

THE STANDARD

Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

VOLUME XXXVI

NOVEMBER 1, 1959 — GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

NUMBER 3

MEDITATION

SECRET ERRORS

"Who can understand his errors? Cleanse Thou me from secret faults." PSALM 19:12.

The context of my text is a strange one.

The first six verses speak of the glory of God in creation, with the sun in its center. The following five verses speak of God's doctrine and its glory. And then, all of a sudden a cry of the sinner: "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse Thou me from secret faults." (And the last word is not in the text.)

I think that we should explain it as follows:

First, the inspired poet points to the glory of God in nature, and outlines the place of the sun in that glorious spectacle.

Second, he refers to the doctrine of God, the law, which finds its type in the sun.

Third, the cry of the sinner is the result of the searching power of God's doctrine, and more specifically, in his heart.

And so I would talk a little of that cry.

* * * *

The key-word is "errors."

What are they?

There are some explanations which are not correct.

Some say that they refer to the sins which we committed in secret.

Now we admit that a very great number of sins are committed in secret, but I do not think that they are meant here. That is plain from the peculiarly questioning form which implies the answer, namely: No one! No one can understand his errors.

There are others who say: the sins that do not come to

completion, but are choked down. That's not correct either, and for the same reason as cited above.

They cannot be called "secret" anymore.

What then?

The word: "errors" means the sins which are made through stupidity, blindness and hardness of heart.

We sinned, but knew not that we sinned.

Ah, but there we have a terrible picture! The root of the word "errors" is to pierce, to cleave, to separate. And its idea is the action whereby we tore ourselves from the light in order to walk in dark, evil ways. And we knew it not.

The secret faults are the dark corners of our heart. And that is not innocent either. Our secret errors are the fruit of the original error of Adam.

Let us take a classical example. Luther, storming at the brethren regarding the Lord's Supper. He would have the wine and bread to be the actual body and blood of Jesus Christ. Luther did not know that this was an error. He was serious, sincere. But it was an error nevertheless.

Do you remember the long and bitter fights in church gatherings regarding "Kleine bekertjes"? (I refer there to the small cups in the Lord's Supper, rather than a few large cups.)

Argument was placed overagainst argument, reasoning against reasoning, heads and hearts became bitter, friends were estranged, and brethren were torn apart.

Secret faults, because the unity is not in the vessel but in the wine. But the people thought that they were fighting for God and against the modern lie.

Ah, secret faults!

* * * *

And David confesses them.

David saw many sins in his life, both in his outward life, but more so in his inner life. And he confessed.

He enumerated his sins: but, oh God! there so many; I

cannot number them at all. And so we hear him say: I am evil, born in sin!

And when the light of God's Spirit shone in his heart he saw many, many sins.

But he also saw the very dark corners in his heart where he could not taste and value. And he distrusted those corners. He feared lest he forgot some sins he committed. No, that is not the right word. It was not a matter of "forgetting" sins, it was a matter whether or not he even saw sin for what it was.

He feared that many sins escaped being seen and recognized.

Beloved friends! Read the foregoing sentence over and over again. *He feared that many sins escaped being seen and recognized.*

Oh, but this is *Contra Naturam*.

According to our old nature we do the very opposite. Then we try to *minimize* sin. But when the goodly light of God's grace enters our hearts we become very careful. Then comes consciousness of guilt.

And then comes *distrust of self*.

Do you see the picture now?

A very humble man is speaking in our text. A man who does not fly upon the shoulder of his neighbor to destroy him. A man who is much harder on SELF than on the neighbor. A man who is filled with the love of God. A man who because of that *hates sin*. He hates sin, of course. But he hates even the sin which he cannot see in his own heart. He thoroughly distrusts himself. And he throws himself in the arms of God, with the prayer: Oh God! I do not trust my heart. There are dark corners in my heart. I may be doing things which definitely are against Thee and Thy law. O God! cleanse Thou me from secret faults!

* * * *

Yes, David asks the Lord to cleanse him from those secret faults.

David is not yet satisfied.

It is not enough to know our sins.

It is not enough that we desire to be forgiven.

But we want to be cleansed from them.

There is a text in God's Word which at once comes to our consciousness. It is found in Isaiah 1:18, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Oh yes, we want the cleansing of them.

To cleanse means to be beautiful, to be pure, to be innocent again.

Oh God! burn Thou me clean!

But there is more than that in this cleansing.

It is not so that we are merely cleansed from our sins. No, there is much more. When we are cleansed we are exalted to a heavenly beauty, purity and innocence.

God does not merely place us in the first Paradise where Adam and Eve dwelled.

No, but He places us in a Paradise which beggars description. Read the last two chapters of Revelation.

Moreover, He so renews us that we can never sin again.

And if you should ask me: but how is this all possible? Then I would answer you: its possibility and reality is in the cross of Jesus Christ.

That cross spells forgiveness, cleansing and sanctification.

And the Agent who cleanses us is the Spirit of grace, the Spirit Who was poured out on Pentecost and Who dwells in the Church of Christ ever since.

* * * *

The end is Beauty of Holiness.

And so, don't be stupid.

Stupidity is the cause of the secret errors. Then you fume and fight, but it is for bad things. Hot heads and cold hearts.

Instead, learn from Jesus Christ: "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." Matt. 11:29, 30.

Do not be blind. I am speaking to the disciples of Christ. I am speaking to myself. There is much blindness left in the regenerated heart. And blindness causes secret faults. They are faults that are secreted from your own consciousness.

Instead, let the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ shine unto you. And that light is the glorious knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Then you become wise unto salvation. Then you know what you should think, speak and act. Then you do not stagger in your very behaviour over-against the brethren.

Do not be hard and cruel.

There is much hard-heartedness left in the living church of Christ.

And that also is a cause of the secret faults. Father did so and so, and it is good enough for me. And you go on in your way of self-deception.

Instead, learn of Christ for He was of a meek and lowly heart. He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.

* * * *

And even then, there shall be the dark corners of your heart.

We, all of us, shall have opportunity to pray the prayer of David, the man of God.

It shall be good to pray his prayer: Who can understand his errors? Cleanse Thou me from secret faults!

To thoroughly understand his errors is not given to any man. To *understand* his errors is for a Christian to confess them. And to be cleansed of them.

There is much in us, in the depth of us, in the deep heart, which is not known to us.

But distrust yourself before the face of God.

And ask Him in great humility to thoroughly investigate your heart. Say then: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Psalm 139:23, 24.

The love of God shall be your guide, your prompter.

For it is the love of God which will teach you to hate sin, especially your own sin.

G.V.

Deacons' Conference

All present and former deacons are invited to the Deacons' Conference,

NOVEMBER 20, at 8:00 P. M.

at the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church.

Topic:

"What are the Fundamental Requirements of a Deacon."

Speaker: REV. H. C. HOEKSEMA

The Diaconate of the Hudsonville
Prot. Ref. Church

H. Boer, Secretary

IN MEMORIAM

The Men's Society of South West Protestant Reformed Church wishes to express its sympathy to two of our fellow members, Mr. Richard Kooiker and Mr. Peter Cnosen, in the loss of their

MOTHERS

May God give grace to the bereaved so they may know that all things work together for good to them that love God.

Rev. M. Schipper, President
Isaac Kuiper, Secretary

THE STANDARD BEARER

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

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

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Communications relative to contents should be addressed to
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Grand Rapids 7, Mich.

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James Dykstra, 1326 W. Butler Ave., S. E.
Grand Rapids 7, Michigan

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

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

Subscription price: \$5.00 per year

Entered as Second Class matter at Grand Rapids, Michigan

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EDITORIALS

Evolution, Long Periods, Or Days

Before we finish the present series on the days of creation, we still have to call attention to the seventh day which God instituted as the sabbath for creation and especially for man.

Of this we read more than once in Scripture.

First of all in Gen. 2:2, 3: "And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it; because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made." And in the law, as recorded in Ex. 20:8-11: "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maid servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it." And in Ex. 31:15-17: "Six days may work be done; but in the seventh day is the sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord: whosoever doeth any work on the sabbath day, shall surely be put to death. Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel forever: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed." And in He. 4:4-9: "For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest on the seventh day from all his works. And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest. Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief: Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, after so long a time; as it is said, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. For if Jesus had given the rest, he would not afterward have spoken of another day. There remaineth therefore a rest for the people of God."

Now, what does this all mean?

1. First of all, the question arises whether the seventh day also was an ordinary day like the six days of creation. This, you understand, stands in immediate connection with the subject we have been treating in these articles.

Some have denied this. First of all, because the text does not limit the seventh day by evening and morning as was the case with the six days of creation. Some have even gone the length of reasoning backward from the seventh day to the six days of creation and maintain that just as the seventh day was no ordinary day so also the six days of creation

cannot have been days as we know them but must have been long periods. This, however, is absurd and impossible. For, if from the fact that neither evening nor morning are mentioned in the account of Gen. 2 concerning the seventh day, the conclusion is drawn that, therefore, this day was without end, it must follow that also the six days of creation, supposing they were like the seventh day, must have been endless. And this is absurd. Hence, we maintain, that also the seventh day, as it was sanctified by the Lord for the creature and especially for man, was an ordinary day limited by evening and morning. This is corroborated by the fourth commandment which speaks of the six days of creation and, in the very same connection, mentions the seventh day as the day on which God rested. This is also the explanation of Keil in his commentary on this passage. Writes he: "But true as it is that the Sabbath of God has no evening, and that the *sabbatismos*, to which the creature is to attain at the end of his course, will be bounded by no evening, but last forever; we must not, without further ground, introduce this true and profound idea into the seventh creation-day. We could only be warranted in adopting such an interpretation, and understanding by the concluding day of the work of creation a period of endless duration, on the supposition that the six preceding days were so many periods in the world's history, which embraced the time from the beginning of creation to the final completion of its development. But as the six creation-days, according to the words of the text, were earthly days of ordinary duration, we must understand the seventh in the same way; and that all the more because in every passage, in which it is mentioned as the foundation of the theocratic Sabbath, it is regarded as an ordinary day."

With this we agree.

2. The question still remains, however: how we must understand this rest on the part of God? We realize, of course, that for the eternal God there are no days. There is no time at all in God. But we would mention two things concerning this rest of God on the seventh day. First of all, it means that, on that created seventh day, God ceased from creating; creation was finished and completed. This is evident from Gen. 2:2: "And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made." And also in vs. 3: "in it he had rested from all his work which God had created and made." This, therefore, is the first meaning. God did not create anymore. We must understand, of course, that this was a revelation of God in time, a revelation for us. As we said above, for God there is no time: there are no days and months and years. For that matter we may say that in His eternal decree God eternally creates and eternally rests. But in time God reveals Himself in the six days of creation and the seventh day of rest. On that day God finished His work of creation and He created no more. Secondly, it also means that God, on the seventh day, also entered into the enjoyment of His perfect work, for "God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good."

3. This seventh day God also blessed and sanctified so that it became a sabbath for man: "And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it," Gen. 2:3. Here, surely, it is evident that also the seventh created day, like the six preceding ones, was an ordinary day of twenty-four hours. Man, who was created after the image of God, was also to enter into God's rest. For man was created as the friend-servant of God and as such he might live in God's fellowship. That was his rest and of that rest the weekly sabbath was both a picture and a partial realization. Hence, God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it.

4. However, this was not the end. Man did not enter into creation-rest of God permanently. He fell into the restlessness of sin. But God had provided some better thing for us. Although His works were finished from the creation of the world, Hebrews 4:3, and although He rested on the seventh day from all His works, Hebrews 4:4, and although man, through sin, failed to enter into the creation-rest of God, yet God spoke of another day. That day is the eternal rest according to which the people of God in Christ Jesus our Lord will dwell in God's tabernacle forever. Of that final and everlasting day the seventh creation-day is a shadow.

However, in conclusion, we reiterate that the days in Genesis can by no stretch of the imagination be explained as long periods of thousands or millions of years. Honest exegesis demands that we conceive of them as ordinary days.

H.H.

As To Being Protestant Reformed

To write a few articles on the above mentioned subject seemed to me to be quite proper and expedient.

Many of us hardly can give an account of the reason why we are Protestant Reformed in distinction from other Reformed Churches and, especially from the Christian Reformed Church. This is especially true of the younger generation as well as of those that joined our churches since 1924 and that have not had the experience of those that, in 1924, were ejected from the Christian Reformed Church.

Yet, it is not only proper but also necessary that we all be able to give such an account. We must be able to give a reason before God and also to anyone that asks us why we are Protestant Reformed, a reason for the right of our separate existence as churches. How did we come to exist in separation from the Christian Reformed Church? What is the meaning of the name Protestant Reformed? And above all, what is the distinctive doctrinal basis on which the Protestant Reformed Churches stand? Is that basis only negative, such as the denial of the "Three Points" adopted by the Christian Reformed Church in 1924, or is it also positive? These questions, and especially the last, I propose to answer, the Lord willing, in the ensuing articles.

I do not have to dwell long upon the history of the origin of our churches. Doctrinally that origin must be traced to the adoption of the "Three Points" by the

Synod of the Christian Reformed Church in 1924. And historically that origin lies in the fact that three of the ministers of the Christian Reformed Church, the Rev. H. Danhof, the Rev. G. M. Ophoff and the undersigned, could not conscientiously subscribe to those "Three Points" because, according to their conviction, they were not Reformed but Arminian. The result was, to make a very long story very short, that the three ministers were deposed and that they did not submit to that deposition but continued to function as ministers in their own congregations while by far the majority of their churches followed them.

The three ministers appealed to Synod, chiefly on the basis that the whole matter of "common grace" had been before Synod, that Synod, had, indeed, adopted the "Three Points," but that it had not demanded agreement with those points and certainly had deliberately avoided all suggestions of discipline. Hence, the ministers claimed that the two classes, Grand Rapids East and West, had no right to depose them. It stands to reason that the Synod of 1926 did not even consider the appeal in view of the fact that the ministers had not submitted themselves to their deposition but had continued as ministers in the Christian Reformed Church.

During the interim of their appeal, our churches adopted the name of Protestant Christian Reformed Churches, expressing thereby that they still were and wanted to be Christian Reformed but, at the same time, were protesting against the illegal actions of the Classes Grand Rapids East and West.

In the meantime, even before our appeal was decided upon by Synod, we lost our property and immediately built new edifices.

However, after Synod had rejected our appeal, we desired to have a new name because the name of Protestant Christian Reformed Churches had no sense anymore. A committee was appointed to propose a name to the Combined Consistories (the only form of organization we had as yet at that time) in order that the latter might decide upon a new name for our churches. Two names were proposed to the meeting: the name Reformed Protestant and the name Protestant Reformed. The latter name was chosen and that is still our name.

Now, what is the meaning of that name?

It expresses two ideas.

First of all, of course, it expresses the truth that we are Reformed and stand on the basis of the Reformed Confessions. And this is certainly true even till the present time, our enemies being witnesses to that truth.

And as to the first part of the name, "Protestant," it does not express that we are still protesting against the actions of the Christian Reformed Church in 1924, or even against the "Three Points," but it denotes that we stand on the basis of the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century.

This, I think, is a beautiful name.

Let us continue to make ourselves worthy of it! H.H.

OUR DOCTRINE

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

PART TWO

CHAPTER TEN

Revelation 12:7-12

For this is the opposing side. The dragon and his angels are fighting here with Michael and his angels. We need not dwell very long upon their identity and power. We have seen that the devil is a most powerful monster, bloodthirsty and fierce, with terrible hatred in his bosom against the man child, as the great opponent of God and His kingdom, who has usurped the power of the kingdom but who is limited in his power by the decree of God. At present we need not pay any more attention to him. He is here called the old serpent, the devil, the old deceiver, and Satan. And no doubt these names are here given him with a special purpose. But the meaning of these we shall learn later, as well as the purpose for which they are given to him in this connection. He comes with his angels. No doubt he has a large army of them, as we have learned from the preceding portion: he dragged along in his fall from God a third of the angels in heaven. And though I do not think that he has all these evil spirits at his own disposal at any time, nevertheless we may well imagine that he is there with a large and powerful army, to give battle to Michael and his angels. Such, then, are the combatants in this war. It is a spiritual war between the mightiest among the mighty of God's spiritual creatures, those that fell away from Him and hate Him and strive after His authority, on the one hand, and those that remained obedient and subject to God and that therefore fight His battles, on the other.

It will be of importance to ascertain, in the second place, the time of this battle. For this will help us to determine the significance and the object of this war to a large extent. As we have said in the beginning, we understand this portion as running parallel with the preceding, so that the time of the devil's opposition against the woman and the time of this battle coincide. The scene differs, the stage of the one being upon earth, of the other in heaven; but the time is the same. We must therefore not think of a spiritual battle in heaven before Satan entered into paradise to deceive man. It is true that at a superficial reading we may receive the impression that this is the battle referred to and that we are here taught that when Satan and his angels rebelled against God, the Lord employed the good and holy angels to expel them from heaven. It is also true that some have interpreted this passage in that sense, and that especially poetic imagination is fond of drawing this picture in this connection. Then it should seem as if the text were really explained. It is a

battle in heaven, and therefore it was fought when Satan was still there. It is a battle the result of which is that the place of the devil is found no more in heaven, exactly corresponding with what we know of the rebellion of Satan before he came to the earth. And in the third place, the devil and his angels are cast down to the earth, again explaining his work in paradise and ever since. Nevertheless this explanation is soon proven to be impossible if we only study the text once more. The great voice in heaven tells us of more results of this spiritual battle. It tells us that now the salvation and the power of the kingdom of God have come, that the authority of Christ has appeared, — things that surely could not be said immediately after the first rebellion of Satan and his angels. There was as yet no salvation. There was as yet no manifestation of the authority of Christ. But there is more. The devil is here called "accuser of our brethren." And by brethren is here meant the saved in Christ Jesus evidently. It is in that capacity evidently that he fought this spiritual battle. It is also in that capacity that he was defeated. For the joy in heaven is caused especially by the fact that the accuser of the brethren as such is cast down. The same great voice speaks of the fact that there were saved in Christ that have overcome through the blood of the Lamb and the testimony which they gave. All this gives us an entirely different impression. The time during which this battle is fought is not before the entrance of the devil into paradise: for at this time there are already saved in Christ Jesus, brethren that fight through the blood of the Lamb and that overcome, that have loved not their lives even unto death. And at this time the devil already appears as the accuser of the brethren, who accuses them before the countenance of God day and night.

On the other hand, it cannot be the time of the end that is here referred to. Thus other interpreters have it. There are some who maintain that the woman referred to in the first part of this chapter is the visible church and that the man child whom this woman is about to bring forth is the church invisible, the real spiritual children of God. Their birth is their final glorification. When all the children of God shall have been gathered into glory, the visible church, as pictured in the sign of the woman shall have finished her giving birth to the church invisible, and the latter shall be caught up in glory to God's throne. But now, after the final glorification of these real spiritual people of God has taken place in the end of time, the devil makes a last and bold attack upon them, in order to draw them down to hell. And in this last attack they are defended by Michael and his holy angels. In itself this were possible, were it not against the plain indication of the text. First of all, it is against the simple meaning of the text to make of the man child the church invisible instead of the Christ. Such an explanation leads us into all kinds of difficulties from which we cannot extricate ourselves. But besides, when the birth of the man child in the sense of the church invisible shall have been completed, there shall be no more people of God upon earth. Or

to speak plainly, if the giving birth to the man child represents the visible church giving birth to the invisible in her final glorification, then it is plain that when this birth is finished and all the people of God shall have been caught up to the throne of God, there shall be no more children of God in the church militant upon earth. Yet we read that after this battle is finished there is still the woman, there is still the church of God upon earth. For the devil persecutes her in his wrath. And not only is it true that there is still a church of God on earth, but there are also faithful children of God who keep the commandments of God and who hold the testimony, vs. 17. All this makes it sufficiently plain that this battle is not fought at the time of the end, when all the people of God shall already have been taken up into glory. And therefore also this interpretation must evidently be discarded.

Finally, we also discard the interpretation that has it that this battle is fought immediately after the exaltation of Christ. This interpretation imagines that in this chapter we have a strictly chronological order of events. First the devil stands watching the people of God to devour the great seed they are to bring forth. Then, when the child is born and he fails to crush it and it is caught up to the throne of God in heaven, the devil immediately after the exaltation of Christ also attempts to ascend to heaven, in order that he may attack the glorified Christ in heaven. But aside from the fact that we read no where of such an attack upon Christ in heaven, in the which He was defended by Michael and his angels, it certainly must be evident that this is also against the plain indication of the text. Not the Christ, but the brethren are the immediate object of this attack of Satan. And as we shall presently see, he appears here especially as the accuser of the brethren, who is overcome by them because of the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony. And therefore also this interpretation cannot be maintained.

There is but one possibility left. That possibility, which is fully warranted by the text itself and satisfies all the elements, is that our text gives us a picture of a battle fought in heaven between the devil and his angels all through the old dispensation. At the same time that the devil carries on a war upon earth and watches the church, in order to devour the Christ as soon as He is born, or even to prevent His birth, he also wages war in heaven with the spiritual powers that remain standing. All during this time there were brethren as the accuser of whom the devil appears. All through this dispensation there were those that loved not their life unto the death. It is therefore a battle fought all during this time. It is a battle, however, that must necessarily end, as we shall see, with the manifestation of Christ's glory and victory and His completed work, so that the battle is won through the blood of the Lamb. And if we take this view, we can also explain how the devil, after having suffered defeat in this spiritual battle in heaven, still can come down to the earth to persecute the rest of the seed of the woman. For these others are the faithful of the New Testament day. And therefore, as to the time of this war we would hold that

it began immediately after the death of Abel, that it continued all through the time of the Old Testament, and that it was finished contemporaneously with the exaltation of Jesus Christ.

I think that this interpretation will become all the more acceptable if we for a moment consider what might be the object of the devil in making this attack in heaven upon Michael and his angels. Was it his object to drag down these mighty ones, even as once he did with one third of the stars of heaven? Did he aim at the fall of Michael and his angels? This does not seem likely from the outset. For, in the first place, the fact that Michael is here defending and battling with the devil as the one who stands for the children of God's people and who once fought with the devil for the body of Moses, immediately makes us think that also here he is fighting not in his own defense, but in behalf of the people of God. The people of God are the object of the wrath of the devil. And Michael is sent, is appointed, to defend them. And besides, in the record of the great voice, which evidently sings of the victory of this spiritual battle, there is not even mention made of either Michael or of his angels. They do not sing of victory because they have been delivered from danger, but because of the deliverance and the victory of the brethren. And therefore, it is not likely that Satan's object in this attack is the angels themselves, against whom he is fighting, but rather the people of God of the old dispensation in as far as they have already entered into glory. This, therefore, is our interpretation. We think that all through the Old Testament days there was a battle fought in heaven for the souls of those that entered into glory before the suffering and exaltation of Christ, — a battle that was the logical concomitant of the battle the devil was fighting against the church to prevent the coming of the Great Seed. Just as certain as the devil was in his fight to prevent the coming of the Messiah, just as determined he had to be to fight this spiritual battle in heaven for the souls of the saved ones of the old dispensation. And therefore, once more, our explanation is that the devil fights a battle in heaven all through the days of the Old Testament for the possession of the souls that already had entered into glory from the days of Abel on, and that in this attack he is opposed by Michael and his angels, who stand for the children of God's people.

That this is but logical is clear. Christ had not yet come. And that meant that historically speaking the debt of the sinner had not yet been paid. Historically the sins of Abel and Enoch and Noah, the patriarchs, the prophets had not yet been atoned for. And therefore, historically they died as sinners. Historically Christ had not yet crushed the head of the serpent, had not yet assumed dominion. Historically speaking, the devil still was sovereign, and all the world lay at his feet because of the sin of man, all during the time of the old dispensation. True, in God's counsel it was different. In God's counsel it was established. In that counsel Christ had been appointed head and mediator of His people, and all His people had been given to Him. In that counsel not

only the people that should be born on earth after His own appearance, suffering, and exaltation, but also those that were born before this had been given to Christ. Also Abel and Enoch and Noah and Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the saved in Christ of the Old Testament were given to this head of the covenant. They were in Him. And because God's counsel is absolutely sure, therefore these men of the Old Testament did not have to wait for their salvation till all was finished. But being justified in the decree from all eternity, they entered into glory before the Savior had actually come and paid for their sins.

But Satan did not figure with this counsel of God. Nor could he imagine how certain that counsel of the Almighty was. He could not know that all these men were justified from all eternity, for the simple reason that in the counsel of God they were given to Christ. On the contrary, it was against that counsel, in as far as he knew it, that he fought the battle on earth. Satan actually must have had the hope in his devilish heart that he could so thwart the purpose of the Almighty that the Christ would never be born, would never pay for the sins of the people of God, would never enter into everlasting glory with them. And therefore, according to Satan's view of the matter, all these saints of the Old Testament entered into glory as sinners, upon whom he had a righteous claim, as sinners that deserved to go to hell because their sins had not yet been atoned for. God acted according to His counsel, however; and that counsel was certain as to its fulfillment. But Satan took the historical view of the matter, and maintained that all these souls that entered into glory belonged rightfully to him, that they had sinned against the Almighty, that they according to His own sentence were condemned to death, and that therefore they might not be in heaven. And thus we imagine that the devil goes to heaven to accuse the brethren. Now we also understand the text. Now we understand why he is called the old serpent, the devil, that is, the slanderer and accuser, why he is called Satan, the old deceiver. He slanders the saints of the Old Testament before God. He lies about them. He says that they have no right to enter into glory because they are condemned sinners. He accuses them by lying and slandering, and at the same time he slanders the name and the righteousness of God Who takes sinners into everlasting glory. Thus we can also understand the nature of the battle to a certain extent. The devil comes to fight for the souls of Abel and Enoch and Noah and Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and of Moses and Samuel and of all the prophets and of all those that had the promise and that lived and died by faith, endured the shame and mockery and persecution of the world in the old dispensation, and loved not their lives unto the death. And God sends Michael against him, to guard these souls and to defend the righteousness of God and the right of the saints to glory. The devil claims that they are sinners; Michael retorts that they are righteous. The devil maintains that they have sinned in paradise in Adam, and that they have sinned all their lives, and that therefore according to

the righteousness of God they must be lost, they must go to hell. Michael replies that God Almighty has declared them righteous and that His Word alone is sovereign. The devil maintains that they are not righteous since they themselves have never paid for their sins and no mediator has yet appeared. Michael answers that God has revealed that He would send the Great Seed to perform this work of salvation and that to Him all these saints have been given. The devil finally assures Michael that he is fighting a great war on earth and that he will surely prevent the coming of this man child, or, if he comes, will certainly devour him. Michael's answer is that God is mighty to fulfill all His Word and to crush the head of the serpent. And thus this spiritual battle continues all through the old dispensation. The battle here pictured is a battle for the possession of the saints of Christ that have died and entered into glory during the time of the old dispensation, that have not loved their lives unto death, that have clung to the word of their testimony, and that were accused day and night before the countenance of Almighty God by the devil, that old serpent, that deceives the whole world and that slanders the people of God from age to age, day and night.

Thus we can also understand that this battle must end with the historical realization of the salvation of Christ. When Christ comes, suffers, pays for the sins of His people, ascends to heaven, and is glorified, the contest is decided in favor of Michael and his angels. It is become plain, so plain that even the devil cannot contradict it, that the saints of the Old Testament had a right to glory on the basis of the future expiation of their sins and guilt. And therefore the conflict must end here. The devil is defeated. He cannot continue. Michael can now point to facts. He can now point to the finished work of Christ and overwhelmingly convince the devil that he fights a vain battle and that God was righteous in saving the saints of the old dispensation. Then we can understand why in the song of victory, sung immediately after this battle is finished, no mention is made of the angels, but only of the brethren that were accused but that had gained the victory through the blood of the Lamb and their faith in Him. Then we can understand why this great voice sings, "Now is come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ." It is the death-blow to Satan. It seems to me that Michael and all his angels shout this at the same time in the ears of Satan at the moment that Christ enters into His exaltation. Now is come, that is, now has appeared, now has been revealed, the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of His Christ. All was still hidden in the Old Testament day. It had not yet been historically revealed. And therefore there was room for argument on the part of the devil, and he could wage this war. But now has come the realization of the whole thing. Satan, you must go; you have no argument left. These saints of the Old Testament day belong to Christ, and they have a right to His inheritance.

H.H.

A CLOUD OF WITNESSES

The Meeting of Jacob and Esau

And Jacob lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, Esau came, and with him four hundred men . . .

And he passed over before them, and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.

And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept. GENESIS 33:1, 3, 4

As the glory of the morning sun broke forth in the dawn of another day, it was a new and different Jacob that reunited himself with his family. Much of his old strength was gone. Externally he was a cripple, destined henceforth to limp haltingly on a wounded thigh. Internally his old self-confidence was crushed; no longer did he feel capable of caring for himself; much less, did he think that somehow he had to help God in the realizing of the promise. The scheming Jacob was gone; in his place stood Israel, the prince who had struggled in faith with God and conquered. He had learned life's most difficult lesson, the lesson of true humility and meekness.

Lifting his eyes toward the distance, Jacob saw approaching him Esau, his alienated brother, with his four hundred armed men. As we might expect, there still lingered in the heart of Jacob that sinking feeling of fear as he thought on the great harm that the power of Esau could easily inflict; but now he was able to prepare for the coming of his brother with much more calmness than he had the day before. Quietly he arranged his family for the meeting. Still maintaining his old preference for Rachel and Joseph, he gave to them the safest position in the rear. Leah, the handmaids, and the other children, he arranged in order before them. He, alone and defenseless, went ahead to meet with Esau.

As Esau approached, Jacob bowed himself seven times to the ground. This action of Jacob we must be careful to understand correctly. In the first place, it was a sign of Jacob's newly acquired humility. There remained with Jacob a feeling of guilt concerning those former actions which he had perpetrated against Esau. Although basically he had a love for the promise of God, he had sought to obtain it in his own strength rather than in faith and reliance upon God. He had fought with Esau after the flesh. Now, by his bows, at a time when actions spoke louder than words, he was telling Esau that he was renouncing this former, carnal approach. It was not that he was renouncing the blessing of God which he had sought, that was assigned to him by God's election and could not be reversed; but he was renouncing the carnal manner in which he had sought it. Thus he could stand before Esau, alone and without defense, for he trusted

in God to care for him. In the second place, we should note that Jacob's greeting was purely formal. After the fashion of oriental peoples, this approach was very elaborate; but in the terms of any land, there is no more cold and distant greeting than seven formal bows. Jacob was not yet ready to meet Esau with a friendly or brotherly greeting. Although he repented from his self-willed actions which had been so offensive to Esau in the past, there still remained between them a basic conflict. Jacob loved the covenant of God; Esau did not. Jacob sought the way of the Lord; Esau would have nothing of it. Jacob was a friend of God; Esau had always revealed himself an enemy. Until Esau too showed some sign of true repentance, Jacob could show no real warmth in his greeting. With seven formal bows Jacob greeted his brother.

Equally interesting is the greeting with which Esau approached Jacob. A day or two before when he had met the messengers of Jacob, his attitude had been very doubtful. Their message had not been at all warlike, but he was not ready to accept this. With good reason he did not trust Jacob. Always in former years Jacob had been a schemer, plotting to gain the upper hand. Usually he had succeeded. Esau was not ready to let this happen again. He was ready to meet Jacob with whatever approach he took. If Jacob wanted to battle, he would battle too. If Jacob wanted to be crafty, he would be crafty too. He was ready to resume their former conflict, determined this time to gain the upper hand. Should it prove necessary, he was ready to carry out his oath of former years to slay his younger brother.

As Esau hastened to meet with Jacob, however, he came first to the gifts that Jacob had sent ahead. With the first flock of animals he began to wonder what the scheme behind them could be. But as there came another and another and still another, his attitude toward Jacob began to soften. What ulterior motive Jacob could have by placing all of these valuable cattle in his power he could not imagine. The message of the various servants, "They be thy servant Jacob's: it is a present sent unto my lord Esau," he found to be most flattering. Esau, of course, was unable to understand that Jacob intended to show humility and meekness in this way. Such things had no meaning for Esau. He could see only that Jacob was cowed and afraid. Jacob was afraid of his greater power and wanted to be friends. Impressed by Esau's strength, Jacob was ready to renounce all conflict and even the goal of supremacy in their family. Partly accurate, yet basically erroneous, was Esau's interpretation. He understood that Jacob wished to renounce their outward conflict in the flesh; but he could not understand that there would yet remain between them an inner conflict of the spirit. Nonetheless Esau was satisfied. When finally Jacob approached and bowed before him seven times, Esau was convinced that he intended no harm.

Once he had come to this conclusion, Esau was more than willing to meet Jacob on a friendly basis. As though suddenly

overcome with a wave of tender emotion, he threw himself upon his brother embracing him, kissing him and weeping. A few hours before he had felt very cold toward his brother, ready to meet him in battle and destroy him. Now in a moment it was changed, for it looked to him as if he would henceforth be able to dominate over Jacob completely. It looked to him like he was the victor, and it was flattering to his pride. It pleased him greatly to play the part of a patronizing lord condescending to be kind to an undeserving servant. As long as Jacob did not contest with him for the leadership but submitted to him in all things, Esau was more than willing that he should live. Impulsively he threw the whole of his emotional nature into welcoming his brother home. Should Jacob make one mistake those same emotions would change in a moment to bitter hatred. Until that time Esau was pleased to receive his brother back.

In accord with the patronizing attitude which he had taken, Esau inquired into the identity of the family that followed Jacob. In this Jacob found an occasion to give testimony to Esau of his continued faith in Jehovah God. He told him that these were the children that had been graciously given to him by God. To this testimony, however, Esau was completely unresponsive. Although his emotions could respond so profusely to the greeting of a brother, they had absolutely no appreciation to talk about God. No sooner had Jacob's family given their formal greetings, than Esau rapidly changed the subject.

"What meanest thou," asked Esau, "by the drove which I met?" Those flocks which Jacob had sent ahead to meet him, still continued to perplex Esau. He could not imagine that anyone would sacrifice such a large and valuable gift freely. Neither did he feel free, in his newly acquired attitude of patronizing favor, to accept the gift as offered. Jacob, however, was quite determined that Esau should accept this gift. This transaction would serve as a testimony and seal to the fact that he had been received back by Esau with kindness. It would more or less obligate Esau to be kind to him and his family in the future. Upon the urging of Jacob, Esau finally consented to take the gift.

Rather difficult to understand in this connection is the statement of Jacob's, "If now I have found grace in thy sight, then receive my present at my hand: for therefore I have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God, and thou wast pleased with me." The difficulty is to understand how Jacob could say to Esau that he saw his face as though he had seen the face of God. This has been explained in two different ways. The one explanation is that in that day it was a common figure of speech to compare a pleasant meeting with seeing the face of God. This common figure Jacob made use of without expecting that it would be taken by anyone in its literal meaning. The second explanation is that Jacob saw very literally in the approach of Esau the work of the hand of God. It was the favor of God toward him, Jacob, which had worked in Esau to turn away his

anger and to make him kindly disposed toward Jacob. As soon as Jacob saw that Esau was no longer angry at him, he saw as it were also behind Esau's change of heart, the favor of God turning away the wrath of his enemies. It is this latter view which we would feel must come closest to what was actually intended by Jacob.

As soon as that was decided, Esau suggested that they proceed on their way. He was still of a restless nature, and to extend the formalities of greeting was not to his liking. His suggestion was that as Jacob continued to travel, he and his four hundred men would accompany them, protecting them thereby and guiding them. To this plan Jacob could not consent. He explained to Esau, "My lord knoweth that the children are tender, and the flocks and herds with young are with me: and if men should overdrive them one day, all the flock will die. Let my lord, I pray thee, pass over before his servant: and I will lead on softly, according as the cattle that goeth before me and the children be able to endure." That the flocks and children of Jacob could not keep pace with his fighting men, Esau, of course, could not deny. Thus he acceded to the suggestion of Jacob. Underneath, however, Jacob had a far deeper reason for not wanting to follow Esau. He discerned in Esau a desire to remain on very friendly terms with Jacob but in such a manner that he could dominate Jacob's life. To this Jacob could never consent. Esau was a Godless man and their ways of life could not be allowed to intermingle. There could be no real friendship between them. He pushed this point very strongly until Esau consented and made his way alone toward Sier.

We could wish, of course, that Jacob would have been more bold and direct in testifying of his faith toward Esau. We cannot escape the impression that Esau was often allowed to come to conclusions different from those which lived in the heart of Jacob, but Jacob said nothing to correct him. We would like to read that Jacob laid very clearly before Esau exactly what was his true status before God. We should remember, however, that it was only the night before Jacob had been at Penueel. Not until then had he seen clearly the necessity of leaving behind his old way of life, the way of relying upon his own strength and ingenuity. Although we cannot excuse it, we can easily understand that he was at first hesitant to speak out concerning his new found understanding. In fact, how many are there not of us who although they understand full well, are still after many years hesitant to speak out concerning their convictions, and in far less trying circumstances than those of Jacob? B.W.

"If the doctrine of the apostles and prophets be the foundation of the Church, it must have been certain, antecedently to the existence of the Church . . . It is a very false notion, therefore, that the power of judging of the Scripture belongs to the Church, so as to make the certainty of it depend on the Church's will."

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

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of Romans 14, 15

IX.

(Romans 15:12)

We now come to the last passage, quoted by Paul, to substantiate the truth that Christ received (in love) also the Gentiles; that Israel's mission *as a nation* was exactly that salvation and mercy should come through them, in their great Son, to the Gentiles! Thus the word, spoken by the Lord to Abraham, is fulfilled, "In thee and in thy seed shall all nations be blessed." Gen. 18:18; Gal. 3:8.

As the attentive and painstaking reader will have noticed, we have, in our former two issues, studied Paul's quotation in Romans 15 from Psalm 18:50 (II Samuel 22:50) and from Deuteronomy 32:43 and Psalm 117:1, which passages from Moses and the Psalms teach that Christ will become the minister of the circumcision that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.

We notice that Paul quotes, here in Romans 15:12, from the Septuagint Version of Isaiah 11:1 and 10. This quotation is as follows: "*And there shall be a root of Jesse, and he that riseth a ruler of the Gentiles upon him shall the Gentiles hope.*"

In the Hebrew text we have a slightly different rendering. We read, "And there shall go forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall go out of his roots . . . and in that day there shall be a root of Jesse. To it shall the Gentiles seek, and his rest shall be glorious," Isaiah 11:1, 10.

It is a rather remarkable thing that the Holy Spirit through Paul here simply gives the sense and gist of the Old Testament passage. It is entirely possible and quite likely that this passage was known to Paul's readers in the version of the Septuagint. If it does not give the "words" of God here, it certainly gives the inspired *Word* of God. Such, in passing, is the infallibility of Scripture and its divine authority.

We should take more than a cursory notice of the text in question as recorded in the prophecy of Isaiah.

Without any pretense of being exhaustive and minute, we believe that pains ought to be taken to notice the following salient points in the text as given in Isaiah 11.

1. That this passage from Isaiah is here quoted the last in order, being taken from the "prophets," since it is really the clinching link in the argument of Paul. For that reason it really stands in a climactic position here. It reminds us of what we read in Luke 24:27: "And beginning from Moses and all the prophets he explained unto them in all the Scrip-

tures the things concerning himself." And, again in verse 44 of this same Chapter from Luke we read: "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets and in the Psalms concerning me." And thus we have it here. Moses, the Psalms, and now, finally, from the *Prophets*, to wit, the prophet Isaiah! It must be obvious to the careful exegete of Holy Writ, that, in this discourse from the prophecy of Isaiah, the Holy Spirit of Christ shows more of the salvation which is to be realized in the fulness of time in the Only Begotten Son, than what we can learn from either Moses or from the Psalms. In this passage the season of grace in the fulness of times looms clearly into view. Pentecost seems about to break, the morning of the New Dispensation will dawn, the eternal spring-time will come, when the grace shall also be for the Gentiles!

2. To form a somewhat clear picture of this "glad-tidings" which resounds here in the "prophetic word" in Isaiah 11:1, 10, we believe that the following should be kept in mind:

a. That Isaiah uttered these prophetic discourses, recorded in chapters 7 through 12, at a time when the hand of God was beginning to be heavy upon the land, even upon Judah. These prophecies signal the approaching judgments of God, than which there will be none greater, upon Israel. Although the people, who will not believe, do not take notice of it, yet there are appearing ominous clouds of great and terrible judgments upon the horizon. The "news-analyst" of that day could not see this perspective of prophecy. The men of worldly diplomacy talked about alliances and counter-alliances. This matter of alliances with Syria was the burning question of the hour. The question was: how shall Judah continue to exist? Had not Resin, king of Damascus (Syria) allied with Pekah, son of Remaliah, king of Samaria. And were not the hearts of the kings moved even as the "leaves of the forest are by the wind" because of the threatening disaster from these two allied kings? Had they not covenanted together and agreed and said: "Let us go up against Judah and vex it, and let us make a breach therein for us, and set a king in the midst thereof, even the son of Tabeal"? And did it not appear more than likely that they would succeed in their evil imaginations? For had they not slain in the field of battle, in one day, one hundred and twenty thousand valiant men of Judah? (II Chron. 27:6). And had not two hundred thousand men, women, sons and daughters been carried off to Samaria? And what would stop them from placing one on the throne, who would simply be a vassal king, not of the line of David?!

a. Forsoothe, this is bad. However, this is but the rumbling of the more distant thunder of the judgments of God to come upon Judah by the hand of Assyria, the very kingdom with which Ahaz intended to make an alliance against Resin and Pekah, aforementioned. For when that happens all the

curses written in the book of Moses would come upon them. They will be utterly taken from the land, the land of Immanuel, God-with-us! They will be carried abroad. For Assyria is really the World-Kingdom of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Macedonia and Rome!

c. All this talk of alliance and confederacy means nothing. It will all be of no avail. Thus Isaiah speaks in these chapters. And thus all the prophets of the day roar! For the Assyrian will truly come into the land of Immanuel. God will take the wise in their own craftiness. Then all shall seem stark and despairing for the true Israel of God, which clings to the promise of God. It will seem that God's promise fails, that he has clean forgotten to be merciful to his own! The wicked will then say: "Where is the promise of his coming," and they shall curse God.

d. Yet, this will be exactly the fulfilment of the word spoken to David by the prophet Nathan: "And if he commit iniquity I will chasten him with the *rod of men*, and with the *stripes of the children of men*," II Sam. 7:14. Howbeit, the mercy of God will not be taken from David's house as it was from the house of Saul before him. David's house shall be established forever before him; it shall be established forever! Such had been the word of God's promise to David. And had it not been spoken by Jehovah of Hosts?

e. Hence, in Isaiah 11:1 and 10 the prophet utters the sure word of prophecy unto which the righteous gave heed as unto a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawned and the day-star arose in their hearts, the hope of God's sure promise which cannot fail, and of His mercies which cannot be shut off! After the night and through the night of judgment the breaking of a new and better day is promised. It is glad-tidings of good things in him which is to come. In glad strains the sign of the virgin is proclaimed even to an unbelieving king. "And this shall be a sign unto you. Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bring forth a Son, and he shall be called IMMANUEL, God-with-us." And in that setting of gloom and darkness the glad-tiding is proclaimed: "For unto us a child is born, for unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulders, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of peace"! Isaiah 7:14; 9:6.

Here are truly Christological-eschatological prophetic perspectives!

It should further be noticed that the passage quoted by Paul here is very beautiful and instructive concerning the realization of the Promise, showing forth the glory of Jehovah's work. Briefly, we call attention to the following elements in the passage of Isaiah 11:1-10.

1. That the prophet employs picture language, a figure of speech, here in the text to depict that lowly point of the house of David, and also to make clear the new and better day that God shall bring upon it when He will once more visit them in grace from on high. He speaks of the "stem

of Jesse." The word *stem* is really more clearly expressed in our word "stump," that is, all that is left of a tree, however great it once really was or appeared to be! The "stump" of Jesse! A cut off trunk! What woe-be-gone spectacle is here portrayed by the Spirit of prophecy. All that is left of the glory and former lustre of David's house in Solomon and all the kings is a stump. To all appearances it suffered the same lot as did the kings of the earth, the world-powers that were laid low like a great forest laid low, humbling all its pride and arrogance. Ichabod, the glory is departed from David's house.

2. This figure, evidently, refers to David's house as it shall be when all the terrible and certain judgments of God shall have come upon them, being chastened by the "rod of men." Then shall there be indeed a remnant returning to the land, but there shall be no king sitting upon the throne of David. It is simply — compared with its former glory — a mere stump.

3. That it is called the stem, the stump of *Jesse* is, evidently, to indicate that then the condition of Jesse will have to return to its low estate as it was once in the days of Jesse, before David is exalted by the Lord. Was not David's exaltation really something wonderful when one considers whence he was taken? Does not the Lord of Hosts remind David through the prophet Nathan of this lowly origin when he says to him, "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I took thee from the sheep-cote, from following the sheep, to be a ruler over my people, over Israel"?! It was a day of small beginning, a mere stripling, a shepherd boy, young and tender, having the fear of the Lord in his heart. Nor was he from noble, kingly birth. Was he not from Jesse, a son of Obed, a son of Boaz and Ruth, the Moabitess, a child of incestuous parents, Lot and his daughter? And was there not Rahab, the harlot, the mother of Boaz?

4. Thus shall be the lot of Jesse once more. The king's sons shall not be dwelling in palaces. We will find them in lowly Nazareth, whence, as the proverb has it: "Can anything good come from Nazareth." Here will then dwell, under the heel of the Roman government, a virgin. Here will be the betrothed husband, Joseph. He is a mere carpenter. Nothing great in the land. Thus it will be. A mere trunk. And possibly not even having the power to perpetuate itself. Does not Mary say: I know not a man? And must not a miracle take place, the "sign" of the Virgin?

5. But from the trunk shall grow a Branch. The lineage of David will have a Son. God will come into the flesh. Immanuel will be born. Jesus will be his name. He it is that will save all his people from their sins, and the judgment of God will never more come upon His people. And the house of David will truly be fruitful. Hallelujah! Amen.

(Will be continued)

G.L.

Contending For The Faith

The Church and the Sacraments

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

THE SEVEN SACRAMENTS.

EXTREME UNCTION

(continued)

We concluded our preceding article with the remark that Rome's appeal to James 5:14-15 and Mark 6:13 is completely unfounded. Rome administers this sacrament to those who are gravely ill and in imminent danger of death. Rome declares that "this unction is to be applied to the sick, but to those especially who lie in such danger as to seem to be about to depart this life: whence also it is called the sacrament of the departing." We have all read, at one time or another, how Roman Catholic priests will move quickly among the dying, in times of disaster, to administer these last rites. "And if the sick should, after having received this unction, recover, they may again be aided by the succor of this sacrament, when they fall into another like danger of death." It is evident from this quotation from the decrees of the Council of Trent that Rome's sacrament of Extreme Unction is administered with a view to death. But the passages in Mark and James inform us that these sick will recover. Hence, Rome has no Scriptural support whatever.

We now wish to make a few remarks about the passage in James 5 in general. James 5:13-16 reads as follows: "Is any sick among you? afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms. Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." And then the holy writer quotes the example of Elijah in the Old Testament as he prayed that it might not rain and again that he prayed that it might rain, and these prayers of the fearless prophet of the Old Dispensation, as we know, were answered.

All commentators whom I have read are agreed that the sick of verse 14 are physically sick, although they are also agreed that there is no support in this passage for the Roman Catholic sacrament of Extreme Unction. They are also agreed on this, that this anointing with oil must be understood in the natural sense of the word, although they also declare that the restoration of the sick must not be attributed to any magical power in the oil. These elders whereof we read in this passage must, according to some commentators, be regarded as elderly men who were peculiarly gifted, although they do not

explain how their being peculiarly gifted is related to the oil and the restoration of these sick. And, finally, it is declared that what we read in James 5:14 was applicable only to the time when this epistle was written and is no longer in effect today.

However, against this interpretation are most serious objections. First, notice that we read of afflicted ones in verse 13 and of the sick in verse 14. It is generally agreed that the afflictions of verse 13 must be regarded in the physical sense of the word. The word means: to endure or suffer hardships, troubles. The word, for example, occurs in II Tim. 2:9, and we quote: "Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound." And the word also appears in verse 3 of the same chapter, and we again quote: "Thou therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." Now, if both words ("afflicted" in verse 13 and "sick" in verse 14) refer to physical troubles, why must the afflicted of verse 13 pray for himself and the sick of verse 14 be admonished to call the elders of the church to pray for him? Why may not also the sick of verse 14 pray for himself? Secondly, verse 16, evidently referring to the sick of verse 14, declares that "ye may be healed." And this healing is connected with the confessing of our faults to one another. Does this not indicate that this healing is spiritual? Thirdly, we read emphatically in verse 15 that the prayer of faith shall save the sick and that the Lord shall raise him up. The commentators really do not know what to do with this. They say that this must be understood conditionally, was depending upon the will of the Lord. But the text states very positively that they will be healed and that the Lord will raise them up. In fact, we read that the prayer of faith will *save* them. And it may also be of interest that the word "sick" in verse 15 is not the same word in the original as the word "sick" in verse 14.

First of all, why is it that the afflicted of verse 13 are exhorted to pray for themselves and that the sick of verse 14 are admonished to call for the elders of the church? It seems to me that the answer to this question is obvious. The afflicted of verse 13 are able to pray for themselves but the sick of verse 14 are not able to do so. The reader will notice that James, in the verses 15-16, speaks of sins and faults committed against one another. Obviously, therefore, the sick of verse 14 is in the position that he cannot pray for spiritual reasons and because of sins which he has committed against the brethren. The elders, therefore, must be called in to "pray over him."

Secondly, as far as the word, "sick," is concerned in verse 14, we remark the following. It is undoubtedly true that this word does appear in Scripture as referring to physical sickness and distress. The word itself means: weak, infirm, feeble. This is evidently the meaning of the word in John 5:5: "And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years." And it is surely also of the same significance in John 11:4: "When Jesus heard that, He said,

This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." However, this word also has a spiritual connotation in Holy Writ. It surely does not have a physical significance in Romans 8:3: "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." Neither does this word have a physical meaning in Romans 6:19, where the word "weakness" surely refers to the human nature, and we quote: "I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness." So the word surely does not have a physical connotation in Romans 8:26: "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." And the same also applies to Romans 5:6: "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." We have already remarked that the word "sick" in verse 15 is different than the word "sick" in verse 14. The word "sick" which appears in verse 15 is principally the same word as that which is translated "wearied" in Hebrews 12:3: "For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds," and in this verse it is used with respect to the mind or soul. We surely have a right, therefore, to ascribe to it a spiritual significance in James 5:14.

Thirdly, in connection with this "anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord," we wish to make the following comments. The expression: "and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord," can mean that this anointing with oil accompanied this prayer and also that this anointing with oil refers to the prayer, so that we can read this text as follows: and let them pray over him, thereby anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. The expression, "anointing with oil" can surely be interpreted as a participial phrase which modified this prayer of the elders and further explains it. We all understand, of course, that no magical power of healing must be ascribed to this oil, provided that we understand this anointing as actually occurring in the natural sense of the word. Even if this anointing occurred in that natural sense of the word, it surely accompanied this praying of the elders of the church because of its symbolical significance. What, then, is the significance of "anointing with oil" in Holy Writ? Oil, we know, is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. It was always used in connection with the anointing in the Old Dispensation of the prophets, priests and kings. This needs no further comment at this time. And to be anointed with oil symbolized that act of the Lord whereby He ordained and qualified a certain person to be busy in the things of the house of His covenant, to proclaim His Word, be it as prophet, priest, or king. The significance, therefore, of this anointing in James 5 must not

be sought in any magical power of healing in the oil but because of its relation to the elders of the church. An elder is a person ordained and qualified by God to speak His Word and this, we understand, regardless of the age of the elder. There is a good reason why the apostle, in writing to Timothy, urges that he not be despised because of his youth. And this also explains the words: In the Name of the Lord. This expression does not merely mean that such an elder spoke by the authority of the Lord, but also that he acted in the power of the Lord; the power of the Lord Jesus Christ operated through this office of the elder which God in Christ has instituted in the midst of the church. This anointing of the sick with oil surely means (apart from the question whether natural oil was symbolically administered, actually applied as a symbol) that through the prayer of these Divinely ordained elders the Spirit was imparted unto the sick. These sick are not to be regarded as sick in the physical sense but in the spiritual sense. This is fully apparent for reasons which we have already stated. Why, for example, is he unable to pray whereas the sick of verse 13 can pray for himself? Why is it stated that the sick of verse 14 will be healed if and when this prayer of faith is uttered in his behalf? Why do we read of sins and faults if this sickness is merely physical? Hence, because they are spiritually sick, infirm, weak, they cannot pray. They do not have the spiritual strength to pray. And through this prayer they receive the Spirit (in their consciousness, we understand) whereof the oil (which may have been used) was a symbol.

This also explains the rest of this text in James 5. A prayer of faith is a prayer that has its origin in faith and is also prompted by faith, the bond that unites us with God in Christ, and therefore the fear and love of God. Such a prayer, prayed by the elders and in which the spiritually sick concurs, will heal and raise him up. He will be healed. All such sick persons will be healed by God through the prayer of faith. This also emphasizes that physical sickness cannot be meant. Indeed, a physically sick person cannot draw from the Word of God the assurance that if only elders pray for him he will be healed. However, this is spiritually true. And that such a spiritual healing and sickness is meant is also evident from what follows in the verses 15-16 where we read of the confession of faults and sins. These are the general remarks we wished to make in connection with the passage in James 5.

H.V.

"With the greatest justice God exclaims by Isaiah that the prophets and all the people were his witnesses: because being taught by the prophecies, they were certain that God had spoken without the least fallacy or ambiguity . . . I speak of nothing but what every believer experiences in his heart, except that my language falls short of a just explication of the subject."

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)

As we indicated in our remarks concerning the translation last time, this article is really a continuation of the preceding paragraph. In Article 12 the general objection, namely, that the certainty of perseverance produces a spirit of pride and renders men carnally secure, was faced by our fathers and answered. Here, in Article 13, we have a specific and emphatic instance of that general argument. The objection is raised by the Arminians that in the case of those saints who fall and who are restored from their fall, and who thus have the *renewed* confidence of persevering, — that in that case there surely must be the result that they become careless and profane. That renewed confidence of persevering in those that are restored from backsliding must produce in them licentiousness and must be harmful to piety. Therefore the article begins as it does: “Neither even in those who are restored from backsliding . . .” The Arminian claims that in their case there surely must be carelessness and profanity; but we, the Reformed, claim that this is not even true in their case. On the contrary, the Reformed view is that the very opposite is true. In the end, the whole process of their fall, their restoration, and their renewed confidence of persevering works together for good to them that love God, who are the called according to His purpose: it produces in them a greater concern for carefully observing the ways of the Lord, which he hath prepared, that by walking therein they may keep the assurance of perseverance.

Such is the general thrust of this article.

In order to appreciate its instruction more fully, let us enter more detailedly into the objection that is raised, the denial that is made by the fathers, and the positive truth that is laid down in this thirteenth article.

The possibility that is suggested by the Arminian objector in this article could only arise out of an ethically perverted mind and could only be based upon a warped conception of the moral character of the operation of God’s grace. And one who raises this objection against the Reformed view of perseverance and of the assurance of perseverance either has never understood that view or else he deliberately twists it and presents it in an evil light. Our fathers in this article purpose to counter-act this Arminian objection, whether raised out of misunderstanding by those who are uninitiated to the truth or whether raised out of malicious mischief. Hence, while there is plenty of sound reason behind the

article, they do not reason at all, but simply state what is not the Reformed view and what is the true Reformed faith.

What presentation of the matter do the Arminians make? They claim that if a saint falls into sin and walks in sin for a time, and that if such a saint through God’s preserving grace is efficaciously brought to realize his sin, to be sorry for it, and to repent of it, and that if thus such a saint attains to a renewed confidence of persevering, then the result will be that he becomes licentious and that the renewed confidence of persevering in such a fallen and restored saint will be detrimental to godliness on his part. He will reason, so they say, that he is perfectly free to live as loosely and carelessly as he wants to. Believers cannot fall permanently from grace anyway; ultimately God always preserves them and brings them back, no matter how deeply they fall. Besides, he has learned by experience now that when he falls into sin, God restores him. Hence, he does not need to be concerned about his walk. He does not have to be careful to live a godly life. In fact, he may carry this line of reasoning a step farther: his deep falls serve to magnify the power of God’s preserving grace, so that the more he sins, the more the preserving grace of God abounds. Such is the Arminian position concerning the Reformed view: the renewed confidence of persevering in those who are restored from backsliding produces licentiousness and is injurious to piety.

Let us remember that this is a charge that is brought, and that can be brought, only against the Reformed view of perseverance and of the assurance of perseverance. What is the very genius of that view? It is this, that in absolutely sovereign grace God never completely deserts His saints, even in their deepest falls, but always efficaciously restores them and renews in them the assurance that they are and forever shall remain living members of His church. Perseverance and the assurance of perseverance both being the work of sovereign grace, they are in no sense of the word the work of man. Well now, the Arminian reasons: if they are in no sense the work of man and entirely the sovereign work of God, unconditional, uninitiated and unaided by the saint, then all reason for a careful godly walk and all incentive for piety on the part of the saints is removed. And he reasons further: if a saint once actually experiences this, experiences, so to speak, that he can fall into sin and walk in sin and “get away with it,” then he will surely become wanton and careless in his walk. If he once experiences that he can actually walk in sin and still be preserved, he will do the same thing again and again, without any fear and without any restraint. You understand, do you not, that as soon as you introduce into the work of perseverance and the assurance of perseverance any element of man’s work *as an integral part of the work of perseverance*, as a first step, as a condition, a prerequisite, a cause, or meritorious reason, at that moment there is no room at all for this argument of the Arminians. That was just their “sales point.” But then let it also be understood that the Arminians betray themselves in this argument. No, they seldom or never want to put it just

that way. They always like to say too that it is all of grace, that it is only through the work of the Holy Spirit, etc. But the alternative to the argument which the Arminians raise here is that there is no perseverance except that which man accomplishes, and that there is no certainty of perseverance except that which rests upon uncertain conditions of man's fulfillment. The Arminian claims really that if you want a pious and God-fearing saint, one who is truly diligent to observe God's precepts, then you must scare the devil out of him. You must make the Christian "run scared." You must tell him that if he does not persevere (with the understanding, of course, that he is able to do so, if he wills), he will never reach the inheritance. God will not preserve him unless he is willing to persevere. God will not hold his hand unless he will hold God's hand. You must tell the Christian: "It all depends on you." Then he will be, so the Arminian presents matters, so concerned about his salvation that he will never be bothered by any false sense of security. If he falls once and manages somehow to extricate himself from the clutches of the devil, he will have learned such a lesson that he will never fall again. But, so the opponent claims, if you tell that Christian that he is surely preserved and instill in him the confidence of this certain perseverance, he will be unconcerned about sin to begin with, and the more he falls into sin the more unconcerned he will become. Now what shall we say to this?

Shall we admit that this is indeed a danger under the Reformed view? Shall we become panicky and concede the whole struggle to the enemy? Shall we say that there is truth in the Arminian charge, and that we ought to stress the "other side" of the truth a little more in order to counteract any potential fatalism and passivity? This is the approach of some. They follow a double-track theology. But by following this double track they in reality forsake the track of the truth. By admitting that there is at least an element of truth in this Arminian charge they concede in principle that the Reformed view is wrong, that it is dangerous for Christian morality. But our fathers concede nothing!

The fathers state flatly that the renewed confidence of persevering even in the case of those who are restored from backsliding does not produce licentiousness and is not injurious to godliness.

As we have said, the fathers do not give any reason in this article for their flat denial. In the present article they are only concerned about gainsaying this accusation. This does not mean, however, that there are no sound grounds for this denial; nor does it mean that the fathers have not produced the reasons. This article must be considered in its context once more. And we may profitably consider that context presently. But for the present let us view this statement of the fathers just as it stands there in all its nakedness. This too is profitable. Is it not the expression of Christian experience? Is it not the natural and the first reaction of the sanctified child of God exactly to deny flatly and unequivocally the very suggestion that when he is restored

from backsliding and when the joy of his salvation is restored to him, he becomes licentious and less concerned about godliness? The very idea is offensive to the Reformed believer. With our fathers and with the apostle Paul he will reply to this suggestion: "God forbid!"

And why is this denial so flat and emphatic?

It is because there is one fundamental flaw in the argumentation of the Arminians. They come with an apparently strong and iron-clad argument against the *sovereignty* and the *efficacy* and the *unconditionality* of God's preserving grace. But they forget or deliberately ignore the fact that *sovereign* grace is the grace of a holy and pure and righteous God, and that therefore sovereign grace always operates in a holy and pure way. It can never produce a saint who is licentious and unmindful of the requirements of true godliness. The Arminian seems to think, — and many are misled by this thinking, — that sovereignty and holiness in God's gracious dealings with a rational, moral creature, in whom God also requires holiness and godliness, are mutually exclusive. And he therefore attempts to assault and to destroy the sovereignty and efficacy of preserving grace and to put in its place conditionality and free will by means of the weapon of divine holiness and morality. He would have us choose between sovereignty and morality. And the Reformed believer insists that the antithesis presented by the Arminian is false, that there is no conflict whatsoever between the two.

God's grace preserves. But how does it preserve the fallen or backsliding saint? That grace never totally deserts him. Always the incorruptible seed of regeneration remains in the Christian. Notice: that seed is *incorruptible*, that is, holy. Where is the conflict? There is none. Moreover, that grace certainly and effectually renews the backsliding saint unto repentance and to a sincere and godly sorrow for sin, so that he again seeks and obtains remission in the blood of the Mediator. Is it possible that such a restored backslider becomes licentious? Is it possible that true piety in him is injured? That is impossible in the very nature of the case. If he is licentious and disregardful of piety, then he has not repented, then he has never come to a sincere and godly sorrow for sin. He would show by his very licentiousness and impiety that he has not tasted that grace which is at the same time both sovereign and holy, efficacious and pure.

God's grace supplies the confidence of persevering and also the renewed confidence of persevering. But it operates always in the same holy and pure way. The renewal of the confidence of persevering is never produced apart from a serious and holy desire to preserve a good conscience and to perform good works. He who is licentious and impious has not tasted this reassuring grace. His confidence, if he claims to have assurance, is false.

No, the preserving grace of God, which is always both sovereign and holy, when it operates in the elect saints, even in their deepest falls, can never produce licentiousness and impiety. That is contrary to its divine character.

(to be continued)

H.C.H.

DECENCY and ORDER

Deacons' Meetings

(Continued)

Article 40

Supervision by the Ministers

The 40th Article of our Church Order makes provision for regular and periodic meetings of the deacons. It also stipulates that these meetings, wherein the business of the deacons is to be transacted, shall be attended with *"the calling upon the Name of God."* To these provisions is added the words *"whereunto the ministers shall take good heed and if necessary they shall be present."*

The question first of all arises as to what is the antecedent of the word *"whereunto"* in this phrase. Does it refer to the *"calling on the name of God"* so that the meaning is that it shall be the task of the minister to see to it that this is done at all meetings? This can hardly be the case since the article does not require the minister's presence at the meetings and unless that was also made mandatory it would be quite impossible for him to see to it that all the meetings were opened and closed with prayer.

Does this phrase perhaps then refer to the meetings of the deacons as such so that the idea is that the ministers must take heed to see that the deacons meet *regularly* and if necessary every week? We hardly think so because this sort of supervision would belong to the office of the elder rather than that of the minister of the Word. As a matter of good order it would be the elder's prerogative to see to it that regular meetings are conducted and in which the work of the deacons is executed. The deacons are under the supervision of the Consistory and not of the minister alone.

It appears, therefore, that the most likely application of the phrase *"whereunto the ministers shall take good heed and if necessary they shall be present"* is that it refers to the matter mentioned in the earlier part of the article and in which it is stated that the deacons shall meet *"to transact the business pertaining to their office."* The idea then is that the ministers must see to it that the deacons on the one hand do not engage in any labors that do not belong to their specific office and, on the other hand, that they do perform the tasks pertinent to their office and in particular the spiritual function of that office. This the ministers of the Word could do even though they are not present at the deacons' meetings since Article 25 requires that the deacons render an account of their labors to the Consistory. From this report the minister as well as the consistory could determine whether there is neglect of duty and if so the minister must take heed that it is corrected and, if necessary, even attend the deacons' meetings. Moreover this would also harmonize with Article

16 of the Church Order where, among other things, the duty of the office of the minister is stated to be that he is *"to watch over his brethren, the elders and deacons."* Certainly this provision refers to a supervision of ecclesiastical duties.

Now it may appear a bit strange that this duty is ascribed to the ministers rather than to the elders. Has not the government and supervision of the church been entrusted to the elders? And in our churches do we not have the established custom according to which one of our elders visits the meetings of the deacons in turn? Is not this supervision adequate? Why then does this article stipulate *"ministers"* instead of *"elders"*?

In attempting to answer this question we should note firstly that there is no real conflict between our present practice and the ruling of this article. The article, as we have seen, does not require the minister's presence at these meetings but the presence of the elders or a representation of the elders it would seem is mandatory because the work of supervision is entrusted specifically to them. In the second place, when the minister functions according to the prescription of this article, he functions in the capacity of an elder . . . a teaching elder. And that, in the third place, would seem to indicate why he is specifically mentioned in this article. The deacons may need and desire advice and instruction with regard to the proper functioning of their office. The minister is undoubtedly best qualified to give this. The deacons may want to consult him periodically with regard to their duties. The minister must then make himself available and offer the necessary assistance in order that the office of deacon may be in proper function. The minister, by virtue of his special training, is best qualified for this task. However, it must also be observed that the minister does not have to wait for an invitation to attend the meetings of the deacons. He may certainly present himself at any of these meetings, only his prerogative then is not to preside or lord it over the diaconate but he should retain the status of a visitor and advisor. Where all the Church Order provides what I will call *"administrative supervision"* over the diaconate by the elders, this article provides *"pedagogical supervision"* by the ministers of the Word.

Article 41

"The Classical meetings shall consist of neighboring churches that respectively delegate, with proper credentials, a minister and an elder to meet at such time and place as was determined by the previous classical meeting. Such meetings shall be held at least once in three months, unless great distances render this inadvisable. In these meetings the ministers shall preside in rotation, or one shall be chosen to preside; however, the same minister shall not be chosen twice in succession."

"Furthermore, the president shall, among other things, put the following questions to the delegates of each church:

- 1. Are the Consistory meetings held in your church?*
- 2. Is church discipline exercised?*

3. *Are the poor and the Christian schools cared for?*

4. *Do you need the judgment and help of the classis for the proper government of your church?*

"And finally, at one but the last meeting and, if necessary, at the last meeting before the (particular) synod, delegates shall be chosen to attend said synod." (Art. 41, D.K.O.)

The Classis

In this article and several that follow in the Church Order various matters relating to the Classis are treated. The Classis is one of the four kinds of ecclesiastical assemblies mentioned in Article 29. It is one of the major or broader assemblies of the church.

Article 41 mentions several matters which we will attempt to discuss in the following order: (1) The organization of the Classis, (2) Delegation to the Classis, (3) Time and place of Classical meetings, (4) Frequency of Classical meetings, (5) Presiding officers of the Classis, (6) Questions for the delegation of Classis and (7) The matter of delegates to Synod from the Classis.

Organization of the Classis

This article dates back to 1581 when the Synod of Middelburg combined a number of previous rulings for Classical gatherings into the present form. Prior to this time there were several Classes in the Reformed Churches but they were not too well organized. As early as 1568 the Wezelian Convention had urged that Classes be organized as soon as the conditions of war and persecution permitted. And in 1571 the Synod of Emden drew up a set of rules governing Classical organization but the disorganized state of affairs is reflected in the decision of the Synod of Gelderland in 1582 which expressed *"that it is neither advisable nor edifying, that a few churches should continue to exist by themselves, but each church is bound to join itself to a Classis."* Of course no church should or could be coerced to join itself to the federation of churches but virtually all Reformers, including Dr. Bouwman, are agreed that it was and is the moral duty of each church to do so. Dr. Bouwman advanced four reasons for the necessity of Classical organization and to these others could likely be added. He held this to be essential: "(1) because of the unity of the churches in Christ; (2) because the churches need each other for their continuance, extension, and purity in faith and conduct; (3) because the liberty of the congregation must be maintained and classical organization will be a safeguard against domineering and arbitrary office-bearers; (4) in order that all things may be regulated in the church according to the Word of God, and order and discipline may be maintained in the congregation." It would appear evident that the advantages and benefits of classical organization far outweigh the few minor objections that might be lodged against it.

Delegation to the Classis

According to the provisions of this article, the Classis shall consist of an elder and minister delegate from each

church. These men, with proper credentials, are authorized to deliberate and decide upon all matters that are legally brought before the body. The Classis, so constituted, is, however, more than a deliberative body. By mutual agreement the churches represented in the Classis will either respect and keep the decisions made by the Classis or, as the Church Order provides in other places, appeal any disagreeable decision to the Synod.

The Christian Reformed proposed revision of the Church Order makes a slight change in the provisions for delegation to the Classis. The revision would read: *"Each church within the Classis shall delegate a minister with proper credentials. If a church is vacant or the minister is prevented from attending, two elders shall be delegated"* (Art. 37). From this, as well as from the original reading, it seems that emphasis must be laid upon the fact that *"the elders"* constitute the proper delegation to Classis. Deacons are not to be delegated. This has not always been observed and in some cases it is very possible that a consistory has no alternative other than sending a deacon as delegate or lack a full representation at the Classis. For example let us take a consistory that is very small and consists of only two elders. It happens that the church is without a minister and at the time of the Classis one of its elders is sick and unable to attend. It would under such circumstances not be wrong to delegate one of the deacons. In such cases the deacons are already added to the consistory under the provisions of Article 37 and serve in the capacity of advisory-elders anyway. However, we do feel that wherever possible the delegation to Classis should consist of elders and the appointment of deacons to this function should not be used as a convenient substitute for elders who may be able but unwilling to fulfill their obligations and office. As an emergency measure only it may be permissible.

The manner in which the delegates to Classis are to be appointed or chosen must be left to the choice of individual consistories. The usual method is to delegate by rotation. Either the elders are listed alphabetically or according to their tenure of office and in that order they take turns attending the classes. It is also conceivable that the consistory votes delegates each time but if this method is followed there should be an understanding that the same elder is not delegated twice in succession. All the elders should share in this work even though it may be granted that there may be some elders who are more particularly qualified for it even as there may be other elders who are more fitted for other particular work in the congregation. However, coping with problems of the church on a denominational level and familiarizing one's self with ecclesiastical procedures on the broader level is a profitable experience for all the elders and none should be barred from participation. It is even good for the Classis to have this change in personnel. It is a preventive and somewhat a safeguard against certain dangers and evils that may otherwise quite easily creep into the church.

G.V.d.B.

ALL AROUND US

"The Debate Over Divine Election"

The October 12th issue of *Christianity Today* presents among other interesting articles a "Feature Interview" on the subject stated above.

Dr. Carl Henry, editor of the periodical, served as moderator and directed the questions to the panel members. The panel consisted of Dr. Roger Nicole, Professor of Theology at Gordon Divinity School in New England; Dr. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Professor of Church History at Fuller Seminary; and Dr. H. Orton Wiley, President Emeritus of Pasadena College in California.

The religious and ecclesiastical background of each of these men is interesting when you consider the subject under discussion. Dr. Bromiley stems from the Anglican Church, and Dr. Nicole from the Baptist Church, and as the discussion brings out he claims to lean heavily toward Calvinism; while Dr. Wiley is minister in the Nazarene Church and he does not hesitate to declare that he leans in the direction of Arminianism.

As could be expected the debate on Divine Election brought into discussion such other related doctrines and controversial matters as: Predestination, Foreknowledge, the Remonstrance, the Supra-Infra Lapsarian order of decrees in the counsel of God, Reprobation, Depravity of Man, Common and Particular Grace, the Gospel Offer, etc.

The "Debate" brought out two or three points very clearly:

1. None of the panel members was what you would call a strong Reformed man. Even Dr. Nicole who purports to be Calvinistic in his views does not appear a strong man in the discussion. We would suggest that *Christianity Today* conduct another symposium on the subject and this time ask one or two men who are really Reformed in their views to talk on the subject of Election. One might just as well ask Mr. Krushchev to express his views on Capitalism as to ask out and out Arminians to express their views on Divine Election. You expect to get a shaded answer.

2. It became sadly apparent that aside from a very few dyed in the wool Calvinistic denominations which still cling to the doctrine of divine election as developed by Calvin, most of the Protestant denominations have long departed from or are in the process of forsaking the fundamental truth which Calvin calls "The heart of the Gospel," in favor of doctrines that smack of universal atonement, humanism, etc.

3. We also concluded from the discussion that it is the opinion of big church men today that if you are strict enough and Scriptural enough to stand on the doctrines of

divine predestination in election and reprobation, you are guilty of being a determinist, a fatalist, or some other *ist* who impedes the work of the church to evangelize and win the world for Christ.

4. Interesting as the discussion proved, we were sadly disappointed. When you read the subject: The Debate Over Divine Election, you expect that one of the members of the debate will be affirmative. This I failed to observe. The debate was a failure therefore.

"Is Capital Punishment Wrong?"

In the same issue of *Christianity Today* mentioned above, Jacob J. Vellenga gives his views on the above question. Dr. Vellenga, author of the article, is connected to the United Presbyterian Church.

He expects all who accept "the authority of Scripture" to agree with him that "the issue of capital punishment must be decided on what Scripture actually teaches and not on the popular naturalistic ideas of sociology and penology that prevail today." We agree with him.

Dr. Vellenga succeeds pretty well, we believe, in presenting all the modern arguments against capital punishment and then destroying them with Scriptural arguments.

There are at least two good points emphasized in the article which we appreciated:

1. The Christian of the New Dispensation is, according to the doctrine of Christ, to live by the law of liberty which does not abrogate the natural laws of society and civil government, but it inaugurates "a new concept of law written on the heart where the mainsprings of action are born."

2. In the argument against capital punishment too much is made of the value of physical life. Dr. Vellenga points up that "the sentence of death on a killer is more redemptive than the tendency to excuse his crime as no worse than grand larceny." He emphasizes that "laxness in law tends to send both soul and body to hell. It is more than a pious remark when a judge says to the condemned criminal 'And may God have mercy on your soul.'

"It is significant that when Jesus voluntarily went the way of the Cross he chose the capital punishment of his day as his instrument to save the world. And when he gave redemption to the repentant thief he did not save him from capital punishment but gave him Paradise instead which was far better. We see again that mercy and forgiveness are something different than being excused from wrongdoing."

"No one can deny that the execution of a murderer is a horrible spectacle. But we must not forget that murder is more horrible. The supreme penalty should be exacted only after the guilt is established beyond the shadow of doubt and only for wanton, willful, premeditated murder. But the law of capital punishment must stand, no matter how often a jury recommends mercy. The law of capital punishment

must stand as a silent but powerful witness to the sacredness of God's given life. Words are not enough to show that life is sacred. Active justice must be administered when the sacredness of life is violated."

With the above conviction we are in complete agreement.

*The Rights of Consistory Members at
Congregational Meetings.*

Reverend Herman Bel answers questions sent to him by the readers of *The Banner* in the department: *The Reader Asks*. Most generally we find this department both interesting and instructive. We found this also true of the article appearing in the October 2nd issue of this denominational paper of the Christian Reformed Church.

There the reader asks: 1. Whether a consistory member may speak against a proposal introduced by the consistory? 2. Whether every consistory member who favored the proposal may speak on the motion?

It was the opinion of the questioner "that members of the consistory who are against the proposal ought to keep still and that also those who are for it ought to keep still. If the congregation is in need of information the president should give it."

Because the questions are of practical importance and they often come up in the church, also in our churches, we deemed it well to give our readers Reverend Bel's reply. The reply is as follows:

"1. Let me call attention to the fact that we cannot speak of *right or wrong*, since there is no rule for the conduct of congregational meetings in our Church Order.

We can only point to *usage and custom* in these matters.

2. Though we cannot speak of the right and wrong in these matters we can speak of *the wisdom* of speaking against a motion introduced by the consistory, and also the wisdom of all the members who were in favor of the matter getting up to speak in defense of the same.

It gives the congregation the feeling of division and of using pressure methods.

After all the purpose of the congregational meeting is to gain the advice of the members of the church. Let them speak.

When the division of the consistory members is sharp I doubt the advisability of bringing the proposal to the congregational meeting.

3. However, the majority rules. What has been decided by a motion, properly discussed, and carried is binding according to our Church Order, unless it can be shown to conflict with the Bible, the Confession, or the Church Order.

4. A consistory is not compelled to consult the church, but it is wise to do so unless the matter is controversial.

There is one exception, the consistory *must* consult the church on matters of finances, spending, buying and selling, etc. See Articles on Incorporation.

Conclusion: At a congregational meeting every member may express his opinion, but it is not wise for consistory members to argue in the presence of the church. That undermines the influence of the consistory."

In the main we are happy with this advice. It has not happened often, though it has happened, that a consistory member rose to the floor at a congregational meeting to oppose a proposal adopted by majority vote in consistory. To say the least this weakens the proposal in the minds of the members of the congregation, no matter how well the proposal was grounded. It is conceivable that a member of the consistory will oppose a certain intended proposal in consistory, vote against it, and the decision having been rendered notifies the consistory that for conscience' sake he wants a negative vote registered in the minutes and that he will speak against the proposal in the congregational meeting. That is his privilege, it seems to me. However, when he allows the vote to be taken in consistory without voicing his objections to the proposal and fails also to notify the consistory that he will let his voice be heard at the congregational meeting, he has no moral right at the congregational meeting to oppose a proposal adopted by majority vote in consistory. Even though he is still opposed he should keep silent at the congregational meeting and allow the congregation to voice its opinion and judgment without coaching.

We certainly agree with Reverend Bel that in cases where the consistory members are sharply at odds on an issue the issue had better not be brought to the congregation until the debate has ended and a majority opinion in consistory has been obtained.

What is said above respecting negative opinions on a certain proposal applies also to positive opinions. It stands to reason that if a proposal comes to the congregational meeting it got there by a majority vote of the members of the consistory. Surely these especially should keep silence at the congregational meeting lest they leave upon the congregation the sense of pressure. The congregation should be left free to decide the matter without any undue pressures by the members of the consistory. If all is done right and the proposal is really ready for the congregational meeting, the proposal will be so well grounded and explained by the president that the congregation will need very little other information or opinions from the consistory members.

M.S.

"But since we are not favoured with daily oracles from heaven, and since it is only in the Scriptures that the Lord hath been pleased to preserve his truth in perpetual remembrance, it obtains the same complete credit and authority with believers, when they are satisfied with its divine origin, as if they had heard the very words pronounced by God himself."

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

THE STANDARD BEARER'S WITNESS*

The subject which I have chosen to consider with you this evening is "The Standard Bearer's Witness."

The first thing which we ought to do in approaching this subject is to clearly lay hold of what we have in mind when we speak of *The Standard Bearer*. In general, of course, we may very briefly state that *The Standard Bearer* is a Reformed theological journal. Thus, in the first place, it is a theological journal or magazine. As such it is not primarily concerned with the more external aspect of church life. It is, for example, not concerned usually with the activities, projects, and happenings which take place within our Churches. Such activities may, of course, be reported and reflected upon by the paper, but this is only of secondary importance. The primary function of our paper is to treat, discuss, and develop those things which are of theological importance. The goal toward which we aspire is that the truth of God revealed in Scripture may be studied, analyzed, and expounded. Our primary concern is with doctrine, the doctrine of the Word of God. In the second place, our paper is a Reformed magazine. This is evident from the name of our association, The Reformed Free Publishing Association. We are dedicated, thereby, to the theological truth which was set forth by the Great Synod of Dordt in the three forms of unity. That truth we believe to be a correct rendition of the revelation of God in Scripture. Its elucidation and propagation we seek. This all we state in a general way. We are more or less familiar with it, and we need not spend a great deal of time in its consideration this evening.

Of more particular concern to us this evening are the distinctive features of our particular paper. We want to know what it is that sets our paper apart from others. There are actually many papers that claim to be Reformed journals of one sort or another. We are concerned with those features which distinguish ours from these others.

The most generally recognized of these features is, perhaps, one that derives from the history of our association and of our magazine—the antithetical stand which we have always maintained overagainst the error of common grace. This, we said, derives from our history. The error of common grace, instilled into the Reformed Churches by Dr. A. Kuyper, was first publicly called into question by the Rev. H. Hoeksema through his writings in *The Banner*. For many years these writings went relatively unchallenged until the controversy of 1924. One of the byproducts of that controversy was that Rev. Hoeksema as well as Rev. H. Danhof was refused the right of expressing his views in the publications of that day. As a result our association was founded to provide freedom of theological expression also to those men.

As might be expected, especially the early issues of our paper were in a large part dedicated to exposing the errors in the theory of common grace. The truth of God's grace was examined from every point of view and found always to be particular. The challenge went out from the pages of our paper to all that would deny this. Few were willing and none was able to meet this charge of *The Standard Bearer*. From this, perhaps, more than from anything else, *The Standard Bearer* has received its reputation; it denies and opposes the error of common grace.

In close relationship to this we find the second distinguishing mark of *The Standard Bearer* which we would note—its positive exposition of Reformed doctrine. This is in a sense nothing more than the other side of the same coin. It is the positive side of opposition to common grace. Such positive development is always vitally necessary. One can not oppose evil who does not know the way of righteousness; one can not hate the world who does not have the positive love of God within his heart; one can not expose error who does not know the truth. The same is true of a theological journal; in order to serve its purpose it must positively expound true doctrine.

The positive side of the common grace controversy is the setting forth of Reformed truth. Common grace in essence calls into question and compromises each one of the five points of Calvinism or the five heads of doctrine of the Canons of Dordt. *The Standard Bearer* not only refuted negatively but it expounded these principles of Reformed doctrine positively. This it began to do in the very early issues of the paper. All different aspects of Scripture study and doctrine have been set forth in harmony with the principles set forth by our fathers. This has become one of the most beautiful and enduring characteristics of our paper.

The third feature which we would notice about our paper has raised it to a very unique position—it has been used in the development of new theological insight. This is a blessing which we should be sure to appreciate as a unique privilege. Many are the years and decades which have passed at times in the history of the Church when doctrinally speaking the best that could be said was that the Church held its own. In the comparatively short history of our paper, however, the Lord has blessed us with the services of the Rev. H. Hoeksema and in that position has used him to provide new insight into the doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ.

The one development in doctrine of which we would take particular notice this evening is in regard to the truth of the covenant of grace. The Reformed Churches have always felt that the doctrine of the covenant holds a very important place in orthodox theology; but, they have not always shown great clarity of vision in understanding it themselves. Attempts have been made. Some have said that the covenant is an agreement between God and man; others have found its essence in the promise of God to His people; still others have merely called it the way in which God saves His people. These all have proved disappointingly superficial at

* This is an abbreviated form of the speech offered on September 24 for the annual meeting of the R.F.P.A.

best; and at their worst have led to very serious error. (We might almost wonder if the error of common grace has not developed in the past in connection with one of these erroneous views of the covenant.) It was the editor of our journal, the Rev. H. Hoeksema, who first developed this doctrine of covenant from an entirely different point of view. He found the essence of the covenant of grace to be, not merely an agreement or promise, but the relationship of gracious love and friendship which God has established with His elect people in Jesus Christ. This has shed an entirely new light, not just on the various aspects of the covenant doctrine, but upon the whole scheme of Reformed theology. It serves as a unifying principle which brings all doctrines into close and intimate relation with each other and with personal spiritual experience and life. Through it all doctrine becomes very practical, not with the superficial practicality of a concentration upon externals, but by bringing all of the revelation of God into profound significance for our experience of covenant communion with our God.

Finally, there is one more feature of our Paper which must be considered of major importance—that is the contribution of the Rev. G. M. Ophoff in the exposition of the Old Testament Scriptures. In a very real sense Rev. Ophoff has opened up the Old Testament Scriptures for us. His endeavors in this field have been thorough and unceasing. Never has he been content to find in the Old Testament nothing more than a series of moralistic lessons such as is only too commonly done. From Genesis through Malachi he has sought out and found the gospel of God's covenant grace in Jesus Christ. Clearly he has shown that the Old Testament saints experienced it, the types and shadows reflected it, the songs of Israel exclaimed it, and the voices of the prophets expounded it. The unifying principle of all Scripture has been lucidly revealed through his pen. I am sure that all of our ministers will readily agree that nothing is more helpful in interpreting the Old Testament Scriptures than the writings of Rev. Ophoff in our *Standard Bearer*.

In conclusion, therefore, we find that in our paper, *The Standard Bearer*, we have a very distinct and precious heritage. In the past it has been used by God for the defense, exposition, and development of the true doctrine of Jesus Christ within the Church. In the present we believe that these same principles continue to distinguish our paper. We can only hope and pray that He will also so use us on into the future.

This brings us to the second main aspect of our subject, namely, the witness of *The Standard Bearer*.

Concerning this we should note, in the first place, that when we speak of witnessing we do not have reference to a sort of missionary work. Missionary work is an official function which belongs exclusively to the institute of the Church of Jesus Christ. It can not take place through papers and publications. It is the living preaching of the Word. It

can only be performed by one who is officially called and sent by the Church to preach the Word of God to those that are without. This work we cannot perform. We can not do it as individuals. Neither can we do it in association.

Witnessing, however, is another thing. That is a duty which belongs very particularly to the office of every believer. This witnessing consists of giving testimony to the truth which God has given us and implanted within our hearts. By the grace of God we have received the truth and concerning it we may not keep silent. As servants of God we must express that truth. We are like a city set on a hill which must not be hid in darkness. This is true of us as individuals; it is also true of our association. We have considered together the living heritage of true doctrine which we have in our publication, *The Standard Bearer*. Having this heritage we may not keep it to ourselves. We must also give expression of it to others.

This was quite evidently the intention of our association from the beginning. We read in our constitution that the purpose of the R.F.P.A. is "to witness to the truth contained in the Word of God and expressed in the Three Forms of Unity." This is also the clear implication of the name of our paper, "The Standard Bearer." The standard referred to here is equivalent to the emblem, banner, or flag which is borne before troops which are entering a battle. Such a standard is intended to serve a dual purpose. It encourages the men that follow it, and it testifies to those who do not. This is quite exactly the function which our publication should serve for us. It bears before us the standard of the truth of the Word of God. In doing this it should encourage us who follow it, and it should be a testimony to and against those who do not.

More concretely what this means is that we should take care that the truth which is written upon the pages of our paper should be distributed very broadly. Good Reformed writings are only too rare in our day. Having them, we should not keep them to ourselves but should distribute them about us on every side. Many of us have rather close contacts with members of the Christian Reformed Church, to say nothing of those who left us in 1953. They should be given the testimony of Reformed truth found within our paper. More broadly, we live in communities in which there are members of Reformed Churches, Presbyterian Churches, Methodist and many others. To them our witness and testimony should be brought. Ideally the witness of *The Standard Bearer* should go forth throughout our nation and even unto the very ends of the earth.

This brings us in conclusion to the very real problem of how we can possibly do this.

It is encouraging for us to note that our Board has taken steps in this direction already. For the last few years it has

been making extended work of distributing copies of *The Standard Bearer* to many that are not on our subscription list. There is one difficulty, however, against which we always meet. We cannot afford to make free distribution of our paper to a large number of people for any extended length of time.

Because of this fact I have a concrete suggestion which I would like to submit this evening. Should it be not completely practical in itself, it may nonetheless set us to thinking in the right direction. The various phases of this suggestion I will divide into three different steps. 1. A request should be sent to the editorial staff of our paper asking that they prepare a special series of articles which in a concise and a direct manner would set forth the various facets of our Protestant Reformed truths. 2. Once these articles were printed, we could have the printer re-arrange the type in shorter columns and reprint them in the form of pamphlets. This would involve a minimum of expense. 3. These pamphlets could then be forwarded to such groups as the Prot. Ref. Action Committee of Doon, Edgerton and Hull, the Church-Extension Committee of South Holland and Oaklawn, and to individual committees that could be organized in our various congregations. These committees could then mail them out to various people of their communities and states, and perhaps in some instances even more broadly than that, both nationally and internationally.

Before we close, we can hardly resist speculating upon what the results of such a program might be. In the first place, such a series of pamphlets as is proposed would be beneficial for our own people. Properly preserved and indexed they could form a handy source of reference in every home. In the second place, such broadly distributed reprints from *The Standard Bearer* would serve as a very good means of advertisement for our paper and could easily lead to an increase in the number of subscribers. In the third place and more than anything else, we would be filling our obligation to our God to witness as broadly as possible to the truth which He has given to us. Finally, however, it is not inconceivable to expect that such a broad program consistently carried out could lead eventually to the opening up of new fields in which the official missionary ministry of our Churches could engage.

B.W.

"It is necessary that the same Spirit, who spake by the mouths of the prophets, should penetrate into our hearts, to convince us that they faithfully delivered the oracles which were divinely intrusted to them. And this connection is very suitably expressed in these words 'My Spirit that is upon thee, and my word which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed forever.'"

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

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

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

Oct. 20, 1959

Rev. G. Lanting, of Grand Haven, received the call from Holland from a trio which included Revs. G. Lubbers and G. Vanden Berg.

Rev. J. A. Heys, of Hull, is considering a call from South Holland. The other members of the trio were Revs. G. Vanden Berg and B. Woudenberg.

Rev. G. Vanden Berg declined the call extended to him from Edgerton.

REPORT OF CLASSIS EAST

October 7, 1959

Hudsonville, Michigan

Rev. G. Vos, chairman of the July Classis, led in the opening devotions.

All the churches of Classis East were represented by two delegates except Creston and Grand Haven whose ministers only were present.

Rev. B. Woudenberg, following the order of rotation, presided at this session and acquitted himself well of his task.

After the approval of the transcribed minutes of the July meeting, Classis listened to and received for information various reports from the Stated Clerk, the Classical Committee and the Committee for Church Visitation.

The report of the Classical Committee revealed that the Rev. J. A. Mc Collam had resigned from the ministry in the Protestant Reformed Churches and particularly from his pastorate in Holland. The Classical Committee had appointed Rev. G. Lanting to be the counselor of Holland and made arrangements for classical appointments to help this church in her need.

The Church Visitors reported concerning the general well-being of the churches in Classis East. Our churches accordingly are prospering and experiencing the favor of God.

Classis also considered several requests for classical appointments, two coming through Classis West to supply the churches in Randolph and South Holland, and one from Holland. Classis acted favorably and adopted the following schedule of appointments:

HOLLAND — Oct. 18, M. Schipper; Oct. 25, H. Hanko;
Nov. 1, Open; Nov. 8, G. Lanting; Nov. 15, Open;
Nov. 22, G. Vos; Nov. 29, A. Mulder; Dec. 6, Open;

Dec. 13, R. Veldman; Dec. 20, Open; Dec. 27, B. Woudenberg; Jan. 3, Open; Jan. 10, C. Hanko.

RANDOLPH — Oct. 18, R. Veldman; Oct. 25, B. Woudenberg; Nov. 1, Open; Nov. 8, Open; Nov. 15, M. Schipper; Nov. 22, H. Hanko; Nov. 29, C. Hanko; Dec. 6, Open; Dec. 13, G. Lanting; Dec. 20, G. Vos; Dec. 27, Open; Jan. 3, Open; Jan. 10, A. Mulder.

SOUTH HOLLAND — Oct. 18, A. Mulder; Oct. 25, C. Hanko; Nov. 1, G. Vos; Nov. 8, Open; Nov. 15, R. Veldman; Nov. 22, Open; Nov. 29, B. Woudenberg; Dec. 6, Open; Dec. 13, Open; Dec. 20, M. Schipper; Dec. 27, H. Hanko; Jan. 3, Open; Jan. 10, G. Lanting.

Classis West also requested two sermons from each minister in Classis East to be used in their reading services. This request was granted.

First Church of Grand Rapids requested that Classis East discontinue publishing a report of their sessions by means of a fly-leaf in *The Standard Bearer*, and inform Classis West of the action if adopted. Classis decided to instruct the Stated Clerk to send this material to the News Editor of *The Standard Bearer* for inclusion in his column. Two reasons moved Classis to take this step. One, considerable expense will be saved for our churches. Two, our people will have a permanent record of the actions of Classis rather than one that can be easily lost on a fly-leaf. Classis West was also informed of this action and it is hoped they will follow the same procedure.

First Church also asked for the increase of censure. After the necessary light had been shed, Classis decided to grant the request.

The Consistory of Loveland presented Classis with a letter informing the churches of Classis East of their great financial need incurred recently by the procuring of a minister and a parsonage. Classis decided to grant their request to ask for collections in our churches to help them in their need.

Rev. R. Veldman was appointed to thank the ladies of our Hudsonville Church for their excellent catering services.

Classis decided to meet next time on January 6th in First Church.

Questions of Article 41 of the Church Order were asked and answered satisfactorily.

After the chairman expressed appreciation for the cooperation he received in this session of Classis and after he expressed the hope and prayer that God bless our decisions, Elder P. Schipper of Holland closed the meeting with thanksgiving.

REV. M. SCHIPPER, *Stated Clerk*

The Office Bearers' Conference held October 6 at Hudsonville was well attended. Rev. G. Lanting, from Grand Haven, gave an excellent speech on the topic, "Praying For Those In Authority" as found in I Tim. 2:1, 2. After recess the reverend answered many questions regarding his subject. The evening proved to be one of spiritual benefit and edification.

Rev. G. Vanden Berg, from Oak Lawn, is conducting all of the catechism classes in South Holland.

An excerpt from Hope's bulletin: "Yesterday (Oct. 17) Rev. and Mrs. H. Hanko brought their baby to St. Mary's Hospital for treatment of spinal meningitis. Not too much is known at this point as to his condition."

Both the Eastern and Western Ladies' Leagues and Mr. and Mrs. League held meetings in the month of October. Those, and other reports, will probably be found in the next issue.

Hope P.T.A., held October 9, featured a round table discussion on "Foreign languages in the elementary school."

The Mr. and Mrs. Society of Hudsonville held a "coffee" recently to help defray the expenses of remodeling the basement of their church.

See you in church . . .

J.M.F.

"Thine own musician, Lord, inspire,
And let my consecrated lyre
Repeat the Psalmist's part.
His Son and Thine reveal in me,
And fill with sacred melody
The fibres of my heart."

— Charles Wesley

Thy right hand shall thy people aid;
Thy faithful promise makes us strong;
We will Philistia's land invade,
And over Edom chant the song.

Through thee we shall most valiant prove,
And tread the foe beneath our feet;
Through thee our faith shall hills remove
And small as chaff the mountains beat.

— Anonymous