reformed Synod also impossible, for that would be tantamount to a confession that the Synod of 1946 did wrong by deposing them.

This is, indeed, quite a problem.

It shows very plainly that it may be easy for a church to split, but it is very difficult to re-unite unless the right way is pursued even to the very end. H.H.

OUR DOCTRINE

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

PART TWO

CHAPTER TEN

The Conflict Between The Woman And The Dragon

Revelation 12:13-17

The devil is not a mad fool. He certainly is a fool, and he also is mad. But he is not a mad fool in this sense, that he does things that have nothing to do with the plan of God Almighty. And you may depend on it, if the woman after she has brought forth the man child was of no account any more, the devil would not trouble himself about her. He has but one purpose, and he lives from but one principle. It is the purpose and the principle of opposition against God Almighty. This principle he never denies. And whatever has nothing to do with that principle he leaves severely alone. That is already plain in the individual lives of the people of God on earth and in the church. If you are of no account to the coming of God's kingdom and are in no way related to the glory of God, the devil does not trouble his head about you. It is only when he begins to surmise that you also are one of the followers of Christ and that you confess him that he begins his action against you. Thus it is also with the woman. The very fact that the dragon in raving madness indeed turns against the woman, to persecute her, already causes us to surmise that she is still of great importance to the kingdom of God and the fulfillment of His plans.

Nor need we search very long to find the answer to this question. What is the motive of the devil in persecuting the woman even after she has brought forth the man child? This woman, as we have had occasion to notice before, is the church, the visible church as she exists on earth. In the former passage we noticed how she appeared as the mother of the Savior, of the King in the kingdom. The church brings forth the Christ. Christ is the great seed of the woman. He is the Son of Mary, out of the house of David, of the tribe of Judah, born from Israel, out of the loins of Abraham, in the line of Shem and Seth, and finally born from Eve as the spiritual mother of the holy seed. But this is not all. The church as she exists in the present dispensation is not only the mother of Christ, the great seed. But she is also the mother of us all. She is the mother of the true, spiritual children of God. As such it may be said that the church visible, as a visible institution on earth, brings forth the church invisible, the true believers, from age to age. The church is the mother of the true children of the kingdom. These are born from her, are baptized by her, are nourished through her, receive their strength and life and all the

blessings of God's covenant in her bosom. And it is as such that evidently the church appears in the words that we are now discussing. For as we have maintained already, the passage makes mention of the rest of her seed, of her spiritual children. She is the mother of all the true children of God, of all the subjects in the kingdom that is to be established in the future. That is her great importance.

Now the devil knows this. He knew from the beginning that the great seed which this woman is to bring forth is the all-important factor in the entire war which he wages. If he can prevent His coming or devour Him as soon as He is born, he does not have to trouble himself about the rest of her seed. And therefore all his efforts are directed toward that end in the old dispensation. And because he is so certain that he will succeed in that battle against the woman and surely prevent the birth of the great seed, he also thinks it strange and without justice that all the saints that are born and die before the coming of Christ go into glory. But he has failed. And now he knows too that the church still exists. He knows that even as that same woman has not only brought forth the great seed, but was also the mother of Abel and Enoch and Noah and the patriarchs and Moses and all the prophets and all the faithful believers of the old dispensation, so she will continue to bring forth seed in the new dispensation. Also in the New Testament day she will have children. She will bring forth children of the kingdom that will fight the battle of the kingdom here below and that will enter into the glorious kingdom hereafter. And since he cannot fight directly against the King of the kingdom any more, Who is caught up to the throne of God, and since he cannot go to heaven any more to dispute about the right of the glorified saints, he will persecute the woman and try to destroy her at all events before she has brought forth many more children that will serve as subjects of the kingdom that is to be established. And therefore he goes and persecutes her.

Now the text tells us that when the dragon comes to persecute the woman, two wings of an eagle are given to her, in order that she might fly into the wilderness. The question as to the meaning of the eagle's wings, as if they could be interpreted to mean work and prayer, or anything else, is certainly irrelevant. The figure has perhaps been obtained from Exodus 19:4, where we read that Jehovah says: "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself." And the idea is evidently that God Himself provides the church with means to escape the fury of the devil. Different, however, it is with the idea of the wilderness. Also this has been obtained from the episode of the people of Israel's history in the desert. Even as there God delivered His people from the fury of the world-power in Egypt by bringing them into the wilderness, so also now He brings His people into the wilderness to escape the rage of the devil. But the difference is that in Israel's case it was a real wilderness into which they were led, while evidently in this case the figure

is employed to represent something different. And the question is: what is the meaning of this wilderness into which God enables the church to fly in the new dispensation in order that she might escape the wrath and persecution of the devil. It has been said that the wilderness is here used to the want and deprivation of the people of God, so that they must suffer in the world. They are the despised of the world; and there are not many noble and mighty among them. They must suffer all kinds of persecutions and deprivations in the world. And therefore that world is a real wilderness to them. And, of course, this is true in itself. But it is not the meaning of the text. For, in the first place, the church is driven into this wilderness after the birth of Christ and after His exaltation. But it cannot be said that the being subjected to want and deprivation of all kinds is peculiar of the people of God in the new dispensation only. Also the long list of witnesses mentioned in Hebrews 11 could tell you of them. And therefore, this cannot be meant. In the second place, it is difficult to see how this could possibly be a means of hiding them from the face of the devil, so that he could not attack them. Yet this is evidently the purpose of it all. The woman received these wings to fly into the wilderness in order that she might be able to escape the wrath of the devil, and so be safe. And in the third place, the wilderness is a place prepared for her by God, where she does not suffer want and deprivation, but is nourished by God for a time, and times, and half a time, or twelve hundred sixty days. And therefore, that cannot be the meaning of the term *wilderness* in our present passage.

We would rather adhere to the symbolism, and derive the meaning from the representation itself. In the literal and natural sense of the word the wilderness, or desert, is a place in the world, but not of the world. It may lie right in the midst of the world, yet it is absolutely separated from the life of the world. There is no plant life, no vegetation to speak of, no animal life, no human life; there are no houses, no cities, no rivers and streams. It is a place in the midst of the world, yet separated from the world. If one is in the wilderness, he is separated from the life of the world. If we adhere to this meaning, the explanation of the symbolism cannot be difficult. It reminds us of the words of the Savior, "In the world, yet not of the world." And it tells us that the visible church in the new dispensation is an institution separate in every respect from the world-power as such. It exists indeed in the world, but it exists as a separate institution. That is not true of her children individually. They live right in the midst of the world, and they live the life of the world, even though they are spiritually separated from that life, and live it from the principle of the kingdom of God. But that is true of the church. The church as such is a separate institution in the world. She has her own King. And as an institution it does not recognize any other ruler. No earthly king has any dominion over her. There is no worldly ruler to be king or president or dictator that can exercise dominion over the church as the mother of her

spiritual children. Only Christ is King. From this it follows that the church has its own laws. There may be laws established and ordained by the worldly ruler regarding the existence of the church in this world, regarding her buildings and property, et cetera; but the church in this world, in regard to her real existence and life, acknowledges no other power, no other sovereignty, than that of Christ. No world-power, no emperor, or king, or president, can formulate her creed. She does so herself, in obedience to Christ her King. No world-power can regulate her worship, can compose her hymns and her forms, can dictate how she must pray and what she must preach. No world-power can tell her how and when and why she must censure her members and exercise discipline over them. The church as an institute is a separate institution. She has her own King, her own laws, her own life. She does not mingle in politics as such. She may instruct her children how to behave in regard to the powers that be; but she herself does not mingle in the politics of the world. She has no armies. She does not fight with the sword. Again, she may instruct her children that even in regard to the battles of the world they must be subject to the authorities, and obedient; but she herself, as an institute and as the mother of her spiritual children, does not take part in the battles of the world. She lives in separation. Even as the children of Israel in the desert lived in separation from the world-power in Egypt, and even as they received their own laws from their own King in that wilderness, so also the church of the New Testament is in the wilderness with regard to the world and its power and its life. The church does not do business. The church does not mingle with the affairs of this world. She owns no property for its own sake. She has no factories. She has no army and navy. She fights her own battles and does her own work. The church as an institution is separate from the life of the world. She has received a God-prepared place in the wilderness.

Only in this sense can we see, in the first place, that this condition commenced actually in the new dispensation and with the exaltation of Christ. In the old dispensation among Israel church and state were intertwined in the theocracy. Israel was the people of God. Israel was the church. They were not identical, but they were inseparably combined. For that reason the people of God also could have an earthly king, could fight the battles of Jehovah with bow and sword, could have an earthly country of their own, could have possessions and do business as a people of God. With the new dispensation this is changed. The church does no more live in a certain land, but is spread all over the world and among all nations. One and the same church, with the same King, with essentially the same faith, with the same life, now exists among all the nations of the earth. And as the most general confession has it, "I believe an holy catholic church." But at the same time, and for that very reason, the church is now in the wilderness. It is separated from the world-power. It does not acknowledge any other authority for her life as

such than the authority of Jesus Christ. But, in the second place, it is also very plain that this is exactly her safety in the present dispensation. The world-power is and remains on the earth, earthy. It has a temporal purpose, and ultimately shall unite, as we shall see, to make war against the Christ and His kingdom. If the church did not live as a separate institution, living her own life, acknowledging her own King, regulating her own affairs, making her own laws, establishing her own forms of belief, and controlling her own worship, she will be gone, and ultimately unite with the power that rises against the Christ and His kingdom. No matter whether this would realize itself in one or in the other, whether the church would have dominion over the powers of the world and over the affairs of the world, as the Romish Church would have it, or whether the power of the world would exercise authority over the church of Christ as an institution in the midst of the world, the same result would necessarily follow, namely, the destruction of the church as the mother of the faithful subjects of the kingdom of Christ. The church is in the wilderness of this world, separated from the power of the world, and must needs be in that wilderness for her own safety.

The measure of time here indicated need not detain us very long. It is plain from the context that time, times and half a time is the same period as the twelve hundred sixty days mentioned in the first portion of this chapter. This leads us to the conclusion that time, times, and half a time indicates three and one-half symbolic years. One symbolic year, and two symbolic years, and half a symbolic year. One symbolic year is calculated to be three hundred sixty days, which, multiplied by three and one-half, gives us the twelve hundred sixty days. And again, this is evidently the same period as the forty-two months of the two witnesses. For, taking a symbolic month to contain thirty days, forty and two months would again give us twelve hundred sixty days, or three and one-half years. All these indications of time refer, therefore, to the time of the new dispensation, from the exaltation of Christ to the very end, as has become plain before. Only, the three and a half times indicate this period, in the first place, from the point of view that the history of the world is divided, as it were, into two halves, because of the coming of Christ. If seven is the symbolic number indicating the completion of all that God does in time, and therefore also indicating the complete period of the history of the present world, both before and after Christ, then it is plain that three and one-half must indicate the period of one dispensation, in this case that of the dispensation after the coming and exaltation of Christ Jesus. And in the second place, this number also indicates that the period of the church being in the wilderness shall be cut short. The days shall be shortened for the elects' sake. But whatever this number, which also occurs in Daniel, may indicate, certain it is from a comparison of the different places in which it occurs, that it points to the entire period of the new dispensation, even to the end. In this entire period the

church has to suffer from the attacks of the dragon. In this entire period God has prepared her a place in the wilderness in separation from the powers of the world, and that too, to her own safety.

That this is actually so is also plain if we study for a moment the manner in which the dragon attacks this woman in the wilderness, and how he fails. Symbolically the text indicates it by saying that the dragon, when he saw that he could not pursue her into the wilderness, cast a stream of water after the woman, in order that she might be carried away with the flood. Evidently this does not mean that the devil makes an attempt directly to destroy the woman while she is in the wilderness. On the contrary, especially the original gives us reason to believe that the purpose is different. He knows that he cannot approach the woman in her isolation in the desert. He cannot touch her. She must remain there. He must leave her alone. And hence, he casts a stream of water after her, that she might be borne up by that flood and be carried out of the wilderness. Especially the word used here in the original gives us that very idea. He does not mean to drown her: that would be impossible. But he means to lift her from her isolation. And therefore he casts a stream after her, in order that she might be carried away by the stream, and thus be borne into the world from the which she fled.

And understood in that sense the meaning is not difficult to grasp. The devil realizes that in the isolation of the church as an institution from the powers of this world lies her strength, and that as long as the church remains in this state of separation he cannot do anything against her. And therefore he makes the attempt to establish an alliance, to unite the church and the world. He tries to carry the church into the world and either offer her the dominion over the powers that be or subject her to the powers of the world. Then he may be sure that her strength is gone. Then he is certain that she will also bring up her spiritual children as subjects of the kingdom of the world, which is his kingdom. Then he is certain that the kingdom of the Christ shall at least be deprived of its subjects of the new dispensation. Clearly you may see this attempt. Now the devil tries to subject the church as an institution to the powers of the world, and establish a state church, as in various countries of Europe has been and still is the case. In that case the worldly rulers are at the same time the rulers of the church, and they establish its creeds and forms of worship and confessions. The church is ruled by the worldly power. Now he tries to gain his point along the way of offering the church dominion over the powers of the world, as in the time of Constantine the Great, and ever since, in the Romish Church. But the devil always failed. That does not mean that he never saw results. He surely did. Church after church was affected by this stream of water he spits after the woman. Now the church is actually subject to the state; now she has absolute sway over the powers of the world. And every time she lost her true character. But it never

succeeded completely. The woman always remained in her isolation. And even today, although the tendency is once more to bring the church into the service and the subjection of the worldly power, and although the church has a hard fight to remain in her God-appointed place in the wilderness, nevertheless in many places the church stands as a separate institution, and also in our own land the separation of church and state is still constitutionally established. And therefore, the devil fails in principle. And our text tells us that he will fail. Surely, also in the future many a church will be carried away, and her subjection and unification with the worldly power will be one of the factors in her apostasy. But nevertheless, the church shall always stand, shall always remain as an institution and as a separate institution, shall always bring forth and nourish her spiritual children, till the last one of God's elect shall have been gathered into the glory of the kingdom.

If we have understood the text correctly thus far, it is not difficult to understand the last verse of this passage, where we read that the dragon, being enraged with the woman and yet realizing his impotency to destroy her as such, goes to make war with the rest of her seed, that keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. At first sight we may think that this is a somewhat strange expression. Is the church after all not the sum-total of all her seed? And how then must we conceive of this idea that the devil, after he has failed to destroy the church as such, can still turn to her children, to the rest of her seed? This is not difficult to understand, however. The woman represents the church as such, the church as a visible institution in the world. And as such she is the mother of the true spiritual children of God. At first the devil makes the attempt to destroy the church as an institution by making her part of his own kingdom and by uniting her with the power of the world. But when this fails, he turns to the individual believers, in order that he may persecute and destroy them and bring them to apostasy. These individual members move about in the world. In every sphere of life they claim that they must live according to the principles of the Word of God, that they must keep His commandments, and that they must proclaim that Jesus Christ is King over all. And so they attempt to realize these principles in the midst of the world. They have been brought up in the commandments of God by their mother, the church. And they have learned to embrace and keep the testimony of Jesus. And therefore, in every sphere of life, in the home and in society and in the state, wherever they go and whatever they do, they keep these commandments and refuse to live from the principles of the world. They come into contact with the world, and therefore the devil can approach them. He can employ that world to make life hard for them, in order that by his persecution he may bring them to destruction. It is not told us how the devil attempts to accomplish this in this chapter. The following chapter pictures to us this tremendous attempt in detail,

for there we have the description of the power of the Anti-christ.

Let us now close this particular passage with the application of the text. In the first place, the church is in the wilderness. Neither must she attempt to rule over the powers of the world or to mingle with the affairs of the world, nor must she subject herself to these powers. Christ is King, and no other beside Him, over the church. There are many rulers in the world; there is but one King in the church. In the second place, love the church as your spiritual mother. More than once we find this presentation of the church in relation to her members. She exists for your spiritual care and nourishment, that through her you might be strengthened with the bread of life, and that too, through the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments. In the third place, walk as her faithful children in the midst of the world. Keep the commandments of God and hold the testimony of Jesus. And finally, be assured that all the attempts of the devil shall surely fail. He shall fail in his attempts to destroy the church as such. She shall remain, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against her. And if you must experience the wrath of the great red dragon as her individual children, never you fear: Christ has overcome the world!

H.H.

“Woe's me that I in Meseck am
A sojourner so long;
That I in tabernacles dwell
To Kedar that belong.

My soul with him that hateth peace
Hath long a dweller been.
I am for peace: but when I speak,
For battle they are keen.

My soul distracted mourns and pines
To reach that peaceful shore,
Where all the weary are at rest
And troubles vex no more.”

— ANONYMOUS

* * * *

VERSIFICATION OF PSALM 65

Before thee, Lord, a people waits,
To praise thy name in Zion's gates;
To thee shall vows be paid.
Thou hearer of the suppliant's prayer,
All flesh shall unto thee repair
To seek thy gracious aid.

How great my trespasses appear!
But from all guilt thou wilt me clear,
All my transgressions hide.
How blest thy chosen, who by grace
Are brought within thy dwelling-place
That they may there abide.

A CLOUD OF WITNESSES

Returning to Bethel

And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother. GENESIS 35:1

Shechem was a revelation to Jacob showing to him the actual spiritual state of his family. At Peniel God had taught him the danger of relying upon his own sinful flesh, but he had still retained considerable respect for the discretion of his maturing children. To their insistence he had yielded and moved from Succoth to Shechem. At Shechem he had left his children free to mingle with the inhabitants of the city, confident that their spiritual discretion would keep them from evil. But the worst had taken place, for Dinah was defiled by the prince of the city. Relying still, however, upon the spiritual strength of his sons, he had left it to them to deal with Shechem concerning this folly which had been wrought in Israel. Overwhelmed with bitter anger, they threw aside all restraint and destroyed the city completely with all of its inhabitants through the means of deceit and treachery. Suddenly Jacob began to realize the evil way into which his children were falling. By this deed of cold-blooded revenge, they had put the name of Israel to shame before all of the nations of the earth, and it troubled Jacob no end. He began to understand that not only his own carnal nature but also his children had to be subjected to spiritual control. Slowly Jacob was being led by God in the way of sanctification.

It was at that point that the Lord appeared to Jacob and told him to arise and go up to Bethel. It was a shame that that command had to be given. Many years before while fleeing from the wrath of his brother Esau, he had spent the first night of his journey there at Bethel. That night God appeared to him in a vision, standing at the top of a stairway filled with ascending and descending angels. Beautiful words of covenant promise were spoken to him and he was assured of a safe return to possess the land of Canaan. Arising in the morning he had been filled with joy of thanksgiving and had anointed the spot with oil. In solemn oath Jacob had made a vow that morning. "If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God: and this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee." It was over thirty years before that he had sworn that vow, and over ten years since he had returned to the land of Canaan, but still he had not paid that vow. It was a shame that God had to appear and command Jacob to return to Bethel.

Why Jacob hesitated to return to Bethel, we cannot tell for certain. However, it seems to be implied in the command which Jacob gave to his household, to put away their strange gods. It comes somewhat as a surprise to find that idolatry was practiced in the household of Jacob. Evidently Rachel still carried with her the images of her father, and perhaps some of the servants had still others. Jacob had not maintained enough control over his household to have these removed. Undoubtedly Jacob refused to serve these idols himself and perhaps even warned the others against them. But at the same time he did not exert enough authority to have them removed from the camp. And as long as they were in the camp Jacob did not dare to return to pay his vow at Bethel, lest coming with idols in his possession he should make it more of an occasion of mockery than of worship.

When, however, Jacob saw at Shechem the results of the evil way in which his family was going, and when he received the direct command from God to pay his vows at Bethel, there could remain no more doubt with Jacob as to what ought to be done. With an unusual ring of authority in his voice, he commanded them to put away the strange gods, to clean themselves, and to put on new garments. All of the charms and jewelry which had been carried with them for many a year were given to Jacob and buried together under the oak which was by Shechem. It was a ceremonial cleansing of the household of Israel and a sign of renewed consecration to the Lord.

The journey from Shechem to Bethel was for Jacob and his family a difficult journey indeed. The massacre of the Shechemites by Jacob's children had made them, just as Jacob had anticipated, "to stink among the inhabitants of the land." The Canaanites felt that the men of Shechem had been their kinsmen and the fact that they were so deceitfully slaughtered by the sons of Jacob made them angry. As Jacob traveled toward Bethel he had to pass through the territories of many of these now hostile nations. Cold stares and looks of hatred could be seen by them on every side. Only one thing prevented them from being pursued and slain in revenge by the Canaanites, "the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob." Although the Lord too found no pleasure in their destruction of Shechem, still He would not allow his chosen people to be destroyed by their enemies in the land.

The arrival back at Bethel must have caused a deep stirring of old memories for Jacob. Over thirty years had passed since he had stopped at that spot on his journey to Padanaram. Then he had nothing more than the staff that was in his hand. Now he was the father of a large family and the lord over great amounts of wealth. The promises which God had given him in his dream there at Bethel had come very literally and very fully to pass. Overwhelming waves of thanksgiving must have filled the heart of Jacob as he gathered the altar stones so that he might fulfill the vows

promised by him to God so many years before. Only then, when he had paid his vows upon the altar and gave due thanksgiving to the God who had blessed him, was he truly returned from Padanaram. Actually he had been back in the land of Canaan for well over ten years. But Padanaram was more than just a locality or place where Jacob lived for a while. From a spiritual point of view, it was a banishment from the promised land of Canaan because of the presumptuous sins of his youth. Even when he had returned to dwell in the land of Canaan, this sense of banishment persisted, he felt distant and cut-off from the promised inheritance of his fathers. Only after he had expressed his vows of thanksgiving to God, acknowledging Him as the source of all of his blessings, did Jacob receive a real feeling of belonging to the inheritance promised to his fathers.

We might give expression to this same thought a little differently by saying that at Peniel Jacob left behind the sin of self-reliance, while at Bethel he learned to give full acknowledgment for all of his blessings to God. At Peniel Jacob repented from the sins of his youth; at Bethel he entered full spiritual maturity by giving full and complete thanksgiving to God. The two together mark the important changing points in Jacob's full entry into the promise of the covenant. There at Bethel he built an altar and offered a sacrifice of dedication unto God. Henceforth the tenth of his possessions was to be consecrated unto the Lord. This time he called the place Elbethel because he had experienced the strength of the God who had appeared to him in this same place before.

After Jacob had offered this sacrifice to God, the Lord appeared again to him, this time not in a vision but directly, perhaps in the form of an angel. Once again He spoke to Jacob the covenant promise. "Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name: and he called his name Israel. And God said unto him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply, a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins; and the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land." In essence this was the same promise that had been given to him thirty years before in Bethel including both the multiplication of his seed and the possession of the promised land. However, there is a new element also included, kings were to come forth from him. His seed was to be a seed of royalty. The reason for the introduction of this new element into the promise was the fact that he was no longer Jacob but Israel, no longer the supplanter but a prince who had power with God and with man, and had prevailed.

Once again before leaving this sacred spot, Jacob erected a pillar of stone as a memorial unto that which had transpired. Upon the newly erected pillar he poured forth wine as a thankoffering and oil of consecration. This was truly "Bethel," the place where God dwelt with his people.

Almost parenthetically in the account of Jacob's stay at Bethel is interjected a notation concerning the death of Deborah, Rebekah's nurse. At first it seems hardly worthy of note, and yet, because it is recorded in Scripture, proves worthy of special note. A mere servant, her position was far from imposing. Nonetheless, she had filled it faithfully and well. Upon her knees Jacob had been raised, and from her lips he had received many words of instruction and comfort. Some time after the death of her mistress, she had been taken into the household of Jacob. Thus she spent the closing years of her life continuing to encourage the child who had become her master. Only a servant, she proved herself to be a sister in the Lord. Her final death was a cause of sorrow for all for her resting place was called Allonbachuth, "the oak of weeping."

* * * *

As Jacob was traveling from Bethel toward Ephrath, once again God answered the prayers of Rachel. For many years she had been barren and through her lack learned to appreciate the privilege of bringing forth covenant children. It was on this journey that God answered her for a second time and she brought forth a son. The birth, however, was very difficult, and in it her own life began to expire. In fact, so great was the pain as to convince her that neither would the child be able to survive. The attempts of the midwife to comfort her were of no avail, and with her dying breath she named the child Benoni, "Son of my sorrow."

This anticipated an event which was to take place many hundreds of years later at the very spot. At that time the last band of Israelites was gathered together in Rama by the Chaldeans so as to be sent away into Babylon. Concerning that event Jeremiah wrote (31:15), "A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not." To all appearances Israel was being taken into captivity from which they would never return. With bitter tears like those of Rachel, Israel would not be comforted because of the conviction that they would never return to life, life in the promised land.

Rachel's child, however, did not die; and Jacob, though deeply grieving for the death of his dearest wife, refused to look upon the child as a son of sorrow. With this child he had received twelve children from the Lord; the number of the covenant was made complete in his own family. He would not call the child Benoni, but he named him Benjamin, meaning "son of my right hand." It was as though he heard the words of the prophet in his ears, "Refrain thy voice from weeping and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded." Jeremiah 31:16.

B.W.

God is the judge who ends the strife
Where wit and reason fail.
Our guide through devious paths of life,
Our shield when doubts assail.

— ANONYMOUS

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of Romans 14, 15

XI.

(Romans 15:13)

What a grand theme Paul is developing here in these two chapters in his epistle to the Romans. It is the theme of the unity of the elect Jews and Gentiles, as they are constituted one new man in Christ. The enmity consisting in commandments and ordinances is once and for all wiped away! For the righteousness of God in Christ is such that now it is for both Jew and Gentile. Christ has become the minister of the circumcision for the establishing of the truth of God, in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy! Romans 15:7, 8.

And this is the great plan and purpose of God.

This is not simply the teaching of some isolated Scripture passage but it is the truth, the very marrow of all the Scriptures. Thus is the clear and indisputable teaching of Moses, the Psalms and all the Prophets. And, as we might notice in many Scripture passages, all through the Old Testament the hope of Israel, the very quintessence of her existence, is that the Gentiles may come to her light. Salvation is out of the Jews! John 4:22.

For in these Scriptures we do not merely have the word of holy men, uttering their pious wishes and aspirations, but we have the Word of God, the Word which God Himself utters through the prophets. Do we not read in Hebrews 1:1 that very ponderous and beautiful utterance, which is the end of all contradiction: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers through the prophets . . ."? It was *God* who spoke unto the fathers of hope and joy and peace in Him who was to come! He did this in divers manners and at sundry times, yet always it was *He* who infallibly spoke to us His sure Word of prophecy unto which the church gave heed as unto a light shining in a dark place—until the day dawned and the day-star arose in her heart!

Small wonder that Paul, after having quoted all these infallible, clear and perspicuous Scriptures from Psalm 18:49, Deut. 32:34, Psalm 117:1 and Isaiah 11:1 and 10, speaks of God as the "God of the hope"! And, again, is it not wholly within our "reasonable worship" (Romans 12:2) that this God of the hope alone can fill us with "all joy and peace in believing, in order that we abound in the hope in power of the Holy Spirit"?!

And does He not do this by means of the Scriptures?

And are these Scriptures not God-inspired, "God-breathed," so that the Holy Spirit speaks to us in these Scriptures, filling our hearts with patience and consolation? Romans 15:4. Well may and does Paul utter this prayer in our text here in Romans 15:13: "*Now the God of hope fill*

you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope in power of the Holy Ghost".

Let us take notice of the various elements in this beautiful prayer.

There is first of all the designation "the God of *the* Hope" which should receive our attention.

Since in the Greek the definite article is used with the term hope (*elpidos*) we believe that Paul is here referring to the definitely known and revealed hope of the Scriptures which he had just quoted, and to which Scripture passages we have given some special attention in former essays in this rubric. The "hope" is the great objective salvation and blessedness which God has thought out, purposed and realized in Christ Jesus, His Son! In and through Christ's death and resurrection this "hope" is realized. And this great and glorious work of God in Christ, as the God of our salvation, shall finally be revealed in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In this sense of the objective hope, the things hoped for, the things which eye hath not seen, and ear hath not heard, and which have never entered into the heart of man, Scripture speaks repeatedly in various contexts. In Col. 1:4, 5 we read: "We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints for (because of) *the hope which is laid up for you in heaven*, whereof ye heard before in the word of truth of the gospel." And, again, we read in Ephesians 1:18: "the eyes of your understanding being enlightened: that ye may know what is the *hope* of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of *his inheritance in the saints*, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power . . . which he wrought in Christ . . .!"

It is quite clear from these Scripture passages that the "hope" is, indeed, the things which God has prepared for His people and for Himself in Christ Jesus. And this "inheritance in the saints," of course, is that which the church now longs and hopes for. Is this not the very scene portrayed in Isaiah 11:6: "And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together . . ."? And, again, in verse 9: "And they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain . . ."?!

The hope is, therefore, first of all the objective hope laid away for us in heaven. It is the inheritance, incorruptible, undefilable and that which fadeth not away! And it is ready to be revealed in the last day (I Peter 1:3, 4).

But "hope" is also something very subjective within us, according to Holy Writ. It is the new life of regeneration bursting forth in glad and joyful and certain anticipation of entering into the final rest. It is in this "hope" that we are patient.

That God is called "*the God* of the hope" in this passage is very meaningful. Three times Paul employs this kind of *description* of God in this chapter. In verse 5 he calls

Him "The God of the patience" and in verse 33 it is "The God of the peace." Here it is "the God of hope"! We refer those who wish to study this construction a bit more to such passages as Romans 16:20, II Cor. 13:11, Phil. 4:9, and I Thess. 5:23.

Surely that God is the God of *peace*, of *patience*, of *hope*, indicates, first of all, that God is the *fountain* of all these virtues. This expression does not indicate primarily what God *does*, but it refers first of all to what God *is*. God is His virtues, and all His virtues are one in Him. Hence, God is wholly a God of love, of grace, of patience, of hope, of peace! That He *is* in each instance as the Infinite One. There is no end to his being the God of hope and of peace and consolation. Hence, Paul turns his heart and mind toward the infinite God in this prayer.

Of course, such an Infinite One, when He works peace, joy and hope for and in His people, is the *Summum Bonum*! There is no end to His glorious perfections. And that, too, is expressed here in this passage. And, we may add, it is for this reason that God is "the God of the hope" that He will surely be able and willing to perform this prayer. He takes great pleasure in granting His people hope in their hearts. That is His glory!

Paul prays that *this* God fill the saints with all "joy and peace."

Of both of these concepts we will presently have just a few remarks to make. However, we will first call attention to what the apostle writes in the latter part of this thirteenth verse, "that ye may abound in hope in the power of the Holy Ghost."

There is certainly no hope in our hearts apart from the almighty operation of the Holy Ghost. The Spirit here spoken of is certainly the same Spirit that "rests" upon Christ as the Head of the church. He is the third person of the Divine Trinity, co-equal with the Father and with the Son. His is the "power," the ability to make alive, and to grant each member in the church from the fulness of Christ, as He wills. He is the Spirit of life. There is hope in our hearts only because of the love of God shed abroad in our hearts. Romans 5:4.

The question is: What does it mean to *abound* in hope? The word *abound* in Greek really means to *overflow*. The idea is that the hope in our hearts is such that it causes us to rejoice in the perfect salvation, reaching out for it in earnest and great expectation. Hope then is the well-spring of all that we think and do. And, in relation to the particular situation here in the church at Rome, it would mean that the believers will look for the final realization of the church, both Jew and Greek, when with one mind and in one voice they shall perfectly praise and glorify God.

But shall this be a reality—this abundant and overflowing hope in the hearts—then there is a spiritual-psychological reality which must be the portion of the saints. And this spiritual-psychological reality is that God must then fill our hearts with "joy and peace"! We may, therefore, say that

this "joy and peace" is a spiritual-psychological *requisite* of abounding in hope. It belongs, so to speak, to the very fabric of hope. Hope is in its very nature joy and peace. And all are the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

But what, then, is this joy and peace?

"Joy" is really a little bit of heaven on earth. It is the deep, genuine contentment and blessedness of the man who is created after the image of God, in true knowledge, righteousness and holiness. Joy is only possible when man attains to the end unto which God has created him. There is no joy in sin, guilt and unrighteousness. Christ often speaks of this joy to His disciples. Says He in John 15:11: "These things have I spoken unto you that *my joy* might be in you, and that your *joy* may be made full"! Joy is, therefore, the joy which is peculiarly Christ's, as He came to fulfil the law for us and in us. And we have joy in Christ's saving us.

Often "joy" is associated in Scripture with the final salvation in Christ, as a fruit of His sorrow. Thus we read in John 16:20: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice . . . ye shall sorrow, but your *sorrow shall be turned into joy*." And, again, "A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come. But when she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish for *joy* that a man is born into the world" (John 16:22). And, finally, in the sacerdotal prayer Jesus says, "But I come to thee: and these things I speak in the world, that they might have *my joy* fulfilled in themselves" (John 17:13).

From these passages it is abundantly evident that this "joy" is not earthly, but is basically heavenly in its origin and nature. It is from above. It is, in fact, the "joy" which Christ Himself received and merited for Himself and for all His own. Do we not read in Hebrews 12:2: "Looking unto Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the *joy that was set before him*, endured the cross and despised the shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

This joy is possibly basically "eternal life"!

When our fathers in the Heidelberg Catechism explain what really constitutes eternal life they speak as follows: "since I now feel in my heart the *beginning of eternal joy*, after this life I shall inherit perfect salvation . . ." Question 58. And in Question 90, speaking of the putting on of the new man in Christ, this is said to consist in "a *sincere joy* of heart in God through Christ."

Such "joy" certainly is a requisite of hope. For hope is really the joy, in the present, of the future blessedness of heaven. Hope is the life of the Christian as it rises to its own level, that is, the heavenly.

But there is also more that is required in us. And also this the Holy Spirit alone can and does give us.

It is the gift of *peace*. Both joy and peace are gifts of the Holy Spirit. Do we not read in Galatians 5:22, 23: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering,

(Continued on page 120)

IN HIS FEAR

Freedom of Speech

(3)

Freedom of speech has to do with words.

So obvious is that fact that it might seem utterly unnecessary even to mention it. Speech and words belong to each other, for when we speak, we speak words. That again is so obvious that it seems superfluous. Yet the point we wish to make is indicated in that other form of expression that is used, when men speak of freedom of the press rather than freedom of speech. Freedom of speech as we know it in our land is not simply the freedom or liberty to speak up and express one's convictions without fear of penalty or persecution. It means that he may also print that which he believes and set up words in permanent form for educational purposes.

Speech is the expression of thought and desire. And it makes little difference whether that expression is sounded out by the spoken word or whether it is set down on paper by means of letters, whether it is sent forth into the air by sounds or shown by the printed letter. It is because of this freedom of speech or of the press that we have our newspapers, our magazines and books. In these the thoughts of men are expressed, propagated and even preserved for unborn generations.

And let us not underestimate the power of this written word nor underestimate both its value and its danger. Consider once what joy floods the soul at the receipt and reading of a letter from a loved one. What an impact likewise a letter containing sad news can have upon the soul of the reader. Whether the word is spoken or whether it is read makes little difference. It is the idea behind the words spoken or written that counts. They produce the one effect or the other. The policeman does not need to stand on the corner of the street and shout at you the word, Stop! It is sufficient to have it written in letters upon the sign. And the summons to appear in court that is handed to you, and consists of a series of letters printed upon a sheet of paper, carries all the power that the diplomatically tempered, and mild-spoken words of the officer who filled it out and handed it to you carry. Or it might have been left under the windshield wiper of your car while you were busy elsewhere and violated the parking ordinance.

Even more. We have the speech of God in printed form. We have the Scriptures or the Writings. It is the Word of God. It is His speech to His Church. There is not more value in hearing it on a tape recording than in reading it from the printed page. The one may be easier for us than the other. The one may be impossible and the other the

only way to know that which God has revealed of Himself as the God of our salvation in Christ. For the blind the recording may be the only way in which he can receive it. For the deaf the reading of that Word of God is the only way for him to be instructed by it. But who would dare to claim that the one derives more benefit than the other because the mode of his reception is superior? The God Who spoke also moved men to write His Word. We never hear Him speak audibly and personally today as He did to Adam in Paradise, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to the prophets in the Old Dispensation. But is that truth which we have from these upon the printed page of less value? Does the printed page lose some of the power and beauty of the truth? Then why did the glorified Christ give to the Apostle John on the Island of Patmos letters to the seven churches? Why did He not send a man over there to speak the same words?

But consider this, by the printed page and through the freedom of the press as we know it in our land, man's speech is preserved for ages to come. Though a man be long dead he can yet move men to tears or to laughter by his words penned down centuries before. By his words on the printed page he can move you to suspense and shivers by his horror and mystery tales. Though his earthly frame has long returned to the dust, he can yet by his words which he left behind in that printed form hold you in rapt attention or comfort you in your anxious moments. Though he is no longer in the land of the living he can make you enjoy the things of life by his vivid and beautiful description of the things of creation. He can fill your soul with poetry and a song even though his own soul has left this earth many centuries ago.

Scripture speaks that way. The author of the epistle to the Hebrews says of Abel in Hebrews 11:4, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he is righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh." And again in the first verse of the next chapter he states that in all these "heroes of faith" of whom we learn on the printed page of Holy Writ we have a cloud of witnesses. They speak to us from the pages of the Scriptures, the Holy Writings. And this they do though their tongues have long ceased to move and have instead returned to the dust from whence they came.

So it is likewise with those who have not the true freedom of speech and are under the power of the lie. They still speak to us and will speak to the coming generations. Their wicked philosophies, their immoral thoughts and God-dishonoring opinions did not die with their bodies. Their evil thoughts are still free to circulate amongst men of later generations. So significant and dangerous is this speech that is written and preserved after the soul of the speaker has departed for another realm. At the moment of this writing there is a nation-wide scare concerning contaminated cranberries which might induce cancer. People refuse to buy

any cranberries. Suggestions are being given as to substitutes for the Thanksgiving Day turkey dinner which traditionally calls for cranberry sauce. A thing like that men fear. Cancer is a dreaded physical disease. It means death. But this spiritual cancer, this rottenness that circulates so freely in our land in magazine and book strikes little fear in the hearts of men. And the right and liberty of man to propagate and preserve for generations to come that which is written to eat away at the soul of the believer and his children to destroy their faith and bring about their spiritual death is defended. After all that is the democratic way of life. Men are known and lauded for taking the stand that though they disagree with another they will fight for the other's right to maintain and propagate his contrary views. Now that is perfectly all right when there is nothing spiritual or ethical involved. But I surely may not set my seal of approval upon the right of the false teacher to propagate his evil views and try to deceive me and my children and turn me away from Christ. I may not grant him that right. The Apostle John says, "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," II John 11, 12. No, we do not mean to say that it is the duty of the civil authorities to exercise Christian discipline. It has its own sphere and the Church has its sphere of action, and each one must exercise discipline in its own sphere. Before God the false teacher has no right to try to influence and persuade others by his lie. Before me, therefore, he may not have that right either, and I may not grant it to him. That it is not in the domain of the State to punish him for this evil work does not imply that he has the right. The king may walk in all manner of evil and be immune from the discipline of his subordinates, but that does not mean that he actually has the right to walk in wickedness and that men must grant him that right.

And for you and me it surely means that we do everything in our power to keep from our children these theories and heresies except to show them the error therein. We may not let them read, study and digest what is written without warning them against the errors that militate against the truth which we desire to have them believe. Nor can we expect the words of their mouths and the meditations of their hearts to be acceptable to God when they are allowed to read all the evil thoughts of depraved men without carefully and faithfully exposing to them the errors and godlessness in these writings. We may not let them be free to absorb any speech they please and to believe anything that comes off the printing press. That is a freedom of speech which we as parents and as office bearers in the Church of God may not allow. Our government may give the wicked the freedom to publish and distribute these evil thoughts and may even classify them as beautiful thoughts, but as Christians it is our calling to point out to our children that they are not free to believe all the words that they may read or hear.

Are you a parent who turns his child loose and gives him the freedom to read and believe what he pleases? Do you believe that he is free to take into his soul the filth of the world, if he likes? Let me assure you that this is not walking in His fear. And I can likewise assure you that your children will not be free to speak God's praise and to bless Him. Need we point out that the overwhelming majority of the books and magazines written today are written by the unbeliever and express his wicked ideas of unbelief and ridicule for and contempt of the things spiritual. Let us keep it away from our children as zealously as we strive to keep contaminated cranberries off their table. Be as serious about their spiritual wellbeing as you are about their physical wellbeing. And remember that it is your calling to keep them free from the wicked speech of men. In that respect there are also many radio programs from which you must keep them, programs wherein the speech is corrupted by cursing and swearing, blasphemy and ridicule of the things spiritual. We may not invite this wickedness into our homes, and surely we may not promote its entrance into the hearts and minds of our children. It may be an educational program, one that imparts scientific knowledge and widens the vision of your child in regard to this great earth wherein our covenant God has placed us. But if it is not free from this evil speech, it may not have access into your home.

You may call that a very narrow minded and old fashioned idea. So freely do men speak their hatred of the things spiritual and holy that they have the freedom to call the things of His fear by such names. But let me remind you or inform you of that which old fashioned and narrow minded but saintly men of God wrote in a time when the Church took a definite stand about such matters. In the Heidelberg Catechism the treatment of this matter of cursing and swearing has this question and answer, "What is required in the third commandment? That we, not only by cursing or perjury, but also by rash swearing, must not profane or abuse the name of God; nor by silence or connivance be partakers of these horrible sins in others . . ." And again, "Is then the profaning of God's name by swearing and cursing, so heinous a sin, that His wrath is kindled against those that do not endeavour, as much as in them lies, to prevent and forbid such cursing and swearing? It undoubtedly is, for there is no sin greater or more provoking to God, than the profaning of His name: and therefore He has commanded this sin to be punished with death." That is language that manifests the fear of the Lord. Neither by silence or connivance are we to be partakers of these terrible sins. We are to prevent and forbid as much as in us lies the practice of these evils. Does that not mean that we forbid our children to read and listen to it whenever we can keep it from them? This thing which men call freedom of speech and is lauded as one of the benefits of Christianity is so often the principal tool of the Antichrist. Watch out for it, and keep your children free from his spoken and printed speech.

J.A.H.

Contending For The Faith

The Church and the Sacraments

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

THE SEVEN SACRAMENTS

HOLY ORDERS

We now continue with our quotation from The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge on the Romish Order of Exorcist.

"The first certain evidence of the employment of exorcism in the case of catechumens is offered by Cyprian in 256; it is found here in use both in the Catholic Church and among heretics, so that it is evidently no new thing. Another mention of it, possibly somewhat older, is found in the *Canones Hippolyti*. It is doubtful whether Tertullian knew of the practise, or whether the Clementine Homilies (III. 73) intend to refer to it in the description of the daily laying on of hands during the preparation for baptism. At the Carthaginian council of 256 in which it is first clearly mentioned, certain bishops requested that it, together with baptism, should be employed at the reception of heretics into the Church; the reason given, that "heretics are worse than pagans," shows how definitely exorcism was still connected with the thought of paganism. In the same context it is interesting that an early Greek form for the reception of a convert from Judaism contains a renunciation, but no exorcism. When exorcism was thus once brought into connection with baptism, it was applied to the baptism of infants in the same unreflecting way as were the other ceremonies originally belonging to adult baptism. As in the service for infant baptism the various liturgical acts of the catechumen's preparation were combined into a continuous function, the various exorcisms which found a place in that were here also included. At the outset came the *exsufflatio*, a thrice-repeated breathing in the face of the child, with the words "Depart from him, thou unclean spirit, and give place to the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete"; after the giving of salt, there was a long exorcism, three times repeated, each time with a different command to the devil to depart from the child. This remained substantially the same until the end of the Middle Ages. The *Rituale Romanum* of 1614 condensed it considerably, retaining only the *exsufflatio* at the beginning with the last of the three exorcisms and its introduction.

Luther saw no objection to the exorcism in the baptismal office, which he retained in his own of 1523, abbreviating it, indeed, but not on any theological ground. In that of 1526 it was further abbreviated, and the *exsufflatio* omitted; but relics of the Roman function passed from this into the majority of the Lutheran service-books, to excite bitter controversy

later within the Lutheran ranks, and to be the subject of reproach on the part of the Calvinists. When not forced by such attacks to defend the practise, the Lutheran theologians freely admitted that it was a non-essential, and at the Cassel Conference of 1661 expressed their willingness to change it to a prayer for deliverance from the power of Satan. In the rationalistic period at the end of the eighteenth century, it finally disappeared from one service-book after another, and now, since its general abandonment by the Lutherans, the ceremony has no place in the rites of any Protestant Church." — end of quote.

Concerning the Romish order of Lector, we read in The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, Vol. 6, page 437, as follows: "In the early Church, an ecclesiastic in minor orders appointed to read to the congregation from the Scriptures and other religious writings was a lector. From the very first the oral reading of the sacred Scriptures occupied a large place in religious services, and for a long time it was the sole, or at least the principal means of imparting Scriptural knowledge to the congregation. Since during the first two centuries Christianity diffused itself especially among the poorer classes, and the congregations were frequently small, it was not always easy to find a competent reader of the sacred books, written as they were without spacing between the words. The position of the lector in the congregation was consequently an important one. In addition to reading, he often expounded passages of Scripture, especially as the sermon was not yet an official duty. Alphaeus, lector and exorcist at Caesarea (died 303), was "preacher and teacher of the Word of God" at that place, "and had great fortitude before every one." During the early centuries the lector appears to have been reckoned with the spiritual leaders of the congregations, with the prophets, evangelists, and teachers who were accustomed to conduct divine worship. Certain expressions in liturgies of the later time reflect the ancient estimate of the lector's office; thus the *Statuta ecclesae antiqua* observe of the prospective lector, "he is to have a part with those who minister the word of God," consequently the lector occasionally took precedence of the deacon and subdeacon. The development of polity in the Church catholic from the second century downward was unfavorable to the dignity of the lector's office. The bishop or the presbyter was accustomed to appropriate the sermon, and sometimes the preacher included the Scriptural reading as a part of his functions, with the result that the lector became superfluous. In the ceremonially ordered public worship from the fourth century onward, the reading of the Gospel was regularly reserved to the deacons or presbyters, and the lector came to be reckoned with the *clerici minores*, being of the next to the lowest rank in the order of ecclesiastical promotion. In many church districts, children and even catechumens were admitted to the lector's ranks, an impropriety which Justinian sought to correct. The ritual for the installation of the lector was furnished by the liturgies. It usually consisted in the delivery of the codex of the sacred Scriptures. In the

Roman Catholic Church the lector's *ordo* still exists, but in a merely formal sense.

And, finally, another of Rome's minor orders is the Door-keeper. Concerning this holy order the New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge has the following, and this article appears in Vol. VIII, page 283 in connection with a man named Ostiarius, and we quote: "Ostiarius was primarily a porter and later one of the minor orders of the clergy. Originally the porter was a slave (cf. Mark 13:34; John 10:3; 18:17; Acts 12:13); but when the Christians came to possess their own churches, they were compelled to have porters, who, after the second half of the third century, were reckoned among the minor clergy. From Rome the employment of porters spread, so that most Western and some Eastern communities possessed them in the fourth century. Since the office was entrusted only to persons of settled age, and since frequent changes were undesirable, the ostiarius was debarred from ecclesiastical advancements. An ordination rite, with the giving of the keys of the church as its central feature, is given in the *Statuta ecclesiae antiqua*, and, more fully, in the Sacramentary of Gregory. In the East the order declined earlier than in the West, though ostiarii are mentioned as late as the Trullan Council of 692. Also in the Roman Church sacristans are no longer clergy, though the ostiarius ordination is still conferred, as a matter of form, at the beginning of the clerical career."

In criticizing this conception of the Romish sacrament of the Holy Orders, we wish to call attention, in the first place, to the fact that the Romish Church accuses all those who deny this teaching of being guilty of creating a human figment as the product of the imagination of men who are unskilled in ecclesiastical matters. This is stated repeatedly in the chapters and canons which we quoted in our preceding article as decreed by the Romish Council of Trent. We ask in all seriousness: where is the proof from the Word of God that subdeacons, apolyths, exorcists, lectors and doorkeepers are offices in the Church of God and that these men must be ordained by the laying on of hands? These are indeed human figments that have been devised by men. All this merely indicates and establishes how everything in the Romish Church is inseparably connected with the hierarchy. The priesthood and the dependence of the people upon this priesthood is indeed the cardinal principle of the Roman Catholic Church.

We conclude our appraisal of this Romish sacrament with a quotation from the Dogmatics of Dr. H. Bavinck, Vol. IV, pages 365-367, and we quote (we translate): "With the calling and the examination comes finally yet the ordination which occurred especially by the laying on of hands. This practice was in vogue in Israel with the blessing, Gen. 48:14, Lev. 9:22, the offering, Ex. 29:10, Lev. 1:4 . . . , at the appointment to an office, Numbers 27:18-23, later also at the installation of judges and the promotion of teachers (leeraars). Jesus laid the hands upon people, to heal, Matt. 8:15, etc., but we read nowhere that He did this at the appoint-

ment to an office. His apostles were appointed by Him merely by means of a word, without any ceremony, Matt. 10:1 f.f., 28:19. At the appointment of Matthias (we understand, of course, that the question whether Matthias was actually appointed to the office of the apostleship is a matter of doubt, H.V.), Paul, Barnabas, Silas, Luke, etc., mention is never made of a laying on of hands; it was surely no common practice in connection with the introduction into an ecclesiastical office. But the laying on of hands did take place by healing, Acts 9:12, 17, by the imparting or communication of the gift of the Spirit, Acts 8:17-19, by the appointment of deacons, I Tim. 4:14, II Tim. 1:6; according to I Tim. 3:22 it had become general in connection with the ordination to an ecclesiastical office and according to Heb. 6:2 it belonged with the first principles of the doctrine of Christ. But it was not an actual bestowal of the spiritual gifts of an office. For we read in Acts 6:3 that the deacons, who had been chosen, had to be full of the Holy Spirit and of wisdom before the laying on of hands. In Acts 13:3 the laying on of hands does not occur with the ordination, but with the sending out of Barnabas and of Paul, who already were in office. According to I Tim. 1:18, 4:14 the appointment of Timothy to be an evangelist was confirmed by prophetic testimonies (getuigenissen) and by the laying on of hands. It is true that in II Tim. 1:6 the gift of God was in him by the putting on of hands, but I Tim. 4:14 teaches that it was given by prophecy, with the laying on of hands of the presbytery; which proves that prophecy and the laying on of hands were not the source of the gifts, but the means whereby they were brought over in the service of the congregation and were appointed unto that end."

We herewith conclude this quotation from the Dogmatics of Dr. Bavinck as far as this article is concerned. Time and space forbid us to continue with it. The Lord willing, we will resume this quotation in our following article. It is certainly true what we read in the Systematic Theology of C. Hodge: "The Apostles, however, had only the power of communicating miraculous gifts. They neither claimed nor pretended to exercise the power of conferring the sanctifying or saving influences of the Spirit. As the Church of Rome claims for its clergy a power far above that of angels or archangels, so it claims for its bishops powers far transcending those of the Apostles.

H.V.

"Let it be considered, then, as an undeniable truth, that they who have been inwardly taught by the Spirit, feel an entire acquiescence in the Scripture, carrying with it its own evidence, and ought not to be made the subject of demonstration and arguments from reason, but it obtains the credit which it deserves by us by the testimony of the Spirit."

Calvin's *Institutes*, Book I, Chapter VII

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 13 (continued)

We now face the question, however: does the fact that even the backslidings of the Christian are not to be divorced from God's preserving grace but are rather subservient to the purpose and work of the preservation of the elect mean that these backslidings and deep falls are as such and in themselves a reason for spiritual joy and pleasure on the part of the child of God? Is it so that the Christian exclaims, looking back upon such backslidings: "Blessed fall into sin! How glad I am that I fell into such a depth of iniquity"? Does it mean that the child of God deliberately aims to sin more and to fall again, in order that grace may abound so that he may experience more of those "good results" wrought by God's preserving grace through the means of his fall and backsliding?

If the answer to the above questions is in the affirmative, then the Arminian is entirely correct in his evaluation of the Reformed doctrine of perseverance. Then it is indeed an immoral doctrine. It will surely produce licentiousness in those who are recovering from backsliding; and it will be harmful to true Christian piety. And such a doctrine would be unworthy of God, the Holy One. In that case we must revamp our whole doctrine of perseverance along Arminian lines.

But the fathers maintain that this is not true. We said last time that this thirteenth article reveals that they had a clear discernment of the experience of God's child in this process of fall and restoration. We referred, of course, to their claim that the renewed confidence of persevering renders the restored saint much more careful and solicitous to continue in the ways of the Lord, and to their claim that it renders the restored saint much more fearful of abusing God's fatherly kindness and of experiencing the withdrawing of God's gracious countenance from him.

Which is correct, the Arminian or the Reformed claim?

The fathers in this connection state reality, but they do not attempt to explain the relation between the truth which we expounded last time and the truth concerning the Christian's actual experience when he is restored from backsliding. And we may follow their example first, and later inquire

whether it is possible and whether it is necessary to explain this relationship.

If we turn to Scripture with our inquiry as to whether the fathers' presentation is correct or not, it is not difficult to find examples of the very picture which the fathers draw. Let us take two examples, one from the Old and the other from the New Testament, — examples which the *Canons* themselves cite in Article 4. The first is that of David, an Old Testament saint. The expression of his experience you find in Psalm 51. The occasion of this psalm is that of his sin with Bathsheba, after which Nathan the prophet was sent to him to reprove him for his sin. If you read the Psalm, you will discover, first of all, that this example fits the situation of Article 13. David was a saint. He was a saint who had fallen deeply into sin and who had compounded his sin of adultery with the sin of murder. And he was a saint who temporarily was unrepentant; he persisted in his sin and refused to confess it until virtually forced to do so through the message from Nathan. Then he became a saint (in the language of the *Canons*) who was certainly and effectually renewed to repentance, to a sincere and godly sorrow for his sins, who sought and obtained remission in the blood of the Mediator, in order that he might again experience the favor of a reconciled God, through faith adore his mercies, and henceforward more diligently work out his own salvation with fear and trembling. Cf. Article 7. He was a saint, therefore, who was restored from backsliding. All this you can plainly discern in the language of Psalm 51. Now what was David's reaction to this experience? Did it make him careless and licentious? Was it injurious to David's piety? If you approached David and asked him whether he would like to go through that whole experience again, would he answer enthusiastically in the affirmative? The very opposite is true, as is plain from what the psalmist himself says in this fifty-first psalm. Listen! The poet is much more careful diligently to keep the ways of the Lord, for he says: "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me . . . Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee . . . My tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness. O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise." Such is not the language of one who is licentious and who shows a disregard for piety. The poet is afraid of ever passing again through the dreadful experience of having God's gracious countenance turned away from him, or, to use the language of the psalm, of experiencing that God had broken his bones and that he could not hear joy and gladness. For he prays: "Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities . . . Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit." Such is Christian experience. Such is the experience of any fallen and restored saint.

Our second example is Peter, the Lord's own disciple and

apostle. He fell so deeply that he denied his Lord thrice, though severely and plainly warned against that very sin. He too fits the situation described in Article 13. He was a saint who fell and who recovered from backsliding, and that too, through the preserving grace of God in Christ. For remember that the Lord Jesus says: "But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." And what was Peter's reaction when through preserving grace he was restored? In the first place, it is obvious that the Lord's disciple did not assume an attitude of conceited carelessness and licentiousness; only think how in humility he was scarcely ready to say that he loved the Lord at the Sea of Tiberias. In the second place, if you would ask the apostle later on whether or not that whole experience was good for him from the point of view of the fact that it had cured him permanently of his boastful self-confidence and converted his forward and assertive nature into one that was ready to preach the gospel with all boldness, he would undoubtedly have answered in the affirmative. But, in the third place, if you would also ask him whether he would gladly pass through that whole experience again, he would undoubtedly have said: "What? Deny my Lord? Experience again that penetrating look of my Savior? Feel that I had no right to be called a disciple and an apostle? Endure the excruciating pain of that question, thrice asked, 'Lovest thou me?' I would indeed go into prison and into death for the sake of my Lord; but never let me experience that agony of denial again!"

For we must remember that God's sovereign and preserving grace, the grace that preserves the saints even in and through their deepest falls, always operates in an unchangeably holy way, even as it has a holy purpose. And this can only mean that the saint must feel the reaction of God's unimpeachable holiness whenever he sins. No, that grace never lets the child of God completely alone. But when he walks in sin, God, according to His gracious purpose and in His gracious dealings, makes the backsliding saint feel as though that grace has let him go. When he walks in sin, God hides His gracious countenance from that backsliding saint. When he persists in sin, God turns a deaf ear to the petitions of that unrepentant child, and makes him feel it. In other words, as far as the *consciousness* of the child of God is concerned, his salvation and the joy of his salvation is gone. And our *Canons* mention the dreadfulness of such times for God's children. To experience that God's gracious countenance is toward us, so that we behold it, is dearer than life for the godly. For the same godly man to experience that God has withdrawn His gracious countenance, so that he cannot see Father's face, so that he cannot reach Father's ear with his petitions, is more bitter than death, and results in grievous torments of soul. From our point of view, the point of view of our conscious spiritual experience, we feel, in the words of Isaiah 59:1, that the Lord's hand is too short to save, that His ear is heavy, so that it cannot hear. But those times are so dreadful that no child of God would ever

deliberately seek to pass through them, especially not if he has once experienced them. The basic reason, however, lies in the unchangeable norm of God's holiness according to which His grace ever operates. Thus the prophet indicates in the second verse of Isaiah 59: "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." Because the Lord cannot countenance sin, because His eyes are too pure to behold iniquity, therefore the blessings of His grace can be experienced always and only in the sphere of perfect righteousness and pure holiness.

But then just because His grace is not dependent on us, but functions in the sphere of the perfect righteousness and holiness of our Lord Jesus Christ, our sins and iniquities cannot interrupt the current of His grace. In His very gracious purpose, yea, while His grace continues to operate, God causes the saints to *experience* all the dreadful torments of the withdrawal of His countenance as long as they continue in sin. But He uses that very experience in all its dreadful and soul-rending bitterness as a means to bring His erring child back, first of all. And in the second place, that grace, which has never basically and internally forsaken the saint, ultimately goes into action to renew the backsliding saint unto repentance and sorrow. And thus, coming to repentance and sorrow over sin through free grace only, the child of God has the renewed confidence of persevering, enjoys the light of God's countenance, and through the same grace strives to maintain that assurance with renewed zeal and watchfulness.

You feel that problems remain concerning the relationship of these truths? True, we cannot fully understand the dealings of our God in this respect, no more than we can fully understand the relation between God's sovereign counsel and providence and the fact of the fall and of sin. But this is not necessary. Suppose the two truths stood side by side in the Scriptures, and that it was entirely impossible to say anything about the relationship between them: would that impossibility on our part destroy either of these truths? Not at all. But now we can do more: we can at least glimpse a little of the beauty of God's matchless grace in the wonder of a preservation that keeps us so securely that even our deepest falls must tend to our salvation. And then, rather than join the Arminian calumniators of the truth, we can only fall on our knees in thankful adoration, and exclaim: "My God, how great Thou art!"

H.C.H.

The night is the mother of the day,
And winter of the spring;
And ever upon old decay,
The greenest mosses spring.

— ANONYMOUS

DECENCY and ORDER

Questions on Article 41

The president of the Classis is called upon to put the following questions before the delegates. This is usually done at the conclusion of the meeting and to these questions each consistory must answer through its delegates. The questions asked are:

- "1. Are the consistory meetings held in your church?
- "2. Is church discipline exercised?
- "3. Are the poor and christian schools cared for?
- "4. Do you need the judgment and help of the classis for the proper government of your church?"

In the proposed revision of the Church Order these questions appear in Article 37. (This is the proposed revision of the Christian Reformed Church.) Several changes are suggested. Instead of asking whether the consistory meetings are held, the question is asked, "How often does your consistory meet?" Instead of the general question concerning the care of the poor and christian schools, it is specifically stated, "How does your consistory promote the cause of Christian day schools in your locality?" and nothing is asked concerning the care of the poor. Then there are two additional questions which are not found in the old redaction of this article. One of these is evidently intended to take the place of the omission concerning the care of the poor. These two questions are:

"How does the office of deacons function in your church?"

"Do all the members of your church receive a home visitation call at least annually by the minister and the elders?"

Another noteworthy change enacted in this article is found in connection with that part that prescribes the duty of the president of the Classis to put these questions to the delegates. The article merely states that "the president shall, among other things, put the following questions to the delegates of each church." The revision, however, states: "At the beginning of each classical meeting the president shall interview the delegates of each church as to its spiritual condition and its faithfulness in doing the work of the Lord. Among other things the following questions must be asked." This then is followed by the questions.

This revision is more in harmony with the original idea of the article for already in 1578 the Synod of Dort decided that "The president having offered prayer, shall ask each delegation in particular, whether the ordinary discipline is being maintained in their congregations; whether they are being attacked by heresies; whether they doubt the correctness of any part of the accepted doctrine; whether they are giving good heed to the poor and the schools; whether they

need the advice or help of the brethren, regarding the government of their church; and other like matters."

The obvious intent of all this was that the churches might conduct a mutual supervision over each other. The questions were designed to ascertain whether all things in the churches were done in decency and in good order. In order to determine this the president, asking the questions, could not be bound to a stereotyped list but had to be given a certain measure of latitude so that he might also ask about other matters as he saw fit. Today this practice has become obsolete and the supervision is limited to the four prescribed questions. Now, perhaps this can be explained somewhat from the fact that a more careful supervision is made by the Classis through its Church Visitors but even then, this can hardly be used as an argument against restoring a bit of flexibility to this function of the classis through giving the president of that body broader powers whereby the scope of this investigation might be enlarged. Although there is certainly a danger that such power might be abused with the result that a classical hierarchy is established, we, nevertheless, feel that there is as much danger in "too little supervision" as there is in "too much supervision." Both are detrimental to the church and the welfare of the church is best served when a proper balance is attained. Further, because circumstances and conditions not only vary in different congregations but in themselves are always subject to change, we feel that this power cannot be kept in proper balance by restricting it to stereotyped questions and answers. (This would also apply to the questions asked in Church Visitation, see Article 44, D.K.O.) Today the tendency is too strong toward rigid adherence to the latter and this is not good for the church. In a matter such as this the aim of the Church Order would be more readily attained if the spirit of this article were given proper stress. There would then be much less danger that this custom of mutual supervision degrades into a mere formality appended to the Classis. There are evidences that this latter has already become reality to a certain extent and this is very detrimental to the true welfare of the church.

A few remarks must be made yet concerning each of the questions asked in this article. The first has to do with the "Consistory Meetings." This is strictly a matter of good order and is of fundamental importance. The Classis does not interfere here with the work or function of the Consistory nor does she inquire into the internal affairs of the church over which the Consistory has sole jurisdiction. She does not ask what is done at the consistory meetings or how those meetings are conducted. Over these matters the Classis has no supervision. She may only inquire into one matter in this connection. That is: "Are the consistory meetings held?"

This question, however, ought to be changed somewhat. A minimum change would be that the word "regularly" be inserted after the word "held." Otherwise, for example, in

a Classis where the meetings of Classis are held twice a year or once in six months, this question could be asked and a consistory that has met only once or twice in the interval between Classis could answer it affirmatively. This would not be right. Although the answer is undoubtedly correct, the very purpose of the question is defeated. The supervision intended is not accomplished. The question really means, "Are the consistory meetings held *regularly*, i.e., at regular intervals?" Does the consistory meet in compliance with Article 37 of the Church Order? This is generally understood to mean that in every church the consistory shall meet at least once a month. That, it seems, would be the minimum requirement. More frequent meetings may, and in many instances should, be held. This is fundamental to good order for the affairs of the church are regulated and executed through the offices which Christ has instituted in the church and then when the office bearers do not conduct regular meetings, there is something fundamentally wrong in that church. This the Classis has the right to know. Thus it would be better to ask whether the meetings of the consistory are held regularly or, as the proposed revision suggests, "How often are they held?" Then the president might ask further whether the frequency of the meetings in a given church is adequate to meet the needs of that church. If the answer to any of these questions is negative, the guilty consistory must be admonished by the Classis and, if necessary, further investigation be made of the matter.

The next question concerns the administration of Christian discipline by the consistory. This, too, is a very important matter because where discipline is neglected the inevitable ruin of the church follows. Inasfar as is possible, the church must be kept pure. She is the body of Christ in whom God dwells through the Holy Spirit. That body must be properly maintained. Of this discipline we shall have occasion to write, D.V., in connection with later articles of our Church Order and so we need not discuss that here. It may be noted, however, that the matter of discipline in connection with this question may and undoubtedly should be taken in the broad sense of the word. The question then does not mean simply whether the consistory actually has cases of censure and perhaps occasion to excommunicate the impenitent and recalcitrant members. Rather the idea is whether the consistory observes that all things, doctrine and life, are maintained in the church in harmony with the Word of God. Does the church faithfully punish evil doers with the spiritual power of the keys of heaven's kingdom? The preaching of the Word is itself a chief means of discipline and, therefore, this question may also well imply an inquiry into whether or not the Word is so preached that its discipline is felt in the congregation. In connection with this, therefore, the president of the classis has room for several pointed questions if he is allowed the liberty to depart from the "form questions" and broaden the scope of his inquiry. The devil, the world and all the powers of sin are very busy to spoil and break down the church. Should not we then be

the more vigilant to be assured that every possible measure is taken to safeguard the church against these evils and to preserve her in the truth and in righteousness? It is easy to follow a formality by asking a general question but it is something else to really investigate the matter of exercising discipline. Yet, even where it may cause pain, the latter must be done either by the consistory itself or through the processes of this mutual supervision. Finally, it is certainly better to unveil any lack or wrong doing in this respect when it can still be amended than after it has done irreparable damage to the church.

The third question that is asked concerns the proper care of the poor and the Christian schools. These two may be considered separately since they are not really one and the same. A church may, for example, provide for its poor but neglect Christian education or in another case the reverse may be true. First of all then, the question is whether each consistory sees to it that its poor are taken care of. This is very necessary because this work is a reflection of the mercy and love of Christ. It is a question then as to whether or not the High Priestly office of Christ is truly reflected in the church. Moreover, the church has received a direct commission from Christ to look after the poor whom He said, "Ye have always with you!" It is a question whether this command of Christ is being observed. The matter touches upon the other question that is inserted in the proposed revision, namely, "How does the office of deacons function in your church?"

Concerning this we have written at length in connection with Articles 25 and 26 of the Church Order. We need not repeat that here. We must remark, however, that caring for the poor consists of more than setting up and taking offerings for a Charity or Benevolent Fund. If there are no poor in a congregation, the diaconate can and should render assistance as the need may be in other churches or in institutions of mercy where the sick and afflicted are cared for. A church that shows a sizable income in its benevolent fund and very little or no expenditures is lacking in a most important work. The alms of God's people must not only be diligently collected but they must also be distributed with the same diligence. Some diaconates are efficient in the former but lacking in the latter. Is this done in your church? How is this important work carried out?

Also in connection with this the president of the Classis might make further inquiry with a few direct and related questions to the delegates of each consistory. If this were done, some churches would undoubtedly be found to be in need of admonition and in the place of bank accounts collecting interest there would be poor assisted in their misery and afflicted alleviated in their sufferings.

Next time, D.V., we shall continue the discussion of these questions with the one pertaining to the support of Christian schools and the last one dealing with the help and judgment of the Classis in the government of the local church.

G.V.d.B.

ALL AROUND US

The Fight Against Obscenity

In several of the periodicals which we have perused recently, religious and secular, we have noticed that there is considerable alarm raised with respect to and protest against the corrupt literature and pictures being sent through the mails to our American youth.

I have before me at the moment two articles both of which sound alarm and encourage a fight against obscenity: one appearing in *Christian Economics*, and another in *Christianity Today*, November 3 and 9, 1959, respectively.

Christian Economics tells us that "a survey of the magazine stands in the city of Spokane revealed over 100 periodicals featuring sex obscenity in varying degrees." We are also told that a non-sectarian organization called the "Citizens for Decent Literature, Inc.," has been organized to help stamp out the scourge. In one campaign conducted in December, 1958 this organization caused over 30 magazines to disappear from circulation. This organization believes that the fight must be carried on by other local organizations formed in each community throughout the country, and that with national concerted effort this evil can be removed from the American scene.

Christianity Today published an interview with Postmaster General Arthur E. Summerfield in order to show to its readers the seriousness of obscenity in the mails. Mr. Summerfield reveals some startling figures and observations. Here are some of the questions he answered:

"What kinds of obscene materials are sent through the mails? Obscene and lewd pictures, slides, films, and sex literature, as well as material dealing with the vilest perversions. Much of it is so filthy and revolting in nature that it defies description."

"Is mail order obscenity increasing? The mail order obscenity racket has tripled in the past five years and can double again in the next few years unless it is stopped."

"How large a business is it? Our Inspection Service estimates that sales from mail order obscenity are now running at the rate of a half billion dollars a year. They further estimate it will become a billion-dollar racket within the next several years if it progresses at its present rate of speed."

"Filth peddlers will invade American homes by soliciting at least a million teen-age youngsters in the next 12 months. That's one child out of every thirty-five of school age in America!"

"How does it operate? Most dealers in mail order obscenity are relatively small-time operators with very little capital invested in their business. Profits are so large that many of them have fantastic returns on their investments. Increasingly they are directing their sales efforts toward the youth of America, both boys and girls."

"How do dealers in obscenity get names of children for their mailing lists? The names of youngsters are secured in a variety of ways. In some instances the dealers in obscenity buy mailing lists from legitimate list brokers who are not aware of the use to which the lists are to be put. In other instances they build their own lists by assembling the names and addresses of graduates of high school classes, Boy Scout or Girl Scout groups, church clubs or other organizations of youngsters. In other instances, they advertise model airplanes or stamps or doll dress kits to youngsters at attractive prices and actually send them these articles for the money received. However, their primary purpose is to get names and addresses by this procedure."

"What can parents do to stop this racket? If parents find any obscene sales solicitations in the letters sent to their youngsters they can help us stop this racket by doing these two simple things:

1. Collect all the material received, including the envelope.
2. Deliver this material, along with the envelope, to their local postmaster in person or by mail.

The Post Office Department will handle the matter from there on. It is not necessary for the parents or their children to sign a formal complaint or to appear in court."

"What is the Post Office Department doing to drive obscenity from the mails? For the past six months the Post Office Department has intensified its efforts to drive obscenity from the mails. We have testified before the Congress as to the seriousness of this problem. We have exposed this racket in considerable detail to the press, the radio and TV. We have made numerous speeches about this menace before many religious, parents' and women's groups around the country. Right now the Postal Inspection Service is spending a major portion of its time on pornography cases. In the past year it obtained 45 percent more convictions than in the previous year."

Mr. Summerfield is also hopeful that this devastating menace can be and will be wiped out when parents and civic groups and the proper government agencies concentrate on the problem.

It surely behooves us to heed these warnings and not assume an indifferent attitude respecting this problem. Let us not as Protestant Reformed parents think that our children are immune to this infectious scourge that is fast engulfing the youth of our nation. Rather, let us also watch and pray, lest we fall a prey.

Lessons On Matthew 5

In the November, 1959 issue of *Torch and Trumpet* the Reverend Henry Vander Kam gives brief expositions on The Sermon on the Mount. With two of these we take exception.

Commenting on Matthew 5:13-16 and particularly on the expression of Jesus: "Ye are the salt of the earth," he makes the following observations:

"Those whose hearts have been renewed have a very specific task to perform in this world. They are the salt of the earth. This is stated as a fact, not as something which must still be accomplished. If they should not act as a salt they are worthless. They have received all their qualifications from above and that makes them a salt. The statement: 'If the salt have lost its savor' means that their qualifications as citizens of his Kingdom are lacking. Those who are what the Beatitudes demand are the salt of the earth.

"Salt is used for two purposes: to make food tasty and to preserve it. It is this latter function which Jesus has in mind when he speaks of his people as the salt of the earth. Salt was the only preservative known to the people of Jesus' day. It was, therefore, one of the most important things in their daily lives. Without salt food would spoil in a very short time.

"As the salt of the earth God's people prevent the decay of this sinful world. Without the presence of his people this world would fall into utter ruin. Had there been but ten righteous people in Sodom and Gomorrah, these cities would have been spared. God spares the world because of the presence of his people . . ."

Concerning the above quotation we remark:

1. That the Rev. Vander Kam should have known better than to give the above interpretation concerning the significance of salt. He himself tells us that "salt is used for two purposes: to make food tasty and to preserve it." Without testing the former significance, he makes the definite observation that "it is this latter function which Jesus has in mind when he speaks of his people as the salt of the earth." This is a case of poor exegesis.

2. That he is in error when he asserts that salt must be understood here in the preservative sense. He is evidently so much under the influence of the common grace doctrine that he cannot understand how God's people is the only morsel left in this corrupt and rotten world that is tasty to God. He tells us that Jesus is stating a plain fact here, but he ignores this statement of fact and wants to make it an imperative that the children of God must preserve this rotten world. I would ask him the question: What good is it to put salt with rotten and decayed meat? He knows the answer is that it serves no purpose at all. Neither do the children of God preserve this rotten world, nor is it their calling. He knows too that when the very last of God's people has been saved out of this rotten world, then the world will be destroyed as were Sodom and Gomorrah.

We also take exception to what Rev. Vander Kam writes concerning Matthew 5:27-32. Our objection is not so much as to what he writes as to what he doesn't write. We have in mind especially the exposition of the verses 31 and 32. Writes Rev. Vander Kam:

"In this same connection Christ gives attention to the problem of divorce. The people of his day were being misinformed regarding this problem. The teachers of the people

pointed to Deuteronomy 24:1 where Moses allows a bill of divorcement to be given a woman if she does not please her husband due to 'some unseemly thing' which he has found in her. This provision, of course, was not found in the law of Sinai. Divorce was practiced during Old Testament times. In order to protect such a woman, Moses commanded that she should be given a bill of divorcement stating that she had not been guilty of adultery and was free to marry another man.

"In chapter 19 Jesus says that Moses allowed this because of the hardness of the hearts of the people, but that God had not made this allowance from the beginning. Jesus points back to the beginning. This is his 'but I say unto you' over against the prevailing teaching of his day. According to Jesus, there is only one ground for divorce, viz., adultery. No other ground can be found in all his teaching. Marriage is a divine ordinance, a lasting bond. Man may not put asunder what God has joined together.

"The teaching of our Lord in regard to the problem of divorce is quite different from the common practice today. Divorce is easy in many places and almost any ground suffices. The church of Christ is faced with this problem more and more. The Scriptures should be our only guide. Marriage must be safeguarded because it is a divine institution and the most fundamental of all institutions among men.

"What does it mean when Jesus says that the woman who is put away, who is not guilty of fornication, is made an adulteress? Is she made guilty by the sinful deed of her husband? This can hardly be true. There are commentators (Bouwman, Grosheide, Hendriksen, et alia) who emphasize the fact that a verb is used here in the passive voice. This changes the wording considerably. Instead of the reading, 'maketh her an adulteress' the reading would be, 'causes her to suffer adultery.' Among the Jews a woman could not divorce her husband but the husband could divorce his wife. Jesus lays all the emphasis on the fact that the husband is guilty. He does wrong; his wife suffers wrong. If the husband puts away his wife when she is not guilty of the sin of adultery, he causes her to suffer the reproach of one who is actually guilty. She must now face life alone and will be tempted to marry another. The bill of divorcement has not severed the marriage bond in God's sight. Should she then marry again she will actually be an adulteress. The man who marries a woman who has been put away by her first husband also commits adultery . . ."

For lack of space we can only make this one comment. Why didn't Rev. Vander Kam take this wonderful opportunity to instruct his readers, especially those Christian Reformed, and broaden out on the statement "The bill of divorcement has not severed the marriage bond in God's sight." Had he done this his churches might have been helped and a beginning might have been made to deliver them from the divorce problem they have created when they asserted that divorce, grounded by adultery, does sever the marriage bond.

M.S.

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

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

Nov. 20, 1959

Edgerton has named the following trio: Revs. C. Hanko, G. Lubbers and B. Woudenberg.

The trio selected by the consistory of Hull consists of the Revs. C. Hanko, G. Lanting and G. Vanden Berg.

The Mr. and Mrs. Society of Southwest was host to the Sr. Mr. and Mrs. Society of First Church Nov. 13. The Bible discussion was on The Doctrine of the Last Things, following an outline by Rev. M. Schipper, Southwest's president. After recess the joint societies enjoyed colored slides of Yellowstone Park. Seymour Beiboer, of First Church, was the photographer, and also narrated the showing thereof. Mr. Beiboer has shared his beautiful pictures with the Men's Society and the Y.P. Society of his church on some of their after recess programs.

The Adams St. School Athletic Ass'n served a pancake supper Nov. 7 to raise money to build a paved turn-around for the school busses, and for a basketball court for the older children. That evening, like its predecessors, provided opportunity for friendly visiting, and for contributing towards the goal of the Association.

Did you know . . . that the three-fold purpose of the Federation of Prot. Ref. School Societies is: 1. Supplying and training Prot. Ref. teachers; 2. Supplying a Prot. Ref. course of study and textbooks; 3. Attaining cooperation among schools in reaching the goal of distinctive Prot. Ref. education for our children, *and*, that Miss Thelma Pastoor, of Adams School, has been assigned the next seminar paper entitled, "Development of the child, physically, emotionally, socially, intellectually and spiritually," *and*, that about eight ministers and fifteen teachers and prospective teachers, attend these seminars whenever possible?

We surmise that Rev. G. Van Baren, of Doon, will miss Rev. J. A. Heys very keenly after the brother leaves Hull to settle in South Holland. The cooperation between those two ministers made it possible for their congregations to enjoy at least one preaching service on the Sundays that their own pastor was away on Classical appointment.

Because of the shortage of ministers Rev. G. Hanko is busy occupying various pulpits in the area. Due to this fact First Church sometimes alternates the Catechism sermons from morning to evening.

Add to the list of churches that include the sign of the pouring of the wine as a part of the ceremony of the Lord's Supper: Hope Church, whose consistory decided upon this action this month.

Rev. G. Lanting conducted both services in Holland Nov. 8, the day the bulletin carried a copy of his letter accepting the call extended him.

Some of the area bulletins are asking people to keep

Sunday, Dec. 20, open for the Prot. Ref. Men's Chorus Christmas Program to be given after the evening service in First Church. The following week the Hope Choral Society plans to give its annual Christmas Program in their church. Two consecutive Sunday evenings providing splendid Christian entertainment to the glory of the Babe of Bethlehem, Who is our Lord and Savior.

Hull's Young People's Society sponsored a Reformation Day program Nov. 1, inviting the Doon people to share with them the interesting program planned. *Beacon Lights* was the recipient of the offering taken.

This bit of news came to us over the signature of Mr. E. B. Gritters, clerk of Redland's Consistory, "The congregation of Redlands has experienced many welcome changes in the past few months. First of all, after nearly nine months of vacancy, Rev. H. Veldman of Edgerton, Minn., accepted the call to labor in Redlands. Secondly, after meeting in Legion Halls and similar buildings since 1953, the congregation has purchased the church, social hall, and parsonage formerly owned by the Free Methodists, at Colton Ave. and Webster St. in Redlands. With a good deal of volunteer help by both men and women of the congregation our Building Committee, consisting of M. Gaastra, T. Feenstra and H. Sawyer, has completely remodeled and redecorated the parsonage. We thank God Who has so prospered us, and pray for His continued guidance and blessing in the future."

. see you in church.

J.M.F.

FROM HOLY WRIT

(Continued from page 109)

kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control, against such there is no law."

What a gift of grace this *peace* is. Especially when we are full of all joy and peace! When this joy and peace are in us then we live at peace with the brother and sister in the Lord. Then we shall be longsuffering and patient in hope. And the law will not condemn us. We will walk at liberty. We shall be truly free.

Of this we must be made full from the fountain—God!

He is the God of the hope. He is the God of the peace. He is the God of the patience. When He fills us by His Spirit He fills our heart, our mind, our soul, our strength. There are various facets to this peace and joy in life. There are as many as there are relationships to God and man, and to the creature about us.

When we are filled with joy it is from the heart that we love and are at peace! And thus also with our soul and strength. Thus doing shall the saints at Rome truly receive each other. They shall not judge in meat and drink any longer, but shall see that all is the Lord's. Then in hope and faith and joy of the Holy Spirit, whether we eat or drink, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.

Thus shall we, with one mind and out of one mouth, glorify God for His mercy!

G.L.