

THE STANDARD

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MEDITATION

THE SPEECH OF TRUE PENITENCE

*"I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear:
but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I
abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."*

JOB 42:5, 6

Job had been rather voluble: he multiplied words.

Chapter upon chapter of the words of Job.

But in my chapter Job discounts the whole of it. Listen to him: "Therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not."

Also in chapter 40:5: "Once have I spoken; but I will not answer: yea twice; but I will proceed no further." And in the fourth verse he says: "what shall I answer Thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth."

As voluble as Job was at first, so reluctant he is in speaking now.

It is not so that Job does not speak at all. No, he does say something. But his words are very few.

Well, that is according to Divine wisdom, for God saith: "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thy heart be hasty to utter anything before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few."

Do you know that in this last text you really have an answer to the question as to the meaning of the book of Job?

Yes, Job did use only a few words at his latter end.

Let's listen to him. I have chosen the dogmatic statements of Job; the dogmatic statements regarding himself.

In chapter 40 he says of himself: "Behold, I am vile!" And in the text which appears above this meditation: "wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

Well, they are a very few words.

The question is: what do those words mean, and particularly the last quoted text.

I abhor myself!

Did you note that the word *myself* is written in italics? That means that this word is not in the Hebrew text. Job really says: I abhor! Now, all and everyone of you realize that a statement like that has no sense at all. Suppose I would say to you: I abhor! You would ask me at once: Alright! But *what* do you abhor? And then I would have to supply the object of my abhorrence. That is the reason why the translators of the Bible have supplied the proper object.

Now, that was not necessary in the Hebrew. For the Hebrews it was clear what Job meant.

You see, the word which is translated *abhor* has a picture in it, and the picture is sufficient and very clear. I might add also that this picture is very striking.

The word *abhor* means literally: to melt, to melt away, to run; and, specifically of a sore which runs with pus, matter. And therefore the idea of loathsomeness is included.

What Job means with this phrase is that he likens himself to a fetid, filthy, running sore.

Neither is this idea foreign to the Bible. You find this idea everywhere. Attend, e.g., to Isaiah 1:6, "From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed (notice! they have not been closed, so these sores are running sores: a continual cause for loathing! G.V.), neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment." Or listen to God's estimation of mankind: "They are all gone aside, they are all together become *filthy*: there is none that doeth good, no, not one." Psalm 14:3.

Everywhere, I said. Listen to Jesus: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness," Matthew 23:27.

And if you would make answer and say: But these men were the filthy Pharisees whose abominable picture is drawn by Jesus throughout the Gospels! Then I would make answer, first, have you never read this filthy picture of the Pharisees, and trembled? Trembled, because it rang true in

your conscience? And, second, does not God call the human race *filthy*? And, third, does not Job liken himself with a running, fetid, loathsome sore? Are you better than Job? Here is what God said of Job: "And the Lord said unto Satan, hast thou considered My servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?" And yet Job says: "I am a running sore"? (Incidentally, that would be a truer translation too!)

I know, I know, this poses a difficulty: how could Job call himself a running sore, while God calls him a man that is upright and perfect? But we will answer that in its proper place. Just remember this: both are right. Job was a perfect man, and also a running sore.

* * * *

I abhor myself!

That is the language of self-condemnation.

That is the language, first, of condemnation.

One judges by a certain standard, and the result of such judging is that the object cannot bear the name of good.

Second, it is the language of rejection.

We are through with our judging: the object is bad.

And the result is that one turns away from the object: one cannot stand to look at it anymore because of its vileness. And therefore one rejects it. And this rejection is absolute.

And, third, it ends in abhorrence. The Dutch has a very graphic word for this: *afzichtelijk*. Trembling, shivering, one turns away from this object. And the picture of Holy Scripture is wonderfully correct: a stinking wound from which the matter runs.

Thus Job sees himself.

He judges himself to be bad, thoroughly bad.

He rejects himself. He throws himself away. There is nothing good in himself. He judges that he ought to be thrown away: he ought to be thrown away.

And he abhors himself. He cannot stand to look at himself anymore. Did you ever look at a running, stinking sore, and turn away in disgust? That's what we have here. And this abominable object is Job.

Such language is foreign to natural man.

Did you ever attend a funeral of a wicked man who was one of the great of the earth? Have you ever read the funeral orations, the eulogies uttered at the departure of the high and mighty?

Yes, they do judge.

But their judgment, their condemnation is of the other man. Classic is the judgment of the hated Pharisee: I am

not as the rest of men are: extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican!

They judge all and everything: but not themselves.

They judge themselves to be righteous and they despise others. That's a text.

But the judgment of the righteous is just the reverse: they esteem the brother better than themselves.

Job is of such caliber. He abhors self.

And the result was that "he repented in dust and ashes."

What is it?

He sorrowed over his dreadful estate. He did not take the time to count his evil deeds. There was not time enough for that. Hence, he abhors *self*. That included his abominable nature, his sinful deeds, his lack of righteousness: the picture is complete!

And the measure of his repentance is expressed in the addition of a twofold picture: dust and ashes! That was an Eastern term, and expressed the imagery of death. You cannot grow anything in dust and ashes. Yes, the picture is complete: we belong in the dust of death.

What beautiful humility!

* * * *

How did this come about? How does a man arrive there?

Job spoke volubly about his righteousness, and his readiness to appear before the throne of the great Judge.

But all this is past.

Here we see him grovelling in the dust of death.

Here is the answer, beloved reader; they are but a few words.

HE HAD SEEN GOD!

Oh, he had heard of God by the hearing of the ear. His father and mother had told him of God. He did mention the fall of Adam, so he must have heard the story of the first paradise and how man had fallen away from God, etc. Job was acquainted with tradition: there was as yet no Bible. Moses was not yet born. He lived at the time of Abraham, so there was not one page of the written Word of God. But he did hear of God by the "hearing of the ear."

But after his three friends had spoken, together with that young man, Elihu; and after he had given plentiful answers, a storm arose, a veritable whirlwind; God had come down and shown himself to Job. How, I do not know. But God had come very close to Job. I think it was something like we hear from Paul: "But God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, *hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*" II Cor. 4:6.

Oh, I know that the New Testament quality and quantity

of the Spirit of Christ was not yet, but I am persuaded that Job saw the glory of God nevertheless. Is this not in harmony with all the words of God in His wonderful speech to Job in chapters 38 to 41? All this speech of God enhances His wondrous glory and wisdom!

And Job saw it.

And that was exactly the reason why he saw his own stinking, abominable filthiness.

And now the answer to that difficult question: how could Job be at the same time the perfect and upright man of God's estimation, and also like unto a running, stinking sore?

Have you noticed one thing in Job's condemnatory speech of self? It is this: it is the speech of *truth* in the inward parts. God agrees with Job. The light of God's attractive, lovely, beautiful glory shows us our rottenness.

And the love of God in our heart is true in its evaluation of self.

He that condemneth himself shall not be judged. He was found of God's mercy. And that mercy is the lovely Son of God! Amen.
G.V.

Announcement

On Wednesday, September 16, our beloved Pastor Rev. H. H. Kuiper commemorated the fact that twenty-five years ago he was ordained as minister of the Word and Sacraments in the Protestant Reformed Church of Orange City, Iowa.

We, the Consistory of the Protestant Reformed Church of Loveland, Colorado, with the congregation at this place, rejoice with him at this jubilee and pray that the Lord of His Church may use Rev. Kuiper for years to come. May his labors be blessed in the future as we are confident they have been blessed in the past and all the glory be to Him who works His work thru the instrumentality of men.

The Consistory of the Loveland
Protestant Reformed Church
Wm. A. Griess, Secretary

IN MEMORIAM

The Consistory of First Church in Grand Rapids hereby expresses its sympathy to one of its fellow elders, Donald Rietema, in the recent loss of his mother,

MRS. JOHN ROTTSCHAFER.

Rev. C. Hanko, President
G. Stadt, Secretary

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EDITORIALS

The National Council of Churches A Menace to Church and State

From a brother, Mr. Frederick Nymeyer, of South Holland, Ill., I received a rather interesting and important pamphlet of 54 pages under the above mentioned title.

It was published, first in 1955 and now again in 1959, by the Board of Directors of the Southern Presbyterian Journal, Waterville, N.C. Copies may be had for 20 cents each or \$2.00 per dozen.

The contents of this pamphlet are important because it exposes the corruption of what is the largest Protestant organization in America. It claims to represent almost forty million Protestants. Such churches as the Lutheran, Missouri Synod, the Free Methodist, the Southern Baptist and others, are not united with the Council; neither, of course, are our churches.

The pamphlet begins with a brief exposition of the relation between Church and State. It distinguishes the two as follows: "The state is temporal in its administration, designed for the temporal welfare of its citizens. The Church is a spiritual organization, designed to witness to the saving and keeping power of the Lord Jesus Christ, to administer the ordinances and maintain the discipline of the Church and to constitute a visible witness of a redeemed citizenry, one in but not of this world."

The pamphlet further describes how the National Council of Churches came into being and how it developed. It had its origin in the Federal Council of Churches. This Council, merged with several other organizations, became the National Council of Churches. According to the pamphlet, this Federation was not only thoroughly liberal and modernistic in its theological views but also leftist and communistic politically. It quotes from a report of the Office of Naval Intelligence, 1935, as follows:

"Organizations which while not openly advocating the 'force and violence' principles of the Communists, give aid and comfort to the Communist movement and party. Among the strongest of these organizations are:

"The Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America. This is a large radical pacifist organization. It probably represents 20,000,000 Protestants in the United States. However, its leadership consists of a small radical group which dictates its policies. It is always extremely active in any matter against national defense."

And since this Federal Council is the parent of the National Council of Christian Churches, the pamphlet concludes this part as follows:

"In summation, forty-two years of Federal Council history was largely the history of a small clique of ultra-modernist clergymen whose political coloration could be

described as deep pink and who controlled and directed its affairs. A mere recital of F.C.C.C. presidents and top officials would leave little doubt as to the direction of any organization subject to their control."

And it ends this chapter in capital letters with the following words:

"Such is the history of the National Council's parent organization. The Federal Council of Churches of Christ! Is this the kind of activity you want your church and your money to support?"

Here I must insert a remark.

The Southern Presbyterian Church, to which also the authors of this pamphlet belong, is also united with the National Council of Christian Churches. How is this possible? Do not the authors of the pamphlet know that not only a small clique of top men, but practically all the churches or, at least their leaders, with which they are thus united, are full of modernists if not leftists? How, then, can they unite with them at all? Suppose they succeed to get the leadership of the N.C.C.C. in the hands of the conservative element, which is very improbable, would that solve the problem? Would not the modernists still be in the Council and would they not still be united with those that deny the Christ of the Scriptures? The Bible plainly teaches us that there is not and cannot be any communion between Christ and Belial, between light and darkness. And, surely, all modernist theologians, that deny that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, that deny the total depravity of the natural man and the divine Sonship of Christ, as well as the atonement on the cross, are children of darkness and children of Belial. Hence, the Southern Presbyterian Church should never have joined the N.C.C.C. which is a daughter of the Federation of Christian Churches and should separate themselves immediately.

However, this is not the position of the pamphlet. For, on p. 25 we read:

"Our own Church is a member of the National Council, but we find our hands tied to make an effective protest. Those who are at the head of the Council, along with staff members who do so much behind the scenes to direct the policies of this organization, seem adamant in their position and have laid themselves wide open to the severest criticism. In fact, these men have in their action lined themselves and the National Council squarely behind the present Communist line.

"If any of them do not like this statement let them repudiate their position. Otherwise they and their actions will be increasingly suspect.

"In saying this we are not taking a stand against the principle back of the National Council. There is need for an agency which can, in mutually agreed areas, represent Protestantism as a whole.

"Nor do we wish to make an all-inclusive criticism of the National Council. There are activities and individuals which are rendering an acceptable and effective service.

"But this we assert: as now constituted the National

Council has become an ecclesiastical octopus which in an increasing degree is trying to influence all of the constituting churches of the Council and this influence only too often comes from men whose concept of the Church is widely at variance with that of our own denomination. We have the frightening fact that an agency for the Church has left the role of servant to assume the position of master."

This I cannot understand.

How the Southern Presbyterian Church with a Council of Churches that has its origin in the Federation, which is so controlled by modernists that it is even impossible to protest, controlled, too, by men that are "squarely behind the present communist line" — that is a mystery to me. And I repeat: it was a mistake that the Southern Presbyterian Church ever joined the National Council and should separate itself as soon as possible.

Much of the rest of the pamphlet is devoted to a criticism of the stand taken by the National Council to recognize Red China.

The reader must know that last year, in Cleveland, Ohio, delegates to what is called a "World Order Study Conference" which was sponsored by the National Council of Churches, passed the following resolution: "With reference to China, Christians should urge reconsideration by our Government of its policy in regard to the People's Republic of China . . . steps should be taken toward the inclusion of the People's Republic of China in the United Nations and for its recognition by our Government." Pamphlet p. 21.

The pamphlet suggests that a strong protest should be registered against this action of the National Council. And a letter has already been sent to fifty thousand Protestant clergymen from which we quote the following:

"We believe it is important to set the record straight and to show the world where the American Protestant community stands. It is in this belief that we are sending this letter to you and to other Protestant clergymen of all denominations with an urgent request that you make your individual point of view known on two simple and yet paramount questions:

"(a) Do you favor recognition of Communist China by the United States?

"(b) Do you favor the admission of Communist China to the United Nations?

"We urge that you complete the enclosed form as soon as possible and return it to us with an indication of your sentiment. We hope that you will join thousands of other clergymen throughout the country in registering your opposition to any action which would betray the people of China, our allies and the basic tenets of our Christian morality. We look forward to hearing from you by return mail." Pamphlet pp. 26, 27.

This protest, though it asks for the expression of thousands of clergymen in regard to their sentiments on the above two questions, does not enter into the principle of the matter. For that principle involves the separation of Church and State. The National Council of Churches is supposed to represent a large section of the Church. It, therefore, must be interested in the affairs of the Church, chiefly with the maintenance and development of the truth of the gospel. But the question of the recognition of Red China and its inclusion in the United Nations is strictly an affair of the State. It certainly is not the business of the National Council of Churches.

We, therefore, suggest that, in case a protest is made, it should read as follows:

"We, all members of Churches that belong to the National Council, protest through the various assemblies of our Churches, against the action of the National Council of Churches according to which they resolved that Red China should be recognized by the Government of the United States and be included in the United Nations. Grounds:

"1. We all believe in the principle of the separation of Church and State.

"2. The National Council is supposed to represent the Churches that belong to it and, therefore, is interested in all things that concern the truth of the gospel and the well-being of the Church.

"3. But the matter of the recognition of Red China by our Government and its inclusion in the United Nations is strictly an affair of the State and although individual members of the Church may be interested in the matter and express an opinion, no Church-body as such may draw up an official resolution regarding this matter.

"4. By making this resolution the National Council has placed itself in the sign of the false church from which we are called before God to separate ourselves. The false church is anti-christian."

The pamphlet closes with a chapter under the heading: "To Our Beloved Church."

In this chapter strong emphasis is expressed on the necessity of maintaining the truth of the infallibility and plenary inspiration of Holy Writ. And the authors of the pamphlet express deep concern in this respect, not only over the condition of the Church in general, but also over conditions in their own Church. They write: "First of all. There is constant need to guard against any tendency to a qualified acceptance of the Bible. There is an alarming absence of that sturdy faith in, and resounding affirmation of, the Scriptures which characterized the Church in past generations. There is accorded to many scholars outside the bounds of our church a respect and acceptance which their views in no way justify. It can be clearly demonstrated that no development

of science or proven finding of scholarship has invalidated one whit a single doctrine of the Christian faith. Nonetheless there is abroad today a scholarship which denies almost every cardinal element of truth, not on the basis of established facts but on the basis of intellectual pre-suppositions which have denied the faith before they even examined it."

Many in the Church follow these would-be scholars that deny the Holy Scriptures, the God and the Christ and the plan of the Scriptures. And it is, evidently, the idea of the authors of the pamphlet that this is true even of their own Church.

Personally, I agree very much with the sentiments expressed in this final chapter. But when the authors suggest that there are those in the Church who agree with the modernists and their views about Holy Scripture, I cannot help but wonder whether or not there is still discipline in the Southern Presbyterian Church. The authors quote more than once the Westminster Confession of Faith. But that Confession also has the following to say about church discipline:

"I. The Lord Jesus, as king and head of his Church, hath therein appointed a government in the hand of the Church officers distinct from the civil magistrate.

"II. To these officers the keys of the kingdom of heaven are committed, by virtue whereof they have power respectively to retain and remit sins, to shut that kingdom against the impenitent, both by the Word and censures; and to open it unto penitent sinners, by the ministry of the gospel, and by absolution from censures, as occasion shall require.

"III. Church censures are necessary for the reclaiming and gaining of offending brethren; for the deterring of others from the like offenses; for purging out of that leaven which might affect the whole lump; for vindicating the honor of Christ, and the holy profession of the gospel; and for preventing the wrath of God, which might justly fall upon the Church, if they should suffer his covenant, and the seals thereof, to be profaned by notorious and obstinate offenders.

"IV. For the better attaining of these ends, the officers of the Church are to proceed by admonition, suspension from the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper for a season, and by excommunication from the Church, according to the nature of the crime and demerit of the person."

I have the impression from the pamphlet that this part of the Westminster Confession is not observed and that Christian discipline is not faithfully exercised.

In conclusion, therefore, I would once more advise the Southern Presbyterian Church to separate themselves from the National Council of Churches which they should never have joined.

And, secondly, I also advise them to exercise Christian discipline faithfully and excommunicate the members that are disorderly in walk and that deny the faith.

Otherwise I see no hope.

H.H.

OUR DOCTRINE

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

PART TWO

CHAPTER TEN

The Two Signs in Heaven

Rev. 12:1-6

But in the second place, we find a still stronger indication of this truth in the fact that this woman brings forth the man child that is to rule all nations with a rod of iron. This last clause, in connection with the second Psalm and with Revelation 2:27, leaves no doubt that the man child is the Christ, the King of Zion. In Psalm 2:9 we read of this Christ: "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." And in Revelation 2:27 we read that the promise is given to him that overcometh that he shall rule all nations with a rod of iron; and then the addition is given concerning the Christ, "as I also have received of my Father." There is no question about it, therefore, that the man child brought forth by this woman is the Christ. But then there can be no question about it either that the woman is none other than the church of God, the woman, namely, as is conceived of in Genesis 3:15, to whom the great seed was promised. Christ is man. Although He is the Son of God, He is man and He is of man. He issues from humanity, but not from humanity as it is under the power of Satan, but rather from the people of God, from the church of the living God, from Israel. He is the Son of David. That this woman is the church of God is further suggested by her crown of twelve stars: for twelve is the number of the church in this dispensation, as we have observed before. And finally, it is suggested by the very fact that she is a woman: for the church appears throughout Scripture as a woman, as the bride adorned for her husband. The woman, therefore, is the picture of the church.

But also here the question must be answered: how does that church appear in the words of our text? And then we must call your attention to the fact that here we have evidently a picture of the church in the old dispensation, before the woman is delivered and proceeds into the wilderness, that is, therefore, before the woman as she appears as a sign in heaven. She represents the church of the old dispensation. This is plain from the fact that her man child is not yet born. The woman therefore represents the church before the birth of Christ, the church as she is essentially glorious and queen of the heavens, but as she still is in expectation of her man child, that is to deliver her and at the same time become her Bridegroom. And now you must not make the mistake of thinking that this woman represents

the mother of Jesus, or that at least it represents merely Israel. That has often been inferred from the fact that she is already in pain to be delivered and that she expects her son momentarily. But the woman represents the church throughout the entire dispensation of the Old Testament. That entire church lived continually in the expectation that the Messiah would be born and would be born soon. Even Eve imagined that in Cain the promise was realized, and therefore she called him "acquired." Enoch prophesied of His coming for judgment. Abraham longed to see His day. Jacob foretold of His entrance into the world. Moses spoke of the coming of a great prophet. The prophets of Israel spoke of His birth, even indicating time and place. And Simeon could not die before he had seen the Hope of Israel. And the very expression in our text reminds us of the prophecy of Isaiah concerning Him: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulders." Isa. 9:6. And therefore, the entire church of the old dispensation, from paradise onward, presents the picture of this woman, traveling in pain and longing and expecting to bring forth the man child.

Now we must still consider the attitude of the dragon towards the woman and the conflict that ensues between the two. The text tells us that the woman stands in her glory, but also in her helplessness, and that the dragon stands before her. He is evidently watching her, and at the same time barring her way to escape. With intent watchfulness the dragon guards this woman and studies her every movement. And his purpose in doing so is most devilish indeed. It is not the woman as such that is his aim, but rather the child that she is to bring forth. If only that woman did not expect to bring forth that man child, he would care little about her and about her glory. But that man child is evidently of extreme importance to him. And therefore he watches the woman, in order that as soon as the child sees the light of the world he may kill and devour it. But we read that the child is born and is caught up in heaven to God. The child, therefore, escapes him. The devil cannot reach his purpose. He fails. The old deceiver is deceived. And it may be expected that in his rage and fury he will now cast himself upon the woman, in order to devour her at all events. But the woman escapes by fleeing into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God and where she is nourished a thousand two hundred and threescore days.

The meaning of all this is not dark. After all we have discussed, it is plain that the church of the old dispensation is laboring in pain to bring forth the Christ. It is also evident that that church of the old dispensation lives in continual expectation that the man child that is to rule the nations with the rod of iron shall be born. She has reason to expect this, for God Himself has promised the church this seed. In Gen. 3:15 we read the well-known words: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Such was the promise. And therefore, the church

lived in expectation of this seed of the woman from that very moment forth. But also the devil lived in that expectation. He was right there when that promise was made. Nay, still stronger, the promise was addressed to him. It was a promise given in the form of a challenge to the devil that he would suffer defeat. And therefore, also the devil expected the Messiah. I dare say even, in the face of the fact that the devil understood the situation far better than either Adam or Eve, understood also the significance of this seed of the woman better than our first parents, — he clearly had caught on to the significance of that word of the Almighty, and he knows that if the seed of the woman is born, and if that seed of the woman accomplishes his purpose, he, the devil, will be deprived of his power and of his royal diadems, and his heads will be crushed, and therefore he watches the church of the old dispensation closely. His aim is all the time to crush that seed of the woman, either by preventing that it ever be born or by devouring it as soon as it sees the light of the world. But with all his watchfulness he fails. Christ is born and gains the victory and is taken to heaven in glory and leaves the devil behind in furious rage. True, the church still remains behind. She is in the wilderness, that is, practically excluded from outward glory and dominion. The devil still reigns in the world and still has his seven diadems. But also in this period of the new dispensation the church is safely kept and nourished in the place that she has prepared for her by God Almighty Himself.

Thus is the meaning of the text. It simply reveals how the devil throughout the old dispensation exerts himself to kill the seed of the woman and to prevent the victory of Christ. Not difficult it is to trace this struggle throughout the old dispensation. It is to be seen already in the murder of Abel. No doubt the devil made the same mistake at first as did Adam and Eve. They thought that the Christ would be born immediately. At first Eve imagined that her first-born was the promised seed, and therefore she called him Cain, that is, "I have begotten a man of God." But as the two boys, Cain and Abel, grew up, they must all have realized that Cain was not the man, since he was godless. And the same difference between the two boys must also have been the cause that the hope and expectation was gradually referred from Cain to Abel. The devil must have made the mistake to think that Abel was the promised seed; and hence, through Cain he kills him. But Seth is born, and the seed of the woman in the spiritual sense multiplies in the line of Seth. The devil begins to realize that his problem is not so simple. And therefore, standing in front of the woman, he employs different methods. He tries to gain the victory by the process of amalgamation, and the sons of God marry the daughters of men, so that the whole world is well-nigh deprived of the spiritual seed of the woman. But again God interferes through the flood, and saves the seed of the woman in the family of Noah. And thus it continues all through the history of the old dispensation. At the building of the tower of Babel the devil tries to make his own stronghold

against the seed of the woman and to establish his own kingdom. At the time of Abraham, he only is left practically of the seed of the woman. In Egypt the devil tries to extinguish the seed of the woman by oppressing Israel. In the desert he brings them to apostasy. In Canaan he sends enemies against them till they finally are led into captivity. And after the captivity he makes life hard for them. At the time of Antiochus Epiphanes the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the seed of the woman is killed on a large scale. But in spite of it all, the Great Seed appears. Christ is born. And the angels loudly proclaim that the glory is God's in the highest. Also Satan is now certain that He is the Christ. And therefore he directs all his efforts against Him. How this Christ will crush him and gain the victory is not plain to him, no more than it was to Israel of that time. And therefore he applies two different methods to devour this seed. First of all, he makes the attempt to subject Him spiritually, and he offers Him all the kingdoms of the world if only He will fall down and worship him, that is, Satan, knowing that if this promised seed will only do this, the devil will maintain his royal crowns and sovereignty. He tries this repeatedly in the life of Christ. But when he fails, he rouses the enemies of Christ against Him, so that they finally kill Him. I imagine that the devil was foolish enough, at least for some time, to hope that in His death he had killed the seed of the woman. But it was but for a short time. For that Seed, suffering on the cross, at the moment of His death cried out with a loud voice, "Father, into thy hands do I commend my spirit." That Seed rises from death and the grave and is taken to heaven, to sit at the right hand of God in everlasting glory, now working till the kingdom of the world shall lie at the feet of the Almighty. That the devil had not thought this is very evident. That victory lay in the way of suffering, exaltation through humiliation, life through death. And that he prepared after all his own defeat by killing this Seed of the woman, this he had not clearly before his mind. The deceiver is deceived! He has deceived himself. And he stays behind, as we hope to see in the future, filled with fury and rage against the woman that brought forth the man child.

Such is the meaning of the text. The battle of the world is a battle of the devil against God. Not between the world and the church in the last instance, not even between Antichrist and Christ, is that battle. They all are agents. Christ is the anointed agent of God to fight, with His people, the battle against the devil. Antichrist, as we hope to see, is the agent of Satan, to fight his battles against God and His church. What a tremendous idea is expressed here! We, as the covenant people, as being of God's party in the midst of the world, fight the battle of Jehovah against the old serpent, the devil. There is magic joy in the very idea that the Lord will use us as instruments in His hand, nay, as His living people, to fight against the old dragon. In the second place, let us also note that God Almighty has always been victorious in the past, and that the devil with all his attempts to prevent the birth of the Great Seed has simply effected his

own defeat. So it will be in the future. God will always be victorious, of course. Not yet has the devil given up the attempt to gain dominion over the kingdom of God. But the voices in heaven have already sung of it, and the elders have acknowledged it, that the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. Behold, He cometh! And His reward is with Him. Let us therefore be faithful and true to His name even unto the end.

Revelation 12:7-12

7. And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,

8. And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.

9. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

10. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

11. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

12. Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.

I think that in the portion we just quoted above we have a parallel, and, in a way, a continuation of the first part of this chapter. You will remember that we have taken the position that in chapter twelve we have a description of the spiritual agencies that are back of the power that rises out of the abyss and that exalts itself against the two witnesses, against the church of Christ, in this dispensation. In the first portion of this chapter we found a description of the two signs in heaven; and we discussed the identity of each sign, as well as their mutual relation and the attitude of the second against the first. As to the first sign, we found no difficulty in recognizing in it the symbol of the church upon earth. And we found that in the sign of the woman with child we have the symbol especially of the church in the old dispensation, before Christ was born. The second sign is that of the great red dragon, which, as we interpreted, and as is literally expressed in the chapter, is no one else than the devil himself. The devil stands before the woman throughout the old dispensation in an inimical attitude for the purpose of devouring her child as soon as it has been born. However, his efforts are vain. Christ is born, performs His work, and is exalted to highest glory at the right hand of the Almighty. Now parallel with this effort of the dragon against the woman runs the incident recorded in the words of our text and which speaks of the battle of the spirits in heaven.

If the preceding portion depicted a battle of the devil against the church of the old dispensation to prevent the realization of the promise given in paradise, the present passage speaks of another war, also waged by the devil, but this time fought in person by him and by his angels, this time fought in heaven instead of upon earth, this time fought against his fellow angels that remained faithful to God at the time when the devil and his angels fell away. We must conceive of this battle as being very real. There is no mention here of signs and symbols. There is absolutely nothing in the text that indicates that we must explain this portion in the allegorical fashion, as has been done in various ways. And therefore I take it that we have here the record of a real battle in the real heaven. It is not a battle in aerial places, as some would have it, so that the idea would be that Michael and his angels are on the offensive, come down to fight with the devil and his host; but it is a battle in heaven, in the abode of the good and holy angels, before the very countenance of God. And I take it that the devil and his host are on the offensive and that they are challenging the holy angels to fight a spiritual war with them. A real battle, therefore, it is. But it is well that we remember from the outset that all real battles are not fought with material weapons. It is not necessary to have sabre and bayonet or to bring forth cannon and gun in order to fight this battle. This battle has often been pictured poetically. But such a battle is inconceivable between the opposing sides that are here pictured. And we would lose the point in question altogether if we would thus picture to our minds the battle that is here described. No, this battle is a purely spiritual battle. It is fought not with material but with spiritual weapons, with weapons of intellect and shrewdness and subtlety, with the spiritual weapons of law and righteousness. For the combatants in this war are spirits pure and simple. They are, moreover, immortal spirits, at least in the sense that they have no body and that therefore they cannot die the physical death. They have no flesh and blood, so that they cannot be wounded physically. It is a war between angels, a real and fierce battle indeed, but nevertheless a purely spiritual one, fought with spiritual means, and therefore also with a purely spiritual outcome.

On the one hand, so we read in the text, stands Michael and his holy angels. It is not the Christ, as some interpreters would have it, appealing especially to his name and greatness. True, his name means "who is like God." But Christ was not merely like God, but very God Himself, the Person of the Son of God. True, he is described as very great and powerful. But are there not powerful and mighty angels that are mentioned by name in Scripture? True, he fights against the opponent of Christ. But is it so peculiar that the angels stand on the very side of Christ and fight His battles against the devil and his host? Hence, we must not interpret this as referring to the Christ, but to a mighty angel. Especially is this clear from Daniel 10, where Michael is mentioned by name. And you will find at a careful reading that he is

clearly distinguished from the Christ. Who is this Michael? We find him mentioned once more in the New Testament besides in the portion of our text. Jude, verse 9, speaks of him as Michael, the archangel, who was "contending with the devil" and disputed with him about the body of Moses. Little it matters at this point what the dispute really implied. But we learn from this portion in regard to Michael: 1) That he is an archangel. How many of these archangels there are we know not. A Jewish tradition has it that there were seven. Of course, this is not impossible; but it is nevertheless without Scriptural basis. Sufficient it is to know that Michael is an archangel. He is a chief, one of the chiefs of the angels, and therefore occupies a great and exalted place in heaven. He is clothed with great power and authority, no doubt. 2) That he contends with the devil, the enemy of God, just as in the words of our text. 3) That he fights in behalf of one of the great among God's people. In the Old Testament we find him mentioned in Daniel 10:13. There we find that Michael contends with an evil prince for influence with the king of Persia, and that again in behalf of the people of God. The meaning evidently is that an evil spirit tries to influence the king of Persia against the people of Israel. But Michael comes and fights with this evil spirit and prevails. In the twenty-first verse of the same chapter in Daniel Michael is mentioned again; and there he is directly called the prince of the people of God. And finally, in Daniel 12:1 we read: "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince, who standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time." Also here we find that Michael is great and that he is a prince among the angels and that he stands for the people of God and in their defense in a time of great trouble, when they are evidently in great danger. And therefore, taking into consideration at the same time the words of our text, we may draw the conclusion that Michael is a great angel, a chief and prince among his fellow angels. Originally he perhaps had his equal as to power and authority only in the devil. For we read in Jude that this great Michael, acknowledging the original power and authority of the devil, did not dare to curse and blaspheme him, but left it to God. A great angel, clothed with much authority, set perhaps, as we gather also from our text, over many angels, is especially appointed by God to fight against the devil and to lead his angels against him. And he is at the same time the great guardian and combatant on the side of the people of God in time of trouble. And therefore we may surmise from the outset that as Michael also according to the words of our text fights with the devil, the people of God must be involved. He does not fight alone, but has his angels with him. As we have indicated already, this does not necessarily mean that all the good angels fight on the side of Michael, but merely that he is chief of a certain number of angels in heaven and that now he leads his army of good angels against the devil and his host.

H.H.

A CLOUD OF WITNESSES

Passing Over Penue!l

"And as he passed over Penue!l the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh."

GENESIS 32:31

It must have been a rather pitiful sight over which the bright rays of the eastern sun broke that early morning, Jacob limping through the ford of Jabbok at the place he called Penue!l. Slowly he made his way, a man tired and exhausted from a long night of exertion; his clothes were torn and tattered from hours of hand-to-hand combat; he halted and limped upon his thigh from a severe and painful wound that he had received. Surely he stood in contrast to the strong, bold man who but a few days before had withstood the harsh words and threats of Laban. Then he had been the picture of strength; now he was the picture of weakness as he hobbled along under the glory of that eastern sunrise. But, after the mysterious fashion of the kingdom of heaven, within the heart of that tired, crippled man there was a joy and confidence such as he had not known for many a day. Before in his strength he had been Jacob, deceiver and supplanter; now in his weakness he was Israel, conqueror with God and man.

It had all begun the night before when he had remained behind on the bank of the Jabbok for prayer and meditation. It had been a hard and trying day. Early that morning his messengers had returned from Esau with nothing more to report than that Esau was approaching with four hundred armed, belligerent men. His worst fears it seemed were realized. Esau was still angry and thirsting for revenge. And what could he do to defend himself? He had possessions, children and cattle and servants, but they were not trained for warfare and would only be a hindrance in battle. Vainly he searched his mind for a solution, but the only thing of which he could think was to divide his company into two groups so that if one were attacked the other might escape. But what comfort was to be found in a plan that at best provided for the safety of only half his family and possessions? His mind, otherwise so imaginative and fertile with plans, seemed utterly confused and arid. In his despair he had prayed to his God, but as yet there had come to him no answer. He had decided to take the approach of humility and separated five hundred and more head of cattle to send ahead to Esau as a token of his intent, but could he expect that a Godless man such as Esau would be satisfied with a token when it was clearly in his power to take all that Jacob owned? Finally, not knowing what else to do, he had labored far into the evening bringing his family and cattle across the ford of Jabbok. At least, should Esau attack them on the morrow, it would not be while they were busily occupied with the hardships of fording a stream. Now that this was

done, Jacob remained behind by himself on the other bank of Jabbok. His mind was too troubled for him to sleep anyway. In the quiet of the night, he would try once again to collect his thoughts, to evaluate the happenings of the day, and, if possible, to find yet another plan of approach. Once again he would pray to his God, and then he would wait; perhaps, there would still come an answer.

As Jacob sat there deeply engaged in his thoughts, suddenly there loomed up before him the figure of a man. Immediately there came to his troubled mind the conclusion that this must be someone come to prevent him from following his family over Jabbok and entering the land of Canaan. In the obscurity of the night he could not discern who the man was—perhaps an agent of Esau's, or else some new and unexpected enemy. In any case it was someone intending to keep him from the inheritance which had been promised him by God. Not one to hesitate at such a crucial point, Jacob knew what to do. Gathering together his full strength, Jacob threw himself upon the figure that stood in his way. In the stillness of the darkened night the two began to wrestle. Back and forth they struggled matching each other move for move. Time and time again Jacob launched all of his remaining strength into the fray, but each time it was fairly met. Hour after hour, past midnight and on into the early hours of the following day, back and forth they grappled, but neither seemed able to overcome. Tired and aching, Jacob's body cried out for rest; but always before his mind he saw the promised land of Canaan which he had to have; and for it Jacob continued to battle.

It was as though in those few hours of striving in the night, the motif of Jacob's whole life was being reflected. Throughout his life, Jacob had always had one burning desire in his soul, to inherit the land of his fathers and so to receive from God the covenant blessings. He knew that it was rightfully his for God had told his mother so even before he was born. But always wherever he went there would stand someone before him to prevent him from receiving his desire. With such he felt compelled to struggle so that the promise of God might be realized. It had begun already in the womb when he fought with his twin brother Esau. Even when Esau had come forth first, he had held him firmly by the heel, determined to supplant him. Not to be discouraged by his brother's right of birth and determined that God's election had to come out right, Jacob caught his brother in a moment of weakness and purchased from him the birthright for a simple mess of pottage. Next there stood before him his father Isaac, determined in spite of the Word of God to give to Esau the blessing. With him also Jacob grappled. Taking advantage of his father's blindness, Jacob deceived his father into giving to him the blessing intended for his brother Esau. When Esau in anger swore to slay him, Jacob fled to Haran before any harm could be done. There in Haran his uncle Laban stood in his way. First Laban sought to keep from him his betrothed wife, and later his just wages. For twenty years Jacob struggled with his uncle matching

him move for move. Now as he stood once again on the border of the promised land, still another figure engaged him in battle, intent, it seemed to Jacob, on keeping him from the promised inheritance. It was the same old battle, only taking on another form.

Nor did the similarity cease with the fact that Jacob was once again engaged in a battle. It appeared as if this battle had come to a stalemate, and this also had always been the case. Jacob had spent his life in conflict. During this time he had never been completely defeated, but neither had he received his heart's desire. Although he had struggled with Esau in the womb and at birth held him firmly by the heel, Esau had been born first and naturally speaking was to receive the rights of the first born. Although he managed to buy from Esau this birthright and tricked his father into giving it to him, no sooner had he received it and he had to flee the land and dwell in the banishment of Haran. Although in his struggle with Laban he did manage to receive his wives and also the wage which he had coming, it took him twenty years and all of the time he was separated from the land of his fathers which he loved. Now as in the night he grappled with the stranger, he was unable to overcome. True, the stranger neither seemed able to prevail. But neither was Jacob able to put him out of the way so as to proceed over Jabbok. As it had been in all of his life, all of Jacob's efforts were incapable of bringing him to the promised inheritance for which his heart always longed.

It was as morning was breaking across the eastern horizon that a change in the battle took place. Suddenly the man reached out and touched Jacob on his thigh. Actually it was a rather light touch neither hard nor rough, but it was to Jacob like a bolt of power stretching his thigh and wrenching it, pulling it out of place. The battle was as good as done. Jacob could not continue to match the man with a leg so limp and hurting. Still it was not that thought that filled and troubled the mind of Jacob. It was that touch. Who could touch a man so gently and at the same time hurt him so badly?—who but God in heaven? Suddenly the realization dawned upon Jacob, he had not been fighting against another man, but against God. It was a frightening realization. Not only did it apply to the past night, which was bad enough, but to a great portion of his life which had gone before. So often he had set out to procure for himself the promise without ever stopping to find out if actually he was struggling for his God or against Him. He had gone forth in his own strength to attain his end rather than living by faith. Now suddenly he saw it, by going in his own strength he had in reality been fighting against the Lord, the only one who could give him the covenant blessings he desired. The knowledge filled him with fear.

As soon as the angel had touched Jacob, He began to pull away. It brought yet another fear crowding in upon the burdened mind of Jacob. Should the Lord now leave him, what hope would he have left? He saw as never be-

fore that, if ever he was to receive the promise, the Lord would have to give; and now the angel of the Lord was pulling away. With all of the strength he had left, Jacob reached out once again to grasp the angel in his arms and hold Him to himself. Once again the battle was resumed but in an entirely different manner. Before he had sought to be rid of the angel and put him out of the way; now with the arms of faith he grasped him confessing thereby that without the presence of the Lord he saw no hope of entering Canaan. "Let me go," said the angel, "for the day breaketh." But Jacob was quick to answer, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." Already in that early day it was true that the kingdom of heaven suffered violence, and the violent took it by storm.

"What is thy name?" asked the angel, and the answer was given, "Jacob." To this the angel replied, "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed." At last the victory was Jacob's, a victory such as he had never before experienced. It was not a cunning craftiness such as had been so common with him in former years that gained the victory. It was not the long hours of battle through the night. How futile had actually been that struggle, for at any moment the Lord could have reached out and destroyed him completely. The victory had come when he saw the futility of his own efforts and turned to cling to the angel in faith, when he pleaded with the angel to give to him a blessing, when he forsook his own strength and pleaded on the mercies of God. Then he was pronounced a prince who had power with God and with men. He had come to the fullness of the stature of faith when his name could be changed from Jacob to Israel.

It must have appeared a pitiful sight as early that morning he made his way across the Jabbok tired, tattered, and limping. With all of his strength, he had fought a great battle and lost it; he had been wounded; the sinew of his thigh was shrunken; never again would he walk erect. Nonetheless, in his soul there was joy. Defeated in the battle of physical strength, he had been brought to fight the battle of faith, and in that he had conquered. As the rays of the eastern sun shone above his head, the glory of a heavenly sun warmed the recesses of his soul. In confidence he could go forth to meet with whatever approach Esau would offer. The Lord was by his side, and in His strength he would conquer. He had been in Peniel. "For," said Jacob, "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved."

B.W.

Plagues and death around me fly,
Till he please I cannot die:
Not a single shaft can hit,
Till the God of love sees fit.

— Anonymous

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of Romans 14, 15

VIII.

(Romans 15:10, 11)

In this essay we would take notice of the quotations by Paul from Deut. 32:43 and from Psalm 117:1.

In the former passage we read the following from the pen of Moses: *"Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land and to his people."*

In the latter passage from the pen of the Psalmist we read: *"O praise the Lord, all ye nations: praise him all ye people."*

When looking at these passages rather closely, we notice that they both emphasize the fact that the Gentiles shall praise God for His mercy, and that Israel is the people through whom God brings this mercy to the Gentiles. Salvation is *out* of the Jews. True, it is not merely for the Jews. But surely salvation could only come to us through Christ, and he was born to us from a woman and made under the law, that those who were under law might be redeemed from the same, and that the Gentiles too might receive the adoption of sons. Gal. 4:4, 5. This truth is implicitly taught by the Holy Spirit in both Deut. 32:43 and in Psalm 117:1.

Secondly, we notice that both of these passages, which we have quoted above, look at this salvation which is for the Gentiles from a *prophetical* viewpoint. They are both parts of a prophetical "song"! In Deut. 32:43 the Holy Spirit gives us the climax of the Song Of Moses, which was uttered by Moses as the mouth-piece of God, just prior to his climbing Mt. Nebo to die. He went up to this mountain to see the land from afar ere he would die. The mediator of the Old Covenant, the law-giver, cannot enter into the land of promise. This is to be done by one whose name is Joshua, that is, Jehovah saves. It will be done by the greater than Joshua, by Jesus Himself, who will save his people from their sins, and who will truly bring them into the promised rest. And thus also the *end* of this song is nothing else than Christ the righteousness for everyone who believeth, the Jew first and also the Greek. See Rom. 1:16, 10:4. In Psalm 117:1, which incidentally is the shortest Psalm in the Bible, we have as it were one great trumpet-blast, prophetically through the Spirit of Christ in the Psalmist, exhorting the nations to sing the praises of God for His promised mercy and everlasting covenant faithfulness.

Thirdly, we should notice that these passages are now specifically mentioned by Paul as *underscoring* for us the duty and the privilege to glorify God for His mercy. The ends of the ages have *now* come upon us! *Now* Jew and Gentile in great accord, and with one mouth can praise God

for his mercy. Not to do so is to deny the work of God in Christ Jesus on the Cross!

So much in general on these Scripture passages here quoted by Paul.

Concerning Deut. 32:43 we would still notice more particularly the following:

1. This passage is, in the Song of Moses, the culminative point; it is the very matter which gives us to understand this "Song." It is the *key* to its prophetical perspective! If it were not for this particular part of the Song of Moses, truly the law would have annulled the promise. But now we see Moses rise to the heart of the Abrahamic promise: "In thee and in thy Seed shall all nations be blessed." Now Moses sings of the great "Exodus which Christ is about to fulfil at Jerusalem," Luke 9:31. The law is given by Moses but grace and truth became a reality through Jesus Christ. John 1:17, 18.

2. That such is the intent and thrust of this entire "Song" is, it seems to me, very evident from the following important elements in this entire Song of Moses:

a. This appears, first of all, from the very introduction and preface of this Song. It is more than a song of *Moses*! Also this Song is God-inspired. It is the Word of God. Moses is here a prophet and speaks the more sure prophetic word unto which we do well to give heed as unto a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day-star arise in our hearts. II Peter 1:19. The content of this song is such in its prophetical instruction that heaven and earth are called upon to give ear to pay close attention. For mere man doth here not speak! He who proclaims the end from the beginning here unfolds the glory of Israel and the light of the nations (Luke 2:32). Small wonder that the Holy Spirit through Moses says, "Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass," Deut. 32:1. For the greatness of the Lord is here proclaimed, the glory of God in Christ in the church in salvation's history (Heilsgeschiedenis). See a similar instance in Psalm 50:1, where heaven and earth are called to attention; "The mighty God, even the LORD, hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun even to the going down thereof." Compare also Isaiah 1:2.

b. The Lord had really a controversy with the rebellious nation and people, who are not sons, but who are the blotch and spot of Israel. Is God not true and every man a liar? Is He not a Rock and is all His work not perfect, and are not all His ways judgment and equity, and is He not just and right?! And were not the rebellious Israel also brought up with the true sons, and had they not seen the mighty works of the Lord, tasted the power of the coming age — when the Christ will come — in the redemption of Israel? But God is faithful and His promise stands. God will have

mercy upon whom He will have mercy. The elect shall obtain and the rest shall be hardened.

c. To see this truth Israel has but to consider the history of "ancient times," the years of many generations, both past, present and future. They have but to scan the dealings of God through the ages with the sons of Adam. For "when the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he *set the bounds* of the people according to the number of the children of Israel," verse 8. And again we read in verse 9, "For the LORD's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance"! This evidently means that the Lord so placed the peoples in His providence that the children would be gathered from the nations, even as He elected His chosen people before the foundation of the world. When God confused the speech of the builders of the tower of Babel in the days of Peleg and "did scatter them abroad upon the face of the earth" this was not simply a helter-skelter scattering of the nations on the part of the Lord, but it was a work of quiet serenity of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His will. Shall Abraham be the Father of "many nations" then these nations must not be merely "formed," but their "bounds must be set," their place in history must be determined! And each nation is set by almighty God exactly where it can be subservient to the cause of the Son of God in the world. Hence, the bounds of the nations are set according to the number of the children of Israel, as he numbers according to the election of grace! Thus we read in the well-known address of Paul on Mars Hill in Athens: "And he hath made of one blood all nations for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed (orisas prostetagenous kairous) and the *bounds* of their habitation." Both the time and the place of nations is appointed by the LORD! When this is considered, as the ancients will tell, it will be evident that the Lord is a ROCK, and that all His works are perfect!

d. But Moses sees the entire history of Israel from the view-point of the reprobate Israel as they are the "Jeshuran who waxes fat," verses 15-35. They have grown thick, forsaking God who formed them, moving God to jealousy, provoking God with their vanities! They are those who see emphatically and yet see not, and hear emphatically and yet hear not. They are the "not-children" (lo-banai) who are the spot of Israel. Upon these God will come in His judgment, remove them from their land, and through this judgment God will bring mercy upon His people! For this people will sing: For unto us a Child is born, for unto us a Son is given, and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, and the government shall be upon His shoulders. Such is the history here foretold in the prophetic Song of Moses! In this history we see all the virtues of God displayed, particularly His covenant-faithfulness to His own.

e. But also Israel's place and calling are thus determined by God. Also Israel as a *nation* has only a place in the world according to the number of the children of Israel, the "Israel of God"! (Gal. 6:16). For salvation is out of the Jews, John 4:22. To them have been entrusted the oracles of God. Here is the adoption and the glory and the covenants, and the law-giving and the worship and the promises! From this people cometh Christ according to the flesh, who is God over all blessed forever, Amen!

f. And the Scriptures foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles out of faith, proclaimed beforehand as Gospel, "In thee shall all nations be blessed." Harking back to this Abrahamic promise and Gospel, the Spirit of Christ, in Moses, calls out to the Gentiles, "Rejoice, o ye nations, *with His people*." The axiom and the fundamental dealing of God with the Gentiles is not such that it will be first the Jew and *then* the Greek! However, it is first the Jew and *also* the Greek. For in the Christological-eschatological perspectives of Noah's prophecy we read: "God shall enlarge Japhet and he shall dwell *in the tents* of Shem." The Gentiles shall be one body with the Jews. God will make one new man. And therefore the Gentiles are to rejoice in the one Spirit with the Jews.

Thus we have the same Christological perspectives here in the Song of Moses!

But it is no different in the Psalmody of Israel. Particularly it is thus in Psalm 117:1.

Concerning this Psalm we would make a few brief remarks.

In the first place it should be noticed that Psalm 117 is the shortest Psalm in the Bible. As one writer puts it, "This Psalm, which is very little in letter, is exceedingly large in its spirit; for bursting beyond all bounds of race or nationality, it calls upon all mankind to praise the name of the Lord . . . It is short and sweet. The same divine Spirit which expatiates in the 119th, here condenses His utterance into two short verses, but yet the same infiniteness is present and perceptible."

In the second place, we should observe that the Spirit of Prophecy led the Old Testament saints to sing a special song concerning the future salvation of the Gentiles, who too are the Israel of God.

Thirdly, the Holy Spirit through Paul quotes Psalm 117 in Romans 15:15. The Gentiles, who are brought to the faith, are a part of the people of God. They too are the Laos! They are the congregation to which Christ came to show mercy when He became the minister of the circumcision.

Fourthly, we, the Gentile church, are to see this reality. We are not to call common what Christ hath sanctified, but with one voice both Jew and Gentile are to serve God. Thus is the plan and purpose of God in all the Scriptures.

Hence, we are to receive each other in the love of Christ.

For meat we are not to destroy the work of God. In this higher unity the differences of adiaphora vanish away!

G. L.

IN HIS FEAR

Freedom of Speech

Too little and yet at the same time too much.

Too little of the true freedom of speech because there is too little of the fear of the Lord to be found in the world today. And too much of the wrong kind of freedom of speech exactly for the same reason.

Speech is a wonderful gift of God unto man. And freedom of speech is also a precious gift of His grace. No, we do not mean that it is a gift of God's grace that here in our land a man may say well nigh anything that enters into his mind. We do not mean that God is gracious to America because here a man may express his atheism, his evolutionism, his heresy and blasphemy as widely and as freely as he may proclaim the truth from Sabbath to Sabbath. Regardless of what men may think is justice, regardless of what liberty governments may agree to give to their citizens, we are certain that God does not give man the liberty to say what he pleases, to promote his own heresies and denials of God and of His glory. The psalmist was keenly aware of this, and therefore he wrote in Psalm 19:14, "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer." Plainly all the words that proceed out of the mouth of man are not acceptable in God's sight. And because He is God, or let us put it this way, because He IS God, He cannot give man the liberty to speak that which is not acceptable in His sight. Does not the third commandment plainly forbid speech whereby the name of God is taken in vain? Does not God in this commandment also forbid all speech, all propaganda for heresies and false doctrines whereby His name is denied the glory that is due unto it? There can be no question of that. And freedom of speech may very easily result in freedom of irreligion rather than freedom of religion. Such who feel free to speak their false religions are never freed from fear of God's terrible wrath. To have true freedom from fear one must have the true freedom of religion according to which he is free only to speak that which is to the praise of God's name. It is for that reason that we would consider at this time the matter of freedom of speech.

Speech is one of those gifts which we take for granted so easily. Speech comes so easy to us that we just expect our children in time to begin to speak and marvel very little when they begin to speak as fluently as we do. Though we may find public speaking difficult because it makes us nervous and because our minds go blank when we stand before an audience, yet speaking itself, every-day conversation, speaking with the family at home, with friends and neighbours is such an effortless thing. Tongue, lips and vocal cords respond so spontaneously to the thought that arises in

our minds that we are conscious of no effort at all on our part to perform the act of speaking.

And that, after all, is the wonder of speech: we are by it able to express and convey to others any thought or desire that has arisen in our hearts and minds. We are, of course, aware of the fact — even by personal experience — that when you are learning a language foreign to your own mother-tongue, you may stand with a mouth full of teeth and be utterly unable to convey to those who speak this language your thoughts and desires. You are as far as that language is concerned tongue-tied. Sad to say, there are also so many that are tongue-tied as far as the language of faith is concerned. It reminds me of the man with whom we were speaking who desired to refer to the saints of the Old Testament as an example of the matter he was trying to express. With much stuttering and stammering he finally came up with the statement, "You know, Jacob and those other men . . ." So limited was his knowledge of the Scriptures that he could express himself in no better way at the moment. It is a sad commentary on our present day church-world that there is so little knowledge of Scriptures. Many there are who claim to be members of the church of Christ whose knowledge is so limited that they cannot tell you whether Abraham lived before or after Noah and who would find it extremely difficult to quote two or three verses from the Scriptures from memory. Children — and also adults — there are who can name all the players of their favorite baseball or football teams together with their batting averages or weight and height but cannot name the twelve apostles, the names of the books of the Bible, or tell whether the book of Hebrews is in the Old or in the New Testament. Is it any wonder that such are tongue-tied when they find themselves in a group that is discussing doctrinal matters or things of the Christian faith? These surely do not have the true and proper freedom of speech of which we begin to write in this installment. Instead of being free to speak with others on the things of God's kingdom, they at best can only sit and listen or else will gradually push themselves farther and farther away from the circle of the discussion until, finding themselves on the outer edges of the group they can quickly flee from this embarrassing position.

All this, however, does not at all overthrow what we said: speech is that wonderful gift of God to man whereby he is able to express all that which is in his heart and mind. That I may not be able to express it in a foreign language does not deny that by speech it can be done. I may not be able to do so, but it still can be done by others. And that I am speechless when I find myself in the midst of those speaking the highly technical language of electronics, of aerodynamics, of rocketry or the like is not due to the fact that speech cannot express these things but simply to the fact that the knowledge of these things is not in my mind. The man likewise who finds himself tongue-tied when spiritual things are discussed has not the freedom of speech about the things

of God's kingdom exactly because the knowledge of the things spiritual is not there in his mind. He has not applied himself to the truth when the opportunity was given to him. He did not do the work set before him as a youth when in question and answer form the truth was set before him to memorize. He did not commit to memory the Word of God when it was demanded of him. Or else he was never taught these things, never given the benefit of such a training wherein these things were demanded of him. To have the freedom of speech in regard to things spiritual he had better get busy and read and study and memorize the things of God's kingdom. If he finds himself free to speak at length and with ease concerning sports, business, politics, world history and science but tongue-tied when it comes to things spiritual, he would do well to take some serious inventory of himself and get busy in the sphere of the speech of God, His Word. This is very important. Freedom of speech is an extremely important thing when you mean the freedom to speak in the sphere of the things spiritual. It is a thing for which we may offer our prayers daily as the psalmist in that verse we quoted from Psalm 19. And it is also beautifully set forth by the psalmist in Psalm 119:171, 172, "My lips shall utter praise; when thou hast taught me thy statutes. My tongue shall speak of thy word; for all thy commandments are righteous." And we will not understand true freedom of speech until we have that freedom to speak of the things spiritual with ease and joy. Freedom of speech is not something that man can give you and promise you. It is something that God gives us by His grace through the Word which He has spoken.

Let us understand that no one has freedom of speech as God has it.

As the sovereign God He is free in the full sense of the word. In Him freedom is perfect. That, of course, does not mean that He is free to do everything. God is not free to sin. He cannot sin. He cannot be tempted with sin. He cannot will sin. That does not deny that He has perfect freedom. A person is not free according to the measure of things outside of himself that put a line around him and his actions and hem him in to a certain limited course of action. There is nothing outside of God that hems Him in and puts a curb on His thinking, willing or acting. And that He cannot sin, cannot will sin is not due to anything *outside* of Him that controls Him. God cannot sin because His own holy being does not allow it. God is free in the full sense because He determines His own actions. And so free is He that no one, absolutely no one, has even the right to deny Him this freedom to decide for Himself what He will think, will and do. Man lost all his freedom exactly through the lie whereby he was convinced that he could be like God and decide for himself what is good and what is evil. He ate of the forbidden fruit in order to try to attain to that position where he need not ask God what was good for him and what was evil in God's sight but where he might be his own god.

He discarded God's speech and became a hopeless slave to the speech of the devil. As a consequence today he does not have freedom of speech but is, as Paul writes in Romans 8:2 in the slavery of the law of sin and death. The law of sin and death controls and rules him also in all his speech. For that law of sin and death rules and controls his heart and mind, his willing and his thinking. And although the one end for our tongues is loose and must be in order to formulate our words and in order that we may speak clearly and distinctly, the other end is tied firmly to our hearts and minds. The result is that whatever appears there in heart and mind soon spills out of our mouths from off that tongue. It is for that reason that James says, "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man and able to bridle the whole body," James 3:2. And again very correctly he writes, "And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members; that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell," James 3:6. Indeed, out of hell Satan came into the serpent with the lie and into man's heart. Now the whole human race, as born from fallen Adam and Eve, does not have freedom of speech, is not free to speak God's praises, to express true thankfulness to Him, to pray unto Him and confess Him. Instead he is free only to utter the blasphemy, the cursing and swearing, the unbelief, the atheism, the evolutionism, the godlessness of his depraved heart and mind. And it simply is not true freedom of speech when such a man is given the liberty to say what he pleases and to propagate his beliefs and philosophies.

Of that we wish to say more next time, D.V., but let us understand in that light the beauty of David's prayer which we quoted above, and let us by God's grace make it ours, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer."
J.A.H.

"When the Church receives it (the Scriptures), and seals it with her suffrage, she does not authenticate a thing otherwise dubious or controvertible: but, knowing it to be the truth of her God, performs a duty of piety, by treating it with immediate veneration. But with regard to the question, How shall we be persuaded of its divine original, unless we have recourse to the decree of the Church: this is just as if any one should inquire, How shall we learn to distinguish light from darkness, white from black, sweet from bitter? For the Scripture exhibits as clear evidence of the truth, as white and black things do in their colour, or sweet and bitter things of their taste."

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

Contending For The Faith

The Church and the Sacraments

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

THE SEVEN SACRAMENTS.

EXTREME UNCTION

(continued)

Before we proceed with our criticism of the Roman Catholic doctrine in re their sacrament of Extreme Unction, we wish to quote from The New Schaff-Herzog Religious Encyclopedia. Volume IV offers the following comments on this subject, in addition to what we quoted in our preceding article:

"Extreme unction was instituted according to Peter Lombard by the apostles, according to Alexander Hales by Christ, according to Bonaventura by the Holy Spirit through the apostles, according to Thomas Aquinas by Christ, but was promulgated by the apostles. The Council of Trent declares that, according to Mark 6:13, Christ suggested the sacrament, and that James, his brother, promulgated and recommended it. The material which is to be used in extreme unction is olive-oil consecrated by a bishop, and, according to a decision of Paul V, given in 1655, the oil is not effective unless so consecrated. Gregory XVI (1842) confirmed and further limited this decision by declaring that not even in case of extreme necessity could a priest consecrate oil for the purpose. The form of the sacrament was settled only after many discussions. With the growing tendency to look upon anointing as sacramental, the form of prayer was changed from the precatory to the declarative, and this was confirmed by the Council of Florence. The specific purpose and effect of extreme unction is somewhat indefinite. The Council of Trent declares that this sacrament completes not only penance, but the whole Christian life. Nevertheless, it does not occupy nearly the important position in the doctrinal system of the Roman Church taken by baptism, the mass, and penance; it is merely an annex to the latter sacrament to which it gives the character of preparation for death. A specific effect has never been attributed to it officially. Peter Lombard gives as the purpose the remission of sins and the alleviation of physical infirmity. Albert the Great declares that extreme unction could purify only from the remnants of sin which prevent the entrance of the soul into eternal rest. Thomas Aquinas defines these remnants as a spiritual weakness and lassitude which disqualify man for the full enjoyment of the life and grace of glory, and states that extreme unction is a medicine for both. He speaks of physical healing as a secondary effect, taking place when the primary purpose of the sacrament is not hindered but promoted. Bonaventura, on the other hand,

teaches that the specific effect of extreme unction is the remission of venial sins which were completely obviated by this sacrament owing to its strengthening effect upon soul and body. The Council of Trent repeated all the positive doctrines of the theologians, and added the doctrine of unction with the Holy Spirit as the specific effect. These differences concerning the effect and purpose of extreme unction were unsatisfactory, and attempts were made at greater precision. The Roman Catechism assumes two effects, the remission of venial sins, and the removal of spiritual weakness and of any remaining traces of sin. Bellarmine, finally, attempts a precise definition of the "remnants of sin"; they are mortal or venial sins which man might commit after penance and the Eucharist; or sins which were not atoned for properly, because sick persons had unwittingly received in an improper manner, and, therefore, without the due effect.

The olive-oil used in extreme unction is consecrated during the mass on Maundy Thursday (Thursday before Easter, also called Holy Thursday. The word "maundy" is derived from the Latin *mandatum* (commandment), referring to John 13:34, and the day commemorates the institution of the Lord's Supper and the washing of the disciples' feet). Each deanery (the office, revenue, residence, or jurisdiction of a dean) receives a certain amount for distribution among the parishes. The oil which is not used up within a year, is burned in the sanctuary lamp; if there be danger that the supply will be exhausted before the end of the year, small quantities of unconsecrated oil may be added. Only a priest or higher dignitary may administer this sacrament. Even the pope can not authorize deacons and laymen to do so, although Innocent I implies that they may in case of necessity. The administrator acts as a representative of the whole Church; and for this reason it is desirable that several priests be present to take part in the ceremony. The regulations concerning the degree of sickness which entitles a person to receive the sacrament vary, but agree in the particular that the probability of recovery is excluded, and that the recipient must be conscious. The oil is to be applied to the eyes, ears, hands, nose, and mouth, and to the abdomen and the feet of males, but not of females. The sacraments of penance and of the Eucharist should as a rule precede extreme unction.

The usage of the Greek Church differs widely from that of Rome both in methods of administration and in doctrine. There it is simply an anointing of the sick, and its purpose is the restoration of health, physical and spiritual. The place of administration is the church, if possible. The ritual is elaborate, and requires seven priests if they are procurable. The oil is consecrated on each occasion by the senior priest, and each priest repeats the full ceremony while seven selections are read each from the Epistles, Gospels, and collects. On Maundy Thursday the feast of *euchelaion* ("oil of prayer") is observed, in which the whole congregation joins and is anointed. The frequent use of the sacrament is recommended.

The Nestorians never use extreme unction; the Armenian Church has discontinued it." —end of quote from The New Schaff-Herzog Religious Encyclopedia.

In our criticism of this Roman Catholic sacrament of Extreme Unction we wish to make the following observations.

First, what right does Rome have to elevate this practice to the position of a sacrament in the Church of God? We know, for example, that Christ instituted the sacrament of baptism. On the one hand, He simply "took over" the baptism as administered by John the Baptist. He surely recognized the baptism of His forerunner, did not baptize anew who had been baptized by John. And, on the other hand, in Matt. 28:18-19 we read: "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." We also know that Jesus instituted the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. We need not quote the incident which occurred in the upper room the evening before His death. Besides, the institution by Christ of these two sacraments is not in dispute. But, where do we read in Holy Writ that the Lord instituted a sacrament of Extreme Unction? It is nowhere recorded.

Secondly, Rome anathematizes, curses whoever denies that the *Presbyters of the Church*, whom James exhorts to be brought to anoint the sick, are not the priests who have been ordained by a bishop, but elders in each community. However, what right does Rome have to make and establish this observation and doctrine? James speaks of the "elders of the church" in James 5:14. Now we know that Scripture uses two words which denote this office in the Church of God: elder and overseer. The first word, elder, simply means: elder, refers to one that is advanced in life, and views this office from the aspect of its dignity. The other word is *episkopos*. From this word is derived the word, bishop, and it means: overseer, emphasizing the specific function of this office. That these words, as referring to this office in the Church of God, are used indiscriminately is plain from the use of these words in the Word of God. Now Rome, if you please, has the boldness to declare that the name which James uses in James 5:14 to denote this office does not refer to the elders by age, or the foremost in dignity amongst the people, whereas the word as used by James literally means: elder. Besides, the qualifications for this office are recorded in passages such as I Tim. 3:1-7 and in I Pet. 5:1-4. We read in I Tim. 3:1-7: "This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take

care of the church of God?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil." And the passage of I Pet. 5:1-4 reads as follows: "The elders which are among you I exhort, (notice, please, that the apostle uses the word "elder" here, — H.V.) who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed. Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, (notice, again, that the apostle instructs these "elders" to "take the oversight thereof" and "to take the oversight" is literally the idea of an "episkopos"; it is also for these reasons that we declare that the words: elder and "bishop" or *episkopos*, are used indiscriminately — H.V.), not be constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage (Rome may well take this to heart also, H.V.), but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." Rome may well take to heart what we read in I Tim. 3:1-7, that a bishop (elder or overseer) must be the husband of one wife. (This does not necessarily mean that he must have a wife, but that he may not have more than one wife, although it certainly does not forbid having a wife at all, as Rome teaches.) Hence, the "elder" of James 5:14 simply refers to the office of overseer or elder which functions in every church or congregation of the Lord.

Thirdly, Rome's only Scriptural proof is Mark 6:13 and James 5:14-15. In Mark 6:13 we read: "And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them." And James 5:14-15 reads as follows: "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." Now it must be perfectly plain that Rome's appeal to these passages as support for their doctrine of Extreme Unction is completely unfounded. However, to this we will call attention in our following article. We also wish to say a few words about this passage in James 5 in general.

H.V.

Hallelujah, praise the Lord!

Praise, ye servants, praise his name!

Be Jehovah's praise adored

Now and evermore the same!

Where the orient sunbeams gleam,

Where they sink in ocean's stream

Through the circuit of his rays

Be your theme Jehovah's praise.

— Anonymous

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 12 (continued)

The sixth fruit of the assurance of perseverance mentioned in this article is "constancy in suffering and in confessing the truth." It is evident, in the first place, that the article does not have in view suffering in general, or even suffering for Christ's sake in general: for such suffering is really comprehended under the fruit of patience. But here we have to do with a suffering that is connected with confessing the truth. And the assurance of perseverance has the fruit that the believer is constant, steadfast, in the confession of the truth even when such confession involves suffering. Nothing can deter him from the truth. Even when he must suffer for the sake of the truth which he confesses, he remains steadfast and immovable. Nor is it difficult to see why this is the case. Those who do not believe that our salvation is all of grace and absolutely sure are easily moved to doubt. They can easily be tossed to and fro by various winds of doctrine. They have no firm foundation on which to take a stand. They readily listen to those who preach heresy. They do not stand fast in the faith, and therefore they have no devotion to the truth as it is in Jesus. But the true children of God, who live by the Word, see things differently. They understand that this confession, the confession of the truth of salvation by sovereign grace only, must never be forfeited. It is their all, their only hope. If they lose this, they lose their comfort. If they forsake this confession, they forfeit a most precious heritage. And therefore, however much this truth is opposed, and however much they must endure reproach and suffering for the sake of it, they remain steadfast in the confession of the truth and in suffering for its sake. Nor is this steadfastness a figment of the imagination. Surely, there were in the days of the struggle against the Remonstrants, and there still are today, those who depart from the truth. There are those who are moved from the firm foundation of the truth by the first blast of the wind of heresy. But why? It is because they have never learned to appreciate, never apprehended with a believing heart, the blessedness, the preciousness, the solid comfort of this truth. They have never really been gripped in the depth of their heart by the realization that "if the elect of God were deprived of this solid comfort, that they shall finally obtain the victory, and of this infallible pledge or earnest of eternal glory, they would be of all men

the most miserable." Nay, if you would know why it was that faithful people of God persevered in the confession of the truth in the days of our fathers, why they were willing to gather for worship at the risk of goods and of life, why they defied injunctions prohibiting them to gather and hear the true preaching of the Word, then you must understand that this matter of the truth and of the heresies which arose in opposition to that truth was to them no academic question, no matter that did not move them in the very depths of their soul, but a matter that concerned their very comfort. At the root of their constancy lay something spiritual: the assurance and certainty of perseverance, the assurance that God would vindicate the cause of His own truth and of those who confess that truth even if apparently that cause must suffer defeat in the midst of the world.

Finally, the article mentions the fruit of "solid rejoicing in God." This refers to a deep-seated spiritual awareness that all is well, and to the expression of that awareness in our speech and life. Notice, first of all, that it is joy *in God*. It is a theocentric joy. That must necessarily be the case: the assurance is wrought by God alone. Notice, secondly, that this rejoicing is characterized as "solid." It is no passing and shallow emotion. It is not a joy which fades at the first glimmering of tribulation. It is a joy which flourishes and thrives even in the midst of tribulation. It is a rejoicing to which tribulation itself must be subservient. As the apostle Paul says in Romans 5: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope makes not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

Hence, the article sums up the whole matter in the words: "so that the consideration of this benefit is an incentive to the serious and constant practice of gratitude and good works." This refers, of course, not to any mechanical and merely intellectual "consideration of this benefit." Such consideration could never be an incentive to gratitude and good works. It refers to the spontaneous consideration of this benefit by those who experience it in their hearts. And as we said in our correction of the translation, this is not simply a matter of moral obligation, of what the consideration of this benefit *ought* to do. But it is a matter of fact. It *is* an incentive. This doctrine, therefore, is not harmful to a life of gratitude; on the contrary, it fosters gratitude and good works. The spontaneous response of the Christian who has this hope in him is that it becomes his earnest purpose and striving to show thankfulness to God, Who has done such great things for him and in him, and to walk in all good works.

This, our fathers say, appears from the testimony of

Scripture and from the examples of the saints. No Scriptural references are supplied in the article. But it is not difficult to find them. One of the most clear explanations of this relationship is found in the sixth chapter of the epistle to the Romans, where the apostle meets and answers the objection that the doctrine of justification by faith makes men careless and profane. A passage like I John 3:2, 3 presents this same relationship very briefly and succinctly: "Beloved, now are we the children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is. And every one that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." Without going into detail as to the whole text, let us notice that the apostle here presents the relation between hope and sanctification as a fact, not merely as an obligation. He does not say that he that hath this hope in him *ought* to purify himself. That is also true, and the Scriptures many times speak of this calling of the people of God. Moreover, this admonition to sanctification follows from and is based upon the necessary connection between hope and sanctification. Nevertheless, in this passage from John we have no admonition, but the plain statement of fact: "He that hath this hope in him *does purify* himself, even as he is pure." There is no question about it therefore. He that hath this hope in him purifies himself. He that hath not this hope in him does not purify himself. Hope and a careless and profane life never go together, no more than a good tree can bring forth corrupt fruit. Hope and sanctification, hope and gratitude, hope and good works, — these are ever found together. The former is the incentive to the latter; and the latter is the sphere in which the former flourishes.

And this is confirmed by the examples of the saints. Mention any of the saints who are examples of assurance. Take, for example, the apostle Paul. Surely, he was the very personification of assurance. What was the case with him? Was he careless and profane? Did the consideration of the certainty of perseverance excite in him a spirit of pride and render him carnally secure? By no means. There was no one who sought more earnestly after perfection and who more insistently strove to walk in all good works. Persecution and suffering, — and he surely knew by experience what these were, — were no deterrent to him. Even when the saints themselves tried to keep him back from certain bonds and imprisonment, he insisted on going on to Jerusalem, saying: "For I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." Acts 21:13. When he was a prisoner at Rome and still full of assurance, so that he was confident that death would be gain for him, he could still rejoice that Christ is preached and that even his bonds served the purpose of the furtherance of the gospel, and he could confess: "To me to live is Christ." Philippians 1:12-21. He who taught that it is God that worketh in us to will and to do on behalf of His good pleasure, admonished, upon the very basis of that truth: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." He who could triumphantly

shout, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" could also say: "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Romans 8:13, Philippians 3:13, 14.

And so, in the light of Scripture, the matter is settled. This charge of the Remonstrants is pure fiction, a product of sinful reason. The truth is the very opposite: the consideration of this benefit of the assurance of perseverance is an incentive to the serious and constant practice of gratitude and good works.

Article 13. Neither does renewed confidence of persevering produce licentiousness, or a disregard to piety in those who are recovering from backsliding; but it renders them much more careful and solicitous to continue in the ways of the Lord, which he hath ordained, that they who walk therein may maintain an assurance of persevering, lest by abusing his fatherly kindness, God should turn away his gracious countenance from them, to behold which is to the godly dearer than life: the withdrawing whereof is more bitter than death, and they in consequence hereof should fall into more grievous torments of conscience.

The above translation, though essentially correct, can be corrected in a few instances. In the first place, it fails to give the proper emphasis in connection with the preceding article. The article actually begins as follows: "Neither even in those who are restored from a fall (or: from backsliding) does the renewal of the confidence of perseverance produce" In other words, this article deals with a further instance of what is first brought up in Article 12. It deals with an extreme instance of the carelessness and profanity which the Arminians claimed was the fruit of the assurance of perseverance. They claimed that such carelessness would surely be the result in those who fall and are restored. And the article answers this charge: "Neither even in them . . ." This should be brought out in the translation. For the rest we have the following corrections: 1) "disregard" is not a proper translation of *injuriā*. This should be "harm" or "injury." 2) The second clause should be: "but produces a much greater care for diligently (solicitously) keeping the ways of the Lord, which he hath prepared, that by walking therein they may retain the assurance of perseverance." 3) The next clause should be: "lest because of abuse of his fatherly kindness the face of the propitious (favorable, gracious) God (of which the contemplation is to the pious sweeter than life, and the hiding of which is more bitter than death) should be turned away from them anew, and thus they fall into more grievous torment of soul."

(to be continued)

H.C.H.

DECENCY and ORDER

Deacons' Meetings

"The deacons shall meet wherever necessary, every week to transact the business pertaining to their office, calling upon the Name of God; whereunto the ministers shall take good heed and if necessary they shall be present."

— Article 40, D.K.O.

It is to be observed that already as early as 1574 the Synod of Dort ruled that *"Deacons should meet weekly in order to consider the affairs of their office."* Twelve years later the Synod added the stipulations that these meetings should be attended with the *"calling upon the Name of God"* and *"supervised by the ministers, who, if necessary, should also be present."* The words *"wherever necessary"* were added later; in the Netherlands in 1905 and in the Christian Reformed Church in America in 1914, and so we have the present article which, it is understood, applies only to those cases where the elders and deacons hold separate meetings. In cases where the deacons are added to the consistory (see Article 37 of the Church Order) the above article would not apply although it is not impossible that where a consistory is small and naturally the diaconate still smaller, the latter might still hold separate meetings to attend to matters that belong strictly to their office. Should the deacons who are already added to the consistory choose to do so, they would also function under the regulation of Article 39.

Deacons' meetings are not in the technical or official sense of the word to be regarded as *"ecclesiastical assemblies."* They are not included in the four kinds of ecclesiastical assemblies which, according to Article 29 are to be maintained in the church. It is undoubtedly for this reason that the deacons must report all of their activities to the consistory and also why their meetings are held under the direct supervision of the consistory. These meetings would then assume a sort of semi-official status with the consistory passing final approval upon the actions taken.

In the present article there are three things worthy of note. Firstly, there is the meeting itself at which the business of the deacons is transacted. Secondly, there is the matter of the calling upon the Name of God and, finally, there is the presence of the ministers at the meetings. These matters we will treat separately in this and in a subsequent article.

The Meetings Of The Deacons

The Church Order prescribes that deacons' meetings shall be held every week *"wherever necessary."* Originally weekly meetings were held to be compulsory. The reason for this is not known but it is certainly advisable to have a certain amount of flexibility in a rule of this nature. Circumstances

must dictate the frequency of meeting and these are not the same in every congregation. It may very well be that in the larger churches the deacons have to meet every week in order to do justice to the large amount of work while in other smaller churches a bi-weekly or monthly meeting is adequate. The main thrust of the present rule is to require some local regulation so that in each church the meetings of the deacons will be held at regular intervals. This is conducive to good order and even the suggestion of the Church Order Commentary is worthy of note that in places where separate deacons' meetings are not held, the deacons nevertheless meet from time to time to consider the spiritual side of their work. There does not have to be a large diaconate for this. Further, it is always well to do this.

The work that is to be performed at these meetings is to be strictly confined to *"that which pertains to the deacon's office."* Matters of doctrine and the government or administration of the church may not be considered since these things belong to the jurisdiction of the elders. Neither should the deacons concern themselves with sundry social and political problems which belong to other agencies and have nothing to do with the office of the deacons. But what is perhaps a more serious error that is not infrequently committed is that the business of the deacons' meeting is limited to those things that concern the financial operation of the church. It is more or less taken for granted today that the deacons attend to all matters of finance. They pay the minister's salary, the janitor's salary, the gas and electric bills and whatever other expenses are incurred in the operation of the church. They receive the funds contributed to meet these expenses and they formulate proper reports of all receipts and expenditures. To do these things they meet regularly and if nothing more is attended to the main function of their office is neglected. It is not question that it is proper to entrust this work to the deacons but this should not occupy so much time at their meeting that other work is neglected and if it does the situation plainly necessitates more frequent meetings.

The main task of the deacons to which attention at their meetings should be given is described in the form for installation. We quote as follows:

"We may easily gather, what the deacons' office is, namely, that they in the FIRST place collect and preserve with the greatest fidelity and diligence, the alms and goods which are given to the poor: yea, to do their utmost endeavors, that many good means be procured for the relief of the poor."

"The SECOND part of their office consists in distribution, wherein are not only required discretion and prudence to bestow the alms only on objects of charity, but also cheerfulness and simplicity to assist the poor with compassion and hearty affection: as the apostle requires, Romans, chapter 12; and II Corinthians, chapter 9. For which end it is very beneficial that they do not only administer relief to the poor"

and indigent with external gifts, but also with comfortable words from Scripture."

The deacons' office is an office of *mercy*. *A mercy-dispensing office!* For a more complete description of this office we may refer our readers to what we wrote in Vol. 32 of *The Standard Bearer* in connection with Articles 25 and 26 of the Church Order. We need not repeat that here but we should note that whereas the main function of the office of the deacon is to attend to the business of mercy and charity in caring for the poor and indigent and since the purpose of the deacons' meeting is to transact business pertaining to their office, this work should receive priority. The diaconate that so functions is faithful and in the church where such diaconates are found the office will not fall into disuse or revert into a function that could just as well be performed by a committee under Consistorial supervision.

Calling Upon The Name Of God

Article 40 stipulates that the meetings of the deacons shall be attended with the "*calling upon the Name of God.*" Article 32 of our Church Order states that the "*proceedings of all assemblies shall begin by calling upon the Name of God*" but, as we have pointed out, deacons' meetings are not ecclesiastical assemblies and, therefore, do not fall under the latter ruling. Hence, the provision in Article 40. It would almost appear unnecessary to state this but then Jansen suggests that at the time this provision was inserted in the article the office of the deacons was being used by civil authorities for the disbursement of funds to the poor. Some began to look upon the diaconate as civil and secular in nature and to retain this office as an ecclesiastical institution which it is, and to emphasize the ecclesiastical and spiritual nature of the deacons' function, this provision was added. At any rate, whether redundant or not, it is a very proper and necessary practice. The ministration of the mercies of Christ through the office of the deacons is a work that is solely dependent upon the Lord and the gifts of His Spirit and grace. To attempt this work in any other way than through prayer is folly.

An appropriate prayer for this occasion is found in the collection of old liturgical prayers which today are virtually unknown. It reads:

"Merciful God and Father, Thou hast not only declared that we shall always have the poor with us, but hast also commanded us to succor them in their need. Thou hast ordained the service of the deacons for Thy Church, in order that its needy members may receive the aid they require. Since we whom Thou hast called to the deaconal office in this church are now met in Thy Name to discuss matters pertaining to our office, we humbly beseech Thee that Thou mayest, for the sake of Jesus Christ, dwell among us with the spirit of discrimination. May Thy Spirit help us to distinguish between those really poor and those who feign destitution, and to distribute the alms that have been col-

lected as each one's need may render necessary, in the spirit of joy and fidelity. May we neither fail to comfort the needy members of Thy dear Son, nor dispense gifts to those who are not in want.

"Kindly fervent love to the poor in men's hearts, in order that they may contribute generously of their temporal possessions over which Thou didst appoint them stewards, and we may have command of sufficient means to bring relief to those that are indigent, and may faithfully perform our task with true liberality of heart and without difficulty.

"Bestow upon us also the grace we need, not only to relieve want by means of external gifts, but also to instil the comfort of Thy Holy Word in hearts afflicted with misery. Truly, man lives not by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of Thy mouth. We pray, therefore, that Thou wilt bless our ministrations and wilt multiply the bread of the poor, to the end that both they and we may have reasons to praise and thank Thee; meanwhile awaiting the blessed appearance of Thy dear Son, Jesus Christ, Who for our sakes became poor that He might enrich us with eternal treasures. Amen."

G.V.d.B.

VERSIFICATION OF PSALM 65

Thy timely visits bless the earth,
To drenching rains thy clouds give birth,
Enriching all the land
By God's own river, deep and broad,
Thou wilt prepare thy corn, O God,
By thy providing hand.

Thou wilt its ridged and furrowed plain
Make soft and smooth with showers of rain,
Its springing thou wilt bless.
The year thou hast with goodness crown'd,
Thy paths drop fatness all around
Ev'n on the wilderness.

The little hills with verdure clad
Are girt with joy, by thee made glad;
The flocks in pastures lie;
The vales are robed with waving grain;
And shout and song from hill and plain,
Swell joyous to the sky.

Their veins with genial moisture fed,
Jehovah's forests lift the head:
Nor other than his fostering hand
Thy cedars, Lebanon, demand.

— Anonymous

ALL AROUND US

Caught on the Horns of a Dilemma.

The Reformed Guardian of September 10, 1959 presents an editorial written by the Rev. Edward Knott under the title "Observations."

Reviewing the present situation of the churches that left us in the schism of 1953, Rev. Knott, as we see it, observes that his churches are really caught on the horns of a dilemma.

To put the dilemma into figurative language, Knott sees his churches being chased to death by a furious bull which has deadly power in each of his two horns, and Knott's churches must choose which horn they desire shall strike the final blow. The dilemma is this: On the one hand, there is the danger of joining the Christian Reformed Church which will mean that they will lose their historic basis on which the Protestant Reformed Churches have stood from their inception in 1924. On the other, there is the danger of continuing a separate existence, resulting in a slow death and/or failing to realize their ecumenical calling. And our observation of Knott's "Observations" is that he wants his churches to take their time in choosing which horn they wish to be impaled on.

The four observations that Rev. Knott makes are briefly the following:

1. "It should be clearly understood and emphatically stated that officially our doctrinal position as churches has not changed." By doctrinal position he refers to the "Acts of Agreement" adopted by the Protestant Reformed Churches in 1924 which in part express the following basis: "That we adopt as our common basis the Three Forms of Unity and the Church Order of the Reformed Churches." Knott maintains that this position and basis has not changed. He admits, of course, that the committee of contact with the Christian Reformed Church has proposed "radical change in that position" and that if their Synod had adopted the proposed change his churches would have "abrogated their position." But he points out that to the present day at least his churches have not yet adopted the proposed change. So they are officially still on the basis of 1924.

He insists that "this particular element cannot be ignored or forgotten. It places the churches in a very specific position in their relation to and attitude over against every other church. Perhaps it can be said this way: The Protestant Reformed Churches historically have stood, and still stand on the Scriptural and Confessional teaching of the free, sovereign, irresistible grace of God, and have refused to be bound and still refuse to be bound to any synodical decision which alters or abridges that position (reference is, of course, to the action of the Synod with respect to the Declaration of Principles which previously had been adopted). This is the conviction of the Protestant Reformed Churches today."

Here Knott forgets or purposely fails to reveal that the Declaration of Principles which his churches have rescinded is exactly a confirmation of the basis on which he purports to stand with his churches. Moreover, he also forgets or purposely fails to reveal that his churches have sustained the conditional theology of De Wolf which neither he nor anyone else can find in the basis of the Protestant Reformed Churches. We maintain that by the sustaining of the theology of De Wolf and the rescinding of the Declaration of Principles they have clearly given evidence of having been removed from the original basis.

2. "In the second place, we would observe that we, too, desire to be obedient to the call for unity . . . the unity of all those who confess the Name of the Lord Jesus in truth. But we are also convinced that we may not be so enamored of unity that we ignore, or are careless in the achieving of that unity in the proper way: unity cannot be gained in the way of crisis."

At this point Rev. Knott comments on the writing of Rev. M. Gritters in *The Guardian* of June, 1959, where he also pleads for unity. Knott observes that "Rev. Gritters speaks of separations caused by sin and the efforts made to build bridges 'platformed by Truth and Creed', but he does not tell us how these bridges shall be built. Building bridges calls for a careful examination of the terrain and crevass which must be spanned in order that when a unity is achieved between that which has been separated, it may be enduring and permanent. And between two denominations which have a history of separation, unity, even though it is recognized as being enjoined and desirable, cannot be reached or realized if it is not the result of a recognition of each other's doctrinal position and a mutual desire to unite in the framework of the Word of God and the Confessions. And within that framework allowances must be made for differences of opinion and interpretation in the conviction that both desire to be true to the Reformed heritage.

"And in our present consideration of the results of our discussions with the Christian Reformed Church these things must be kept in mind. True unity cannot be achieved by 'concessions', or by simple conformity to the position of the larger denomination, to which basic objections have been raised through the years of our separate existence, and are still being raised. It is desirable that we discuss the issues which separated us and that we find the largest possible common ground between us. It is gratifying that we recognize each other as 'church.' But that does not necessarily predicate, nor allow, organic union. There are still important areas of difference between us, and although these differences *need* not be exclusive, they have been in the past, and continue to be, when agreement to the statement of these differences, either objectively or in reformation, becomes a condition for membership. And then, to our mind, external unity is not more important than the freedom of one's conscience before God."

We make two remarks on the above quotation. The first is, that Knott speaks a different language than others of his colleagues who have already returned to the Christian Reformed Church or have expressed their readiness to return. Knott, it appears, wants to go back in the history and remove all that has been the cause for separation, and if this is impossible he would rather sacrifice unity and keep a free conscience. This is commendable. But, in the second place, does not Rev. Knott realize that this will mean rehearsal of past history, and did not the Christian Reformed Church tell us they are not interested in such rehearsal?

3. "In the third place, we would observe, that whatever the way, we must continue to act like and conduct ourselves as a church."

Here Rev. Knott takes some of the members of his group, including some of the ministers, to task for their "indifferent" and "lackadaisical" attitude respecting the future of their churches. He observes that "it would sometime appear that there will be a termination of our denominational life simply by default."

He points up that there are several reasons why his group does not and should not need to fold up. There are evidences of real spiritual life in the churches. There is a proper and healthy balance in the preaching . . . There is a sense of need of preserving that balance by obtaining a full-fledged seminary of their own . . . There is the expanding missionary witness. Knott insists that these are indications of life, and he continues, "A living body does not ask whether it is alive, or whether it has the right to be alive. It conducts itself as the living organism that it is."

We remark that this last statement taken by itself may be very well true. But it is also true that when a living body has in it the seed of death it is only natural to ask how long will it be before death overcomes the living body. Rev. Knott tells us that there are those in his group that see signs of death for the organism. It seems to me that if there really are signs Rev. Knott had better reckon with them and not imagine that in spite of the signs of death, he and his churches are going on forever.

We also point out that one of the signs of life to which he calls attention, namely, "a proper and healthy balance in the preaching," may not be a sign of life at all in his churches. For by it he must mean that beside the emphasis on the sovereignty of God in the matter of salvation there are those conditions which man must fulfill in order to enter the kingdom. He must mean that beside the emphasis on the doctrine of election and reprobation, there is also an emphasis on what man must do to be saved. He must mean that before 1953 there was no proper and healthy balance in the preaching in the Protestant Reformed Churches. It seems to me that just because the preaching of those who left us in 1953 was not of a proper and healthy balance we had to have the split which separated us. Conditionalism in the preaching does not make for a proper balance but throws the scales in the

direction of Arminianism. The softening of the doctrine of divine predestination in the preaching and the emphasis on the human element in the matter of salvation does nothing more than throw the scale out of balance.

Moreover, it may be commendable that the group of churches Rev. Knott represents feels the need of a seminary of their own. But surely what they have now or hope to have in the future cannot give his people any basis for a happier attitude than those Rev. Knott describes above who are indifferent and lackadaisical. And the missionary witness of which he speaks fails in our estimation to give any ground for hoping for a continued existence. It is not difficult to understand that a majority of his people could believe that this kind of missionary witness would have considerably more potency if it was joined with a larger denomination with greater means at its disposal.

4. "Finally, we would observe that although there are many apparent reasons for disappointment, we must not allow gloom and despair to overcome us. The church is not measured by Quantity. Usually, we know, it is evaluated on the basis of numbers. We like statistics, especially when they are favorable and show increases, but become uneasy and discouraged when the reverse is true.

"But regardless of statistics, history cannot be ignored. Our responsibility as ministers of the Word may not be denied. Societies may die, organizations may cease to exist, but the life of the church does not, and may not come to an end as we put a point at the end of a sentence. Nor may we simply terminate the existence of the Protestant Reformed Churches in a moment of time. Mergers are not made in a day, nor must they be hurried or forced. And until there is plainly and convincingly no longer any necessity for a separate existence, we must continue separately . . . not because we desire or long for separate existence, but because there is no other way.

"It is almost insulting to say these things to the church of Jesus Christ that lives out of her Head . . . but we must by all means recognize our calling. Ecumenicity is not possible for a church that is not a church . . . unity with another denomination cannot be achieved by a church that has no life, neither is it desirable without convictions. Only as we are alive, vigorous, stable, active can we conduct the affairs of the church in a proper ecclesiastical manner."

We would say in conclusion, that though we did not quote all of the editorial we did nevertheless give the gist of it. Sufficient evidence is here given that Rev. Knott sensed a spirit of defeatism in his group and he tried with his editorial to overcome it. Whether he succeeded time only will tell. Personally, we think he failed. At least this much is clear, he also is in favor of returning to the Christian Reformed Church. Only he wants to take his time in doing so. It also becomes apparent from the editorial that Rev. Knott perceives his churches are caught on the horns of a dilemma.

M.S.

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

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

Rev. B. Woudenberg declined the call from Holland, and Rev. C. Hanko declined the call from Randolph.

Holland has made a new trio which consists of the following: Revs. G. Lanting, G. Lubbers, and G. Vanden Berg.

Edgerton has extended a call to Rev. G. Vanden Berg, of Oak Lawn.

Rev. H. Hoeksema will give a lecture in Holland the evening of Oct. 29, D.V., on the topic, "The Infallibility of the Scriptures." The meeting will be in the Ladies' Literary Club Building located at the corner of 10th St. and Central Ave. at 8 P. M. Our Holland congregation is expecting you to attend, and asks you to tell others of this opportunity to hear a masterly discourse on this very important subject that is again being questioned in the church world.

The 1959 Young People's Convention has become history and the new host society for 1960 has already become active. The Senior Young People's Society of First Church in Grand Rapids has set the dates for Aug. 16, 17 and 18 and committees necessary for a good convention have been appointed.

The Annual meeting of the Reformed Free Publishing Association (*Standard Bearer*) was held Thursday evening, Sept. 24, at Hope Church. Rev. B. Woudenberg spoke to a large audience on, "*The Standard Bearer's Witness*," a topic to capture the attention because of the nature of the gathering. The treasurer's report showed a comfortable balance, due largely to the receipt of delinquent subscriptions of about \$1100.00.

The Prot. Ref. Action Society met in annual meeting at Edgerton, Sept. 15. Classis West delegates, friends and members of the society enjoyed a lecture by Rev. G. Vanden Berg, from Oak Lawn, on the timely topic, "The Absolute Infallibility of Holy Scripture." The speaker's sub-title was the more positive, "The Complete Word of God." Election of Board members resulted in the appointment of Tony Jansma, James Blankespoor, E. Van Egdom and Paul Buys.

Miss Winnifred Koole, of the Adams St. School staff, gave a paper on, and a demonstration of, "Teaching Spelling" at the Oct. 1st meeting of the Adams St. Mothers' Club. This meeting also featured a baked goods sale, the proceeds thereof swelling some help-the-school-fund.

Rev. H. Hoeksema is again planning to teach an adult Bible class beginning Oct. 7th. The class is to resume the study of "The Doctrine of the Last Things," begun last season.

Holland's Men's Society sponsored an Inspirational Meeting for all the societies of the church Oct. 5. They invited Rev. H. Hanko, of Hope Church, to give the inspirational address.

Rev. G. Lanting, of Grand Haven, conducts a Wednesday evening catechism class for young people, 15 years old and over. He invites all adults interested in the course to meet with them in the study of the "Essentials of Reformed Doctrine."

Bulletin quote on the subject of silent prayer before the service: "This is the way every church service should begin, both morning and afternoon. Therefore that time before the minister makes his appearance and enters the pulpit should not be spent in chatting, much less in levity, but in prayer, in prayer for the minister, for the sermon, and for the congregation, that the Lord's blessing be on all the aspects of our worship. Let us make this time as much a devotion as any other part of our worship." Change, if you will, the word "afternoon" to "evening" and the observation may be heeded in all churches.

Our own school at Edgerton is happy to announce it has filled the vacancy left by Mrs. H. Veldman, by the appointment of Mr. Dale Kuiper of Redlands.

From Redland's bulletin we learn that a hard working Building Committee, with the help of volunteers, is busy remodeling the parsonage.

The Rev. H. C. Hoeksema family, by means of an open letter in the bulletin, thanked the congregation of South Holland for all the kindnesses and friendship they enjoyed in their fellowship. With the gift from the congregation, received at the farewell, the Hoeksemas purchased a radio-phonograph with which to remember their friends for many years to come.

The Office Bearers' Conference scheduled for Oct. 6, at Hudsonville, promises a worthwhile evening for the elders and deacons that shall be in attendance. Rev. G. Lanting, of Grand Haven, will speak on the subject, "Praying For Those In Authority." May this speech also have the result that our leaders be edified, and that the membership in general may reap benefits from this meeting.

Text for this issue (quoted from Oak Lawn's bulletin), "Take heed, watch and pray . . . for ye know not when the time is . . . and what I say unto you, I say unto all, watch . . ." Mark 13:33, 37.

See you in church . . .

J.M.F.