

THE STANDARD

Bearer

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MEDITATION

GOD'S CALL TO ZION

"Hearken to Me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord: look unto the Rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him.

For the Lord shall comfort Zion; He will comfort all her waste places; and He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody." Isa. 51:1-3

God's people, the Church of the ages, have many names in Scripture, but one of the sweetest of her names is Zion, Mount Zion!

It is, first, a mountain in the holy land.

Second, it is the place where the temple and David's house were built.

Third, it was the very center of Israel's worship.

But in the last instance it is the place where heaven and earth are intertwined, the place where God kisses the earth in Christ.

My text is a call of God to this Zion.

Zion, the joy of the whole earth: the church of the ages.

There is a twofold description of that church.

Negatively, they are called the waste places, the desert, and the wilderness.

Those names express the condition of Zion in the world.

First of all, it is the natural habitat of Zion: the world in which they live, where all the streams are dry. In this world the church beholds nothing else than the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. From the cradle to the grave, that is all there is to life in the world.

Second, those waste places, wilderness and desert spell their own death, sin, guilt, and resulting misery. And it is

the very reason why they confess: the best of our days here on earth are labour and sorrow and it is soon cut off and we fly away. Dwelling in these waste places, desert and wilderness from a spiritual point of view causes the cry every night: O wretched man that I am: who shall deliver me out of the body of this death!

From that point of view Christian is wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.

And both instances cause the Christian to yearn, long and hunger to be relieved, redeemed, saved and liberated.

* * * *

But there is also the description of Zion from the positive side: Those that follow after righteousness.

Righteousness: what is it?

I do not hesitate to say that righteousness is the most beautiful thing from our point of view.

Righteousness is a virtue of God.

It means that God in all His life and works is conform the highest Good.

And in us it means that in all our will, desires, affections and imagination we are conform the highest Good, and that Good is God.

To be righteous is to be conform God.

When you are righteous, you need not fear God's eye upon you. For you are sure of His approving smile. When you come to the door of heaven as a righteous man or woman you are sure to hear His voice: Come! Come near Me! I have a place here for you! You are welcome unto all eternity.

Now then, the Church is described as "following after righteousness."

To follow after it means the same thing as when Jesus said: Blessed are those who do hunger and thirst after righteousness

It means that you know what it is; that you miss it; and that you love to possess it.

And they are the same as those that seek God.

You see, God has from all eternity thought out a righteousness for His children. And this righteousness should become their portion through the Lord Jesus Christ. Of it Daniel said: "... and to bring in everlasting righteousness" And in the very next verse he speaks of the great Medium of this eternal righteousness: "Messiah the Prince"!

And how shall this wondrous gift of righteousness come to them?

Ah, but thereby hangs a beauteous tale!

It become ours, beloved, through a double imputation.

First, all your "waste places, wilderness, and desert" is imputed unto this Prince, this Messiah. Of course, you know what I mean. Jesus took upon Himself all the guilt of Zion. It was not His: it became His by God's imputation. In the style of Isaiah: God caused all our sins to run toward Him!

And this caused Jesus to become a Curse for us!

And He bore this curse, this damnation unto the very end!

One of the three words was "desert."

Well, He surely was deserted: My God! My God! why hast Thou forsaken Me!

Second, the righteousness which Jesus merited for you is imputed unto you. You are clothed with the robes of righteousness. They are the free gift of the grace of God. When God is through with His Golgotha, and your justification, you stand before Him as though you had never sinned, yea, it is as though you in your own person had fulfilled all righteousness!

But be sure to always remember: it is *of* God, it became reality in history *through* God, and unto everlasting it is *to* God! He is a jealous God: He will not give His praise to another!

* * * *

That people are called in my text.

And here is the call: "Hearken to Me!"

Well, there are many voices around about us.

There are the voices of the devils, the wicked people, the suffering creation.

But among the millions of voices there is One Voice that is wonderful: it is the voice of God.

And to "hearken" is to obey.

Obedience is to hearken to God's voice, whether it comes to you through nature or the Bible.

But this voice is very particular: Look unto the Rock whence ye are hewn, and the hole of the pit whence ye are digged.

Oh, we know about that Rock!

I am not in favor of singing hymns in Public Worship, but I will admit that there are lines and phrases in hymns that charm my heart.

Here is one: Rock of ages, cleft for me!

Yes, we know about that Rock. It is Jesus, and in the final instance, it is God.

It is the everlastingly unchangeable Covenant Jehovah. It is your and my Saviour who never puts you to shame, for He will always keep His promises to you. True and faithful is His name.

And you are to look at the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. The hole of the pit. That sounds somewhat crude. I wish I could make you feel the poetic Dutch translation: "de holligheid des bornputs."

The meaning?

Jesus Christ spoke of the same truth when He said: "but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life."

You are hewn from God, and you are digged from Jesus.

It means that all your life, your eternal life is from God.

Now, look at it! That is what God wants you to do. He desires of His church that she behold the beauty of our origin: the God that saved her!

There is a Fountain opened against sin and unrighteousness. And that Fountain is God in Christ.

And God did it all, so that He might rejoice in you and millions of others looking at Him and His Christ as the great Author of their salvation. God delights to listen to your singing for all eternity.

* * * *

And the historical proof is Abraham and Sarah.

No, we need not dwell here for very long: it is so plain!

Abraham and Sarah: dead as man and woman, as wife and husband. What in the name of all that is sane and logical can you expect from them in the matter of progeny? How can Abraham have desire, and how shall Sarah bring forth?

They are alone and they are dead!

But wait! God pays them a visit, and the result is wonder-children, a nation that is born from the dead, the church of all the ages, Mount Zion!

So be sure and look at Abraham your father, and Sarah your mother!

And then look at the Rock, and the hole of the pit.

And sing!

* * * *

Will you hearken? And look?

Yes, you will, you surely will, when the good Spirit of Jesus Christ dwells in you.

And without that Spirit, the Word of God unto admoni-

tion will not profit you. For it is not mixed with faith. Sorry estate!

But if you hearken in obedience and look upon God the Rock, you will receive a wonderful comfort.

"I will comfort Zion!"

In the midst of your waste places, desert and wilderness you will be comforted.

You will be comforted so fully that it will seem at times as though you are already in heaven. An example or two is Paul in the dungeon, and Stephen on his knees, praying for his enemies.

In the waste places and wilderness you will hear the sweet voices of God and Jesus, speaking to you in His wonderful Word. O that Bible! It is sweeter than honey and the honey comb.

In the midst of suffering, distress, prisons and concentration camps, this comfort is heavenly. The cursed earth does become like unto a garden of God.

No wonder then that the Holy Spirit speaks here of Joy and Gladness.

Oh, it may be that this joy and gladness is experienced in rags and tatters, in hunger and thirst, in the midst of devils and the wicked, but no fear: it is there and it is real.

The earth becomes as Paradise, the Paradise of God.

Thanksgiving: it means that you tell God how it is of Him, through Him and to Him!

And the voice of melody!

Melody! It is my choice for the most beautiful word in the English language.

Melody is like heaven and it sounds like heavenly speech.

Melody: an agreeable succession of sounds, mostly in music.

Melody: it is the Holy Spirit of God teaching me how to sing to the praises of God. Amen.

G.V.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On July 17, 1959, our dear parents:

MR. and MRS. GERRITT BYLSMA

hope to commemorate their 40th wedding anniversary, D.V.

We thank our Heavenly Father who has spared them for us these many years.

Our prayer is that the Lord may continue to bless them throughout the further part of their lives. May they always experience the joy and peace which is the heritage of them that love God.

Their grateful children:

Mr. and Mrs. Stuart J. Bylsma
Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth J. Bylsma
Mr. and Mrs. Marvin Koerner
Mr. and Mrs. Edward Cammenga
Mr. and Mrs. John Buitter
Miss Esther J. Bylsma
and 17 grandchildren

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EDITORIALS

About The Three Points

The First Point, as we have repeatedly indicated, is the most important of the three. Yet, in connection with the theory of "common grace," also the second and third points are significant. Hence, in the report of the committee of the Christian Reformed Church that met with a committee of the schismatics, also the latter we discussed.

We better first quote the "Second Point" in its entirety. It reads as follows:

"Relative to the second point, which is concerned with the restraint of sin in the life of the individual man and in the community, the Synod declares that there is such a restraint of sin according to Scripture and the Confession. This is evident from the citations from Scripture and from the Netherland Confession, Art. 13 and 36, which teach that God by the general operation of His Spirit, without renewing the heart of man, restrains the unimpeded breaking out of sin, by which human life in society remains possible; while it is also evident from the quotations of Reformed writers of the most flourishing period of Reformed theology, that from ancient times our Reformed fathers were of the same opinion."

The committee of the schismatics have the following to say about this second point:

"1. We agree that there is a restraint of sin in the present world and that this restraint of sin is ascribed to the 'gracious God' as Article 36 states: 'Our gracious God appoints government to the end that the dissoluteness of men might be restrained.'

"2. Our difference consists in this:

"a. That neither Article 13 nor 36 makes it evident that this is to be ascribed to the general operation of the Holy Spirit. Because this is saying more than the Confessions literally state, we believe that the wording needs revision. In expressions words must be exact.

"b. That Point II, by putting the restraint of sin solely in the context of the goodness of God which makes human society possible, fails to enunciate it in the larger context of Gen. 3:15 with its spiritual antithesis. We hold the church to be the apple of God's eye and that God preserves her against the rage of the whole world (Confessions, Art. 27). This restraint of sin serves also to bridle the raging world in defence of His Church (Psalm 105:14, 15; Isaiah 45:1-4; Arts. 13 and 36, and Lord's Day 10).

"c. That Point II, although stating that amid all the restraint the heart of the natural man is not renewed, yet, in connection with III, it nevertheless leaves the impression that after the fall there is still much good left in man, that is preserved by the Holy Spirit and nurtured unto good works. This endangers the doctrine of total depravity, and

leaves out of perspective Canons III, IV, 3, 4, which state that man holds the remnant under in unrighteousness.

"Therefore, we propose a reformulation somewhat as follows:

"There is a restraint of sin, which, within the providence of God, brings about a degree of good order and decency in society. It curbs the dissoluteness of man and makes human society possible, but it serves especially to defend and preserve the church in the world. This expression is not to be interpreted to mean that there is any essential improvement in the depraved sinner."

What shall we say about this?

Although the schismatics present some points of difference with the second point, yet, they essentially agree: there is a restraint of sin.

They also try to maintain that this restraint of sin is "common grace" when they emphasize that the "gracious God" instituted governments.

Their points of difference are:

1. That the Confessions do not make it evident that this restraint of sin is to be ascribed to the general operations of the Holy Spirit. They do not even deny that this may be true, but simply claim that the Confessions do not literally state this.

2. That the restraint of sin, besides being the manifestation of the goodness and grace of God over all men, in this case, of course, especially over the wicked, also serves to defend and preserve the Church.

3. That the second point, by leaving the impression that, after the fall, there is still much good left in the natural man, endangers the doctrine of total depravity. Especially from this last point, it is evident that the schismatics rather freely consulted my book on "The History of the Protestant Reformed Churches." The difference is that I did not write that the "second point" *endangers* but that it denies the doctrine of total depravity.

Hence, we may formulate the schismatics' idea of the second point in this fashion:

"There is a general goodness or grace of God, especially over the wicked, according to which He restrains sin in them, so that they will not sin as much as they would without this restraint. Through this common grace the dissoluteness of man is curbed and human society is made possible and the church in the world is preserved. But there is no essential improvement in the depraved sinner."

Rather than criticize this compromise of the schismatics in detail we will present our own positive conception on the matter.

We believe that man, after the fall is totally depraved so that he is incapable of doing any good and inclined to all evil. Nor is there any "common grace" that restrains his depraved nature. All the natural gifts left him after the fall he employs in the service of sin and he holds them under in unrighteousness. But, like the whole human race, so sin follows the line of organic development. Adam was the

root as well as the head of the human race. His sin, therefore, was a root-sin and this root-sin bears fruit in all the actual sins of the human race. As the human race develops and life with all its different relationships becomes more complex, sin also reveals itself as corrupting more and more the whole of life and all its relations until the measure of iniquity is filled. But there is no "common grace." Nor, although all men do not commit all sin, but each one sins according to his character, his position in life, and other limitations, upon this organic development of sin, is there any restraint. Under the power and control of God, the development proceeds as fast as possible. All things hasten unto the end and the Lord comes quickly.

The "second point" is a pernicious perversion of the truth.

Such is our conviction.

H.H.

Evolution, Long Periods, or Days

In our last article on the above subject we began the discussion of the creation of man on the sixth day, particularly according to Gen. 2:7. We pointed out that the very fact that God *formed* man, something which is not said of any of the other creatures, indicates that man is a distinct creature, surely not developed from the lower animals.

However, we have more to say on this point.

When we read in Gen. 2:7 that God formed man out of the dust of the ground we must not interpret this as meaning that God first formed a lifeless lump of clay in the shape of a human body and afterwards breathed life into that body. Undoubtedly, the forming of man from the dust of the ground refers to the creation of the body, that is to man from the material aspect. But, in the first place, do not overlook the fact that the human body is a marvellous structure, with its senses of sight, hearing, taste, touch and smell, with its entire nervous system, leading from those senses to the inner man or soul, and that thus this human body is perfectly adapted to the outside world. In the second place, we must not forget that the act of forming man, the entire man, is one act, though it be twofold. We do not read that God formed a lifeless body from the dust of the ground and afterwards breathed a soul into that body, but, on the contrary, that God formed *man* out of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and thus man became a living soul. In other words, by this twofold act of God man became one living soul. Man, too, is not two but one, even though he may be distinguished as body and soul or spirit and even though for a time his spirit, as in death, may be separated from the body.

Hence, when we read that God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life we must interpret this as meaning that God gave to the human nature its own life in distinction from the

animals, a life according to which he was related to the present world through his senses, but also to God. By this wonderful twofold act of God man became one physical, psychical, spiritual being. We may, therefore, distinguish in the one man various elements or aspects. In the first place, there is the physical aspect, according to which, through his senses, he is related to the outside world. In the second place there is the psychical aspect of his body, according to which, through the nervous system, he is related to his inner soul. In the third place, there is what I would call the physical part of the soul, by which the inner man received the sensations from the outside world. In the fourth place, there is the psychical part of the soul with intellect and will. And, finally, there is the spiritual part of the soul, according to which man is a person and stands in conscious personal relation to God. All this is very beautifully and succinctly expressed in Gen. 2:7: God formed man out of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life: and man became a living soul.

Needless to say that this is quite opposed to the theory of evolution. According to the latter, God did not form man separately, but by a long process of gradual evolution he descended from the lower animals, perhaps finally from the ape. In that case, of course, man has no distinct being and nature but is nothing else than a higher animal. Strange it may be regarded, indeed, that we see nothing of this process of development in our present world. Nor do we see any further development of man. To be sure, he develops in the world. He still reveals the remnant of his original power and dominion over all things. He also develops in sin and destruction. But always he remains the same man and there is absolutely no development in him from a lower to a higher being. But even apart from this, the whole theory of evolution is contrary to the Scriptures which we believe to be the infallible Word of God. For that Word of God teaches us very plainly that man did not descend from the lower animals, but that God gave a distinct existence by forming him out of the dust of the ground and breathing into his nostrils the breath of life.

The same is true of the theory of long periods, which is nothing but a camouflaged form of the theory of evolution. According to this theory, God must have taken thousands or even perhaps millions of years to create man. But this certainly is not in harmony with the account in Gen. 2:7. Did it require thousands of years to form man out of the dust of the ground and to breathe into his nostrils the breath of life? We know better. Rather we conceive of it as an act of one moment, for that is certainly the impression Scripture makes upon us.

Hence, neither the theory of evolution nor that of long periods can possibly be brought into harmony with the Scriptural account of the creation of man.

Here we must choose between the Word of God and the philosophy of mere man.

H.H.

OUR DOCTRINE

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

PART TWO

CHAPTER VIII

The Two Witnesses

Revelation 11:5-13

The first part of that week is the time of the great tribulation. But after the time of the great tribulation, after the church has been dead and her testimony has ceased for some time, Christ shall cause a certain revival. A spirit of life entered into them from God, and they stood upon their feet once more. A voice comes from heaven, and calls them up thither, and they ascend into heaven in a cloud. At the same time an earthquake, a terrible earthquake, is felt, which destroyed a large part of the city, but which undoubtedly at the same time accompanies the resurrection of the saints. And the church has been delivered. In other words, before the time of the end, while the Antichrist and the Gog and Magog are still on earth, the church shall be taken away from her shame and persecution and terrible suffering. The living saints shall be changed. Those that have died shall be raised. And the church of Christ shall be glorified. The days have been shortened for the elects' sake.

In regard to the power of the Antichrist that still remains behind, the text tells us that one tenth of its power is destroyed. That is evidently the meaning of the destruction which is caused by the earthquake. One tenth part of the city is destroyed, and seven thousand people are killed. Ten is, as we have remarked before, the symbolic number which indicates the power that is given to the Antichrist by the decree of God. He has ten horns, has dominion over ten kingdoms, — all of which indicates that he has just as much power as God allows him. But now one tenth of his dominion is destroyed. Jerusalem at large, the holy city, that is spiritually called Sodom and Egypt, has, of course, developed into the power of the Antichrist and has served him in the culmination of his power. One tenth of that power is now taken away, that is, just as much as is in harmony with his existence. To take one tenth of his power and his dominion away simply means that he is definitely curtailed, so that he will not be able to maintain himself as Antichrist. And this is for a purpose. For a time they acknowledge the glory of God, just as Nebuchadnezzar would when he was witness of the power and glory of God. To a definite conversion it does not come. The time for conversion is now past. It is only a time for judgment. For the witness of the Word has been taken away, and the church is already in heaven. Terrible things shall still take place. Battles shall be fought between Antichrist and Gog and Magog, and the church shall be no more in tribulation. The time of her

tribulation is past, and with Christ she reigns in glory, till she shall return with Him to judgment.

This, then, is the general picture we receive from this chapter and from other parts of Scripture. The true church, endowed with power and light from on high, will witness of the truth and of Christ throughout this dispensation. When the testimony is finished, the Antichrist will be allowed to develop and persecute the church. The time of the great tribulation shall follow, of which Scripture has warned us so frequently. But that time of great tribulation is to be cut short. At the darkest hour Christ shall deliver His church. History shall be continued for a while, with Antichrist and Gog and Magog as the inhabitants of the earth, till Christ shall come to judge with His church and shall establish His glorious kingdom forevermore. Now we are still in the twelve hundred and sixty days. We must still witness. Perhaps the days of tribulation will come soon. It seems as if we are fast becoming prepared for these days. But still the testimony is not finished. Still therefore it is the calling of the church and its ministry to witness. And the purpose of this picture is to spur us on to be faithful even unto the end, that no one may take our crown. And on the other hand, the people of God may be comforted by the fact that Christ shall not leave them alone, but that even the days shall be shortened for the elects' sake.

CHAPTER IX

The Blowing of the Seventh Trumpet

Revelation 11:14-19

14. The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly.

15. And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

16. And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God,

17. Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.

18. And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.

19. And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.

In order to gain a true understanding of this part of the book of Revelation it is of the utmost importance that we bear in mind the general character of the chapter in which it occurs. We have said that in this chapter we have a picture of the general course of history, of the history of the church in the midst of the world in the present dispensation, and that too, with a view to the end. It really covers

the entire history. From that point of view, the book of Revelation might have closed with this chapter. But we must remember that it is only a general picture, a picture that gives us very general outlines. And the details of that picture shall be presented to us in the chapters that follow. It might be called the general program that is to be worked out in the succeeding chapters, or, if you please, the general index of the book from here on. In it we found a general characterization of the condition of the church in this world. The temple was measured, and we found that the distinction was made between the holy city at large, the outer court, and the real holy place with its worshippers,—a distinction which we found to be applicable to the condition of the church in the new dispensation. There is always a Christendom in the general sense of the word, including all that belong to nominal Christianity in the outward sense, all that have been baptized in the name of the Triune God. But within this largest circle of Christianity there is, in the first place, the false church, that does no more adhere to the Christ, but tramples the blood of atonement under foot. And in the second place, within the same sphere of Christianity in general there is also the show church, that enters with the true people of God in the sanctuary, but that does not worship with them in spirit and in truth. And finally, there is the true church, the body of the true believers, that are implanted into Christ by a true and living faith. And this distinction will become more plain, will be emphasized, toward the time of the end in such a way that the show church of hypocrites will fall away and identify themselves with the false church, the enemies of Christ, and ultimately ally themselves with the power of Antichrist.

We found in this chapter a general picture of the calling and work of the true church in the midst of the world. They must be and are witnesses for Christ. They are the two witnesses. The believers, the church and its ministers, the servants of God, will witness throughout this dispensation, even to the time of the end. They prophesy not only in the midst of the world that does not know the Christ and the gospel, but prophesy also against the wickedness of the false church, in the midst of which they exist as a living testimony. We found that over against these enemies their word becomes a fire, consuming the enemy, so that he cannot prevail against them in the spiritual sense. We found that these two witnesses perform wonders; even as Elijah and Moses of old, they shut the heaven with their spiritual power, turn the waters into blood, and have power to strike the earth with every plague. You will remember how we explained that all of this must be taken in the most literal sense of the word, as applying to the church of the new dispensation.

Finally, we found in this chapter a general indication of the final rise of the Antichrist, the beast that comes up out of the abyss. He oppresses the church. He persecutes the believers that witness against him and that perform these wonders. He kills some of them undoubtedly and succeeds in declaring the entire church of Christ dead, so that their

testimony is silenced and they are the object of greatest scorn and contempt, as is expressed in the figure of their bodies lying unburied in the streets of Jerusalem for three days and a half. But we also find a general picture of the final victory, or rather, of the ultimate deliverance of the church. The days are shortened for their sake. They are raised, changed, and taken to heaven even before the time of the end and before the seventh trumpet will play the greatest havoc with the enemies of Christ and His kingdom. And now it is in that same general sense of the word that in the passage we are about to discuss we meet with the picture of the seventh trumpet.

In the fourteenth verse of this chapter, the first verse of the passage we are now discussing, we read: "The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly." This fact has led many interpreters to believe that all that is told us in chapter nine, verse 12, to eleven, verse 13, belongs to the second woe. You will remember that the eagle that flew in mid-heaven announced a three-fold woe, evidently corresponding with the three last trumpets. These last three trumpets, therefore, may very appropriately be called the woe-trumpets. Now it is very evident from the text that the first woe, or the fifth trumpet, simply includes the plague of the locusts. All are agreed in this respect. But there is difference of opinion with regard to the second woe, or the sixth trumpet. There are interpreters who maintain that it includes all that is told us in chapter nine, verse 12, to eleven, verse 13, as I said above. According to this view, it includes the setting at liberty of the four angels that are bound at the great river Euphrates and all the deadly destruction caused by this. It includes, in the second place, all that is told us in chapter ten of the angel that stands on the sea and on the land and of the open book John must swallow. And it includes, in the third place, all we have thus far discussed of the eleventh chapter: the measuring of the temple, the witnessing of the two prophets, the rise of the Antichrist, and the deliverance of the church. But as we have already indicated in our discussion, we cannot agree with this and that for the simple reason that there is nothing woeful in chapter ten and in chapter eleven, verses 1 to 13, for the world. The woe-trumpets evidently mean to cause woe not to the church but to the world. And from this point of view the last-mentioned portion cannot be classed together with chapter nine, verses 13 to 21, which speaks of the sixth trumpet. And therefore, our conception is that the second woe is recorded in chapter nine, verses 13 to 21, where the sixth trumpet ends. Then in chapter ten we have an interlude, assuring the people of God that the mighty Christ shall surely bring the kingdom and perfect it. And in the eleventh chapter we have a general picture of what will be described in detail in future chapters in connection with the seventh trumpet, or the third woe. That seventh trumpet, or third woe, John now announces and pictures in general terms. And therefore, immediately before this seventh trumpet he announces that the third woe cometh quickly. H.H.

THE SABBATH

Should this subject require an introduction I believe it could easily be expressed in just one simple sentence. I would put it thus: the subject of the sabbath has tremendous practical significance for the church at all times in the history of the world.

We read in the Creation narrative recorded in the primary portion of God's Word of a grand conclusion which is most comprehensively expressed, "thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them." We believe of course that it was at this precise moment that God beheld the perfect product of His Almighty Hand and powerful Word; He beheld the earthly reality of that which was forever real in His eternal conception, or Counsel. Now it is this finale that has significance for the subject at hand because it is in connection therewith, and thereupon, that the church received the first indication or revelation that our God is more than a God of labor. He is also a God of rest. Attend please to the appendage to the creation narrative as recorded in Gen. 2:2 and 3, ". . . And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made." From this it is more than evident that the seventh day was the day of rest, and, this day became known as the sabbath which incidentally means rest.

God's people should learn to call this first sabbath the sabbath of creation. It was beautiful but in a sense barren, comely but in a certain respect crude. On this day it was our God who held communion with the entire creation and that simply through the heart of Adam! And if our first father sang a song that day in Paradise in all probability it went something like this, "the works, the works of the Almighty, how glamorous and fair."

But we ask in seriousness and with sincerity, Could this last forever? Was there no sweeter song?

The church must be taught to say more! She should also learn to speak of the sabbath of redemption. This is her interest from the fall of our first parents unto all eternity. All of us suddenly recognize this sabbath as that of the Lamb. It is clearly distinguished from the former mentioned sabbath. In it our attention is focused on the red of the cross rather than on the green of Paradise. God, we must remember, who rests with chosen men is not only the God Almighty but He is the Almighty God of all grace. He has provided a redemptive rest. Hence, the essence of this day is that now God holds communion with His people, not now as created in the image of God and of His Son. So it is that now redeemed man sweetly breathes the NEW song, "the work of the Lord, the beautiful work of salvation." And this shall go on endlessly in glory!

There is a similarity but not an equality between these sabbaths; a parallel but not a par. Redemptive rest is chief and supreme, it is the day of days in the experience and consciousness of Zion.

If you should inquire of me its ground I would point you to the cross. In the Old Testament times this awful sight was portrayed and pictured in sign and wonder, in type and shadow, in furniture and sacrifice. In the days of reality its solo ground appeared on Golgotha.

Besides all these, this marvelous day which began historically after Adam's fall shall finally be perfected . . . shall continue without end . . . is reserved for that royal priesthood, that holy nation, that peculiar people and chosen generation. Scripture explains it this way, and who dares to explain the everlasting character of the sabbath otherwise, "there REMAINETH a rest for the people of God." For these joys we must wait until the reappearance of our Redeemer on the clouds of heaven to receive his own unto Himself in glory, but the wicked shall inhabit hell.

Strange, but correctly so, the time element in the observance of the sabbath has changed. Ever since the resurrection of our Savior from the dead God's people have kept the first day of the week. Very generally we may say this is due to the change of dispensations which altered many things. Because of this circumcision was changed to baptism, the passover to the supper, priest to preacher and prophesying to ministry or preaching. We could add to this list. Yet very specifically it was the resurrection of our Lord that altered things! Was it not perfectly providential and with purpose that His body should lie all day in the tomb of Joseph, all day of the old sabbath, to make full that twenty-four hour period and fill to the brim the darkest sabbath of all history? Was it not equally true and purposeful that he should arise early that very next morning and make all things principally new? Of course our answer is, yes! We love and live in the rest of the resurrected Redeemer. The Sabbath was altered in the time of observance but not in essence.

Now to abandon the more historical and doctrinal elements of this day of renown and momentum it is severely necessary, especially in this day and age, to touch upon the practical significance in the remaining paragraphs. Two questions quite naturally arise which rather completely cover this phase of the concept. They may be stated in one breath: what is the character of the sabbath and how does this affect my life?

The true character of this day is a spiritual restfulness. This rest must never be interpreted carnally as a laziness or drowsiness or a being at ease but quite contrariwise it is an active devotion to our God. It is concentrating upon and contemplating God's revelation. When this is realized it is the saint's experience that he stands in the nearest possible relation to God in Christ. And by all means this should

be one's concern and objective on this day. But more of this later.

Moreover if the character of the sabbath is contemplating God's revelation it is more than obvious that the heart of this day is the pulpit, the preaching of the Word. And this should always receive the primary emphasis. How God's Word encourages us in this sacred endeavor! Remember that!

On the basis of all this it should become even more evident that the sabbath has a tremendous practical effect upon our life and living at all times and in every sphere. Even as the physical heart requires proper pulsation in order to maintain human life so too the day of rest, the heart of our spiritual life, must pulsate properly if a desirable spiritual life is to be lived. And should this be the case then our entire life is one of spiritual livelihood and direction. Lose the day of rest and you lose everything! Or to go one step back, lose the preaching — the proper preaching — and you lose the day of rest.

The importance of maintaining this day, both the pure preaching and the day itself, is obvious from Christ's own words. In the first place, and probably the neatest expression of our Lord on this subject, reads, "the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." Here our Lord is speaking from an observatory point of view and essentially declares that the sabbath cannot keep man, man must keep the sabbath! In the second place we cannot help but pen the one command of ten which awes our souls and accuses us so often of sin and which reads, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy . . ." Need we mention the incident of the Old Testament Israelite who was put to death for its desecration? Holy Writ gives us every indication of sabbath seriousness.

Keep the day! But how?

To answer such a question requires a manifold reply. Possibly the fundamental reply would be that we build the ingoings and outgoings of the day about the pulpit with its preaching. Thus if you neglect the house of worship and prayer its observance is impossible. But even then the attending of this house does not necessarily mean proper observance of the day. What do we do before and after services? Perhaps some perform unnecessary labor, or so! A serious and precarious disturbance of Rest indeed should this be done. But we have overlooked the mountain! In all likelihood the greatest disturbance of rest in this day and age is pleasure. Both of the above mentioned factors hinder the saintly concentration of the issues of his life on spiritual things. More categories could be added but let this suffice.

Pleasure, in particular now, dulls the spiritual appetite even as certain manufactured products of men dull the natural appetite. For example, give the child some sweets prior to meal-time and what becomes of his appetite? Even so permit the flock of Christ Jesus to partake of the Sunday

afternoon ball game, the boat ride or beach bathe and their hunger after righteousness is gone. Mealtime comes to mean little to them. Besides, the Sunday television program and news paper are a poor dessert after the Meal of God's Word. Moreover experience may well have informed many that it is spiritually awkward to leave the courts of God and moments later stand at the counter of the corner drug store or beside a wheel of industry. Or experience no doubt has taught us that it is awkward to step from the arena of entertainment and enter the audience of the awed as they behold the beauty of God in His temple.

Sorry to say but some boast of liberties in sabbath observance, while others boast of laws. The fact is that men are divided on this score. Perhaps or perchance among our readers there are the liberals and the conservatives! If so, let us not ridicule the "reserved" for their narrowness as is sometimes done but assuredly let us rebuke the "libertine" for his lawlessness. The command is succinct, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy."

Do we forever heap rule upon rule, precept upon precept and law upon law? No, that is our answer, and, the author of this article teaches no such thing. The simple command above is both broad and beautiful. It is enough.

Blessed sabbath day!

Its observance is only possible and a privilege for the faithful, the objects of God's unrestrained and unchangeable favor. To these the sabbath is set aside for rest, that is, spiritual activity in the Kingdom of our King.

A.M.

Announcement

The Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches announces that the Rev. G. M. Ophoff has been granted his request for emeritation and has been given the status of emeritus professor.

Synod further expresses its heartfelt appreciation to our beloved Rev. Ophoff for his many years of service to our churches, and especially to our Theological School, from the very beginning of our history; that we express that we are mindful of the fact that under God's providence he has been one of the fathers of our movement; that we express that we sympathize with Rev. Ophoff in the present way of affliction in which the Lord leads him, and that we are saddened by the fact that now the Lord removes him from active duty in our churches; that we express, further, that we hope and pray that our gracious God may sustain him, and his beloved wife, Mrs. G. M. Ophoff, in the remainder of their earthly pilgrimage.

SYNOD OF THE PROTESTANT REFORMED
CHURCHES

G. VANDEN BERG, *Stated Clerk*

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of Romans 14, 15

III.

(Romans 14:2-12)

In our former article we spoke of the matters of things which are "indifferent," sometimes called the *adiaphora*! Eating or not eating of meat has as such no importance; it is not the matter which *determines* the true worship of God in His church. All that which is not *out* of faith is sin. Not eating as well as eating meat, keeping or not keeping of days, is sin if it is not out of faith. When it is not out of faith it simply is human institution and inventions. Such cannot be the rule of faith in the church!

Let each be fully persuaded in his own mind.

In this chapter, we have noticed, Paul is speaking to the weak in faith and to the strong in the faith. The weak in faith are not simply weak in their subjective life, but they are weak in the objective truth of the justification by faith, and weak and hesitant to apply this truth of justification by faith to certain areas of life. And, therefore, the weak brother is the "problem-child." If all were strong in the faith there would be no problem. However, now there is a twofold problem.

In the first place there is the problem which we might call the *dogmatic* problem. It is the problem of the relationship of the days and meats to Christ, the Lord.

In the second place there is the problem of the *human-relations* in the difference of convictions concerning days and meats, which exists between the "strong" and the "weak in faith"! The latter problem can become such, and often does, that it is not possible to rightly keep a proper perspective of the former question.

Both of these aspects are on the very surface of this passage which calls for our attention here.

Let us take notice how Paul handles this delicate situation here. We need not repeat here what we wrote in our former essay on this matter. Let it suffice to call attention to the following:

The problem here arises out of the weakness of the weak. The *resultant* situation is such that Paul writes, "One man hath faith to eat all things; but he that is weak eateth herbs." Verse 2. And again, "One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike." Verse 5.

Such is the situation.

How does Paul handle the situation? Are both the strong and the weak equally right in their contention? They

may be equally right. However they may also be equally wrong, paradoxically as it may sound! And, again, the one may be right ethically and the other ethically wrong!

The key is: *all that is not out of faith is sin!*

Eating meat or not eating meat, keeping of a day or not keeping of a day is *as such* a matter which is *indifferent*! This is wholly a matter which is only *spiritually differentiated* by the faith or lack of faith of the user and non-user! It is because of this spiritually undifferentiatedness of meat and drink as such which calls for spiritual sobriety on our part, lest we walk either in bondage unto the law, or in antinomian libertinism!

Let not the reader think that matters of the undoubted Christian Faith are ever matters of *adiaphora*, or matters which are expressly forbidden in the law of God. *Adiaphora* deals only with matters which pertain to the good creature, and their being used in the service of Christ. It is, therefore, wholly a matter of being "fully persuaded in our own minds."

When the matter is thus pin-pointedly stated all *adiaphora* has its necessary limitation, doesn't it. We do not cherish being misunderstood. We ask a careful reading of these lines! Let no one jump to conclusions which are neither directly nor indirectly implied in these lines!

We write above: the Key to the solution of this situation is, "all that is not out of faith is sin"!

Next to this Paul posits another factor: it is that *Christ is Lord*, both of the living and of the dead! Thus we read in verse 9: "For unto this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living."

These two factors are the all-controlling solution to eating or not eating of meats, or keeping or not keeping of days!

Take the matter of days, for instance. Is it not an uncontrovertible truth that Christ is *Lord* of the Sabbath. Thus we read in Mark 2:27, 28: "And he said unto them, the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: so that the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath." Is Christ's *lordship* not then the key to the proper use of days, and is he not "strong" who properly sees this Lordship of Christ over a day, so that *in relationship to Christ* he accounts all days alike?! And was such not the very design of God in the creation of the weekly sabbath in the beginning? It was made for man, that is, for man to use in the service of the Lord! However, the day was not made that man should serve the day or be bound by the day, but be free in the day being free in the Lord of the sabbath-day!

And now the matter of "meats." Is it not true that God saw all that He had made and behold it was very good? Gen. 1:30. And did not Christ come to save the world and put all things in His service? I Cor. 15:27. Did Christ Himself not attend weddings, and is He not accused of being a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners? Matthew 11:19. And does not Paul say in I Tim. 4:4, 5:

"For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, if it be received with thanksgiving, for it is sanctified through the word of God and prayer"? And are not all things of us, and are we not of Christ and is Christ not of God? I Cor. 3:22, 23. Is Christ not *lord* of all things, exactly through his death and resurrection, the First-born of all creatures?

These are the objective controlling principles in this Chapter here.

But is that the solution to the *situation*? Does Paul solve this with a few "statements," expressions of doctrinal formulae? Or is he here a man of wisdom, of sobriety and power, who gives a word of reproof, demonstrating how this great principle of the *lordship* of Christ is, when brought into practice, the solution so that the strong are not arrogant and the weak are no longer critical of the strong, but rather themselves become strong in faith?

Since the weak brethren are the problem children, judging the brethren, who are strong in faith, by the terms of meat and days, Paul directs to them the reproof which is implied in Christ's lordship over all things. Christ is not merely lord over days and meat and drink, but he is too the lord of the *strong brethren*! Christ, their Lord, *himself* has made them strong. The strong shall stand! And no bickering of the weak is to make the strong in faith weak. Wherefore Paul writes: "Yea, he shall be made to stand; for the Lord hath power to make him stand." Verse 4b. The very salvation of the weak to become strong depends upon the strong remaining strong, pillars in the church. The foundations must stand!

Hence, it is to these "weak in faith" that Paul says: "Who art *thou* that judgest the servant of another? To his own lord he standeth or falleth"! Verse 4. This is a very severe reproof and correctly so. Not only may these weak not foist their weakness upon the strong as the standard of Christian conduct, but they have rightly or wrongly as their case as such might be, not the prerogative to judge the stronger brother. For they are then not keeping in mind the "lordship" of Christ over this brother. His standing or falling, his being condemned or justified in this matter before the tribunal of Christ, is solely at bottom a matter of his relationship to his own Lord, Christ. And his Christ will make them stand. They shall not fall. The Lord will finish his own work in them!

That "who art *thou*" is really the end of all bickering and judging in days and meat! It brings in the *new dimension* of the Lord over all things! As soon as the weak grow stronger in faith they will subject themselves more and more unto their Lord and the Lord of the strong, and see that they will be joining the ranks of the strong! Then shall they be more and more "fully assured in their own mind" that what they do is done unto the Lord! In the real unity in the Lord, their own purpose in "not eating" and in "keeping of days" will come to stand in a new light, and a new

service to the Lord. There will then be a new content in the old forms!

For he that regardeth then the day in this new dimension of grace and liberty in Christ, will regard the day unto the Lord! It will then not simply be a matter of punctual Sunday observance till twelve o'clock midnight on Sunday night, like the Pharisees, but it will be a matter of keeping the sabbath as outlined in the Heidelberg Catechism in Lord's Day 38! It will then be a matter of serving the Lord, and giving heed to the often repeated refrain in the Old Testament, "for I am the LORD"! Yes, we shall then especially on the sabbath, that is on the day of rest, diligently come to the congregation of God to learn His word, etc., and all the days of our life cease from our evil works. Thus the fathers of the Reformation spoke in the days when the church lived in holy joy in the liberty in Christ and when they eschewed all libertinistic excess and licence! Monday then also is a day which must be kept to the Lord, for whether we live or whether we die we are the Lord's!

And when the strong take the latter position the weak must not judge them. They are the household servants of Christ in so doing! They are thus free according to the royal law of liberty. And the weak must not be judges but doers of the Word!

Nor may the strong look down from their heights upon the weak and despise them. The weak too are brethren, and must become strong. Illumination in the church on earth often is an occasion of stumbling for the illuminated Christian. It is the flesh in him warring against the spirit, warring against the soul. The strong must not relinquish their position, but bear with the infirmities of the weak!

For whether we be strong in faith or weak, none of us liveth to himself and none of us dieth to himself! Whether we live or whether we die we are, either as strong or weak, the Lord's! Thus all things are done for edification.

Paul adds a sobering note in verses 10-12. "For we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of God. For it is written, As I live saith the Lord, to me shall every knee bow, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God."

Sobering words. They are quoted from Isaiah 45:23. In this prophecy we are shown the perspective of the New Testament dispensation when both Jews and Gentiles shall be saved, shall be justified by faith. All shall come from the ends of the earth and be saved. For the Lord is God and there is none else. And every tongue stands in relationship to the Lord!

Let us then not judge in days and in "meats" but rather in this that all must be done out of faith. Meat is adiaphora as such, but in relationship to the Lord nothing is indifferent. Then all is a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to him!

Let us not glory in days or in meats, nor let us glory in not using meats, but let us glory in the Lord whether we eat or eat not!

G.L.

IN HIS FEAR

An Open Letter to the Graduates of 1959

Dear Graduates:

A day to which you looked forward for years has come; and the graduation hour that stood out in the month gone by is now a moment of the past. You have graduated either from what we usually—although erroneously—call the Grade School or Grammar School, or from High School or College. You have reached a milestone which marks a measure of progress in your education and training. Whether it has been an easy road on which you seemed to be coasting because of the ease with which you mastered your subjects, or whether it was a continual struggle, an uphill climb, you both have arrived at this point that marks a prescribed goal. You have reached it with honor or with difficulty; but you have reached it and received a certificate that testifies of this to all who read.

I cannot help but wonder, as I sit here contemplating the commencement exercises I attended last night and the night before, just what the motto was that was chosen by your class? I am not able to trace the origin of this custom of having a class motto. I do not know how and when it originated. But a custom in our land it surely is. And it is quite proper that you choose a class motto. You choose a class flower. You have your class colors. Perhaps you also have a class song. A class motto is quite in order. But I wonder what motto it is that you have chosen. There are good mottos of which we may read in our newspapers; and there are bad ones, decidedly bad ones full of worldly, wicked, atheistic, God-dishonoring sentiment. Only too often they are nothing but carnal boasts of the proud heart of man. But there are also mottos that express faith in God and mottos that are the prayer that rises in the heart of the child of God. Here in this community we have been informed by local papers of the mottos of three of the local schools. These three mottos are the following, "Onward, Ever Upward"; "Grant Us Knowledge To Know What Is Right And Courage Enough To Do It"; and "Lead Me To The Rock That Is Higher Than I."

If you have been reading these lines in *The Standard Bearer* which we call In His Fear—and you ought to read them for your own instruction in His fear—you will know that we prefer that last one because it is literally the Word of God. You cannot improve upon that! Your prayer may be, as you journey relentlessly onward from birth to death, that your walk of life may ever be upward, seeking the things which are above, walking as a pilgrim and stranger who seeks that heavenly city that now is above but will descend at the end of time to be the Holy City of God. And if I were asked to speak on the motto, "Grant Us Knowledge to Know What is Right And Courage Enough To Do It," I could explain that courage requires grace and that it is not

simply a matter of courage to do what is right but the grace of God to cause us to love Him and what is right. Many a sinner knows what is right and having no fear of his fellow-men dares to do that which is right but never does it because he does not love God. The devil knows what is right and has plenty of courage to disregard all the thoughts of men; yet he never does that which he knows to be right. No, give me the Word of God: Lead Me To The Rock That Higher Is Than I. That is a nice motto. And the more we live in this world, the more it becomes plain to the child of God that he needs that guidance to that Rock Which is Christ.

But now to return. *Your* motto. What was it? Was it a prayer to God? Was it an expression of faith in Him? Was it a declaration of praise and thanksgiving to Him? Say, let us not forget that. You graduated. You were given these years of life on God's earth. You breathed in His air. You walked on His earth. With a mind that He gave you were you able to receive knowledge. I will not take the time now to call your attention in detail to what wonderful things He gave you: a sound mind (what an amazing thing the human brain), an eye of which the man-made movie camera is a very limited imitation, an ear that functions so wonderfully and fills such an important role in our learning, a faculty of memory, of speech, of perceiving and of calculation. We could continue; but is it not plain that with all our education and learning our motto surely could very fittingly be an expression of praise to this great God Who has given us all things natural and spiritual?

But more interested than in your motto I am interested to know what it is that you learned and is represented by that diploma which you received. Often it is, indeed, that this motto reveals the spiritual principle behind that which you have been taught. You may have read the amusing news item in your newspaper which relates that the graduating class of a certain High School had chosen for its motto: "Today We Launch Out; Tomorrow We Sail" only to have the whole commencement exercise rained out by a cloudburst. There was too much water for them even to launch out that day. O, such a motto overlooks that there is a God in heaven and that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. It was a proud boast of man of what he was going to do. But the God in heaven, though men may ignore Him and rule Him out of their educational system, is still there; and He let His presence be felt by the torrent of rain which He sent at His prescribed moment. A motto of worldly philosophy reveals that all the instruction has been colored by such materialistic, atheistic, God-dishonoring philosophy. I remember having the privilege to speak to the graduates of one of our own schools some years ago—a school I can never forget, and I can only wish that all of God's children could attend such a school. I hope that the graduates of that school are reading these lines even as I know that they have discussed in school in the past the lines of this department. The theme or motto of that class was, "Our God is King."

What an education, what a wonderful knowledge, what a priceless wisdom to be able to see in all the spheres of our earthly lives that God is King and that this King is our King! If that motto expresses also the viewpoint, the principle that governed all the teaching—and I have no reason to believe that it was not but rather every reason to believe that it actually was the case by the grace of God amid all our human frailties—those graduates and their fellow students in school, received a covenant training.

Your motto may be different, graduates. All cannot have that same one. All need not have this same one. But did you learn that in school? Did you see God in all things which He has made? What a privilege has been given to you. But what are you going to do with it now? A motto means nothing if it is discarded as soon as the day of commencement exercises is a thing of history. An education and training in His fear means nothing if we walk contrary to it. No, these do mean something. They mean that our punishment will be the greater. For these things will testify against us in the day of days when we all appear before the judgment seat of Christ to receive the things done in the body. That diploma you will save. Your graduation picture you will have framed and keep for future reference (and perhaps amusement). But your education in the fear of God's name, do you want to cast that from you as soon as you received a passing grade upon it and are proclaimed a graduate?

May that not be the case. In this letter we wish to congratulate you on this achievement of graduating. This, of course, is meant only for those who have as children of God's covenant reached this milestone in their lives. We cannot find the words to congratulate those who have learned to rule God out of His great and wide creation. We can only find words to express our sympathy and pity to you that are so deprived of the fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom. We cannot rejoice in such an achievement. We cannot honestly before God say that we are glad to see you reach this goal.

But do not misunderstand, we still write this open letter to you. And in it we plead with you to cast off this philosophy that pictures the whole world as revolving about man instead of being centered in God. Let the Word of God be a lamp unto your feet and a light upon your pathway. Turn away from the vain philosophies of men. Accept nothing that the world may teach you that is contrary to the teaching of the Word of God. It may receive the approval of the world and may seem to be the smart thing to do. But do not forget that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. And the psalmist declares in Psalm 119:98-100, "Thou through Thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for Thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Thy precepts." Many a teacher today gives instruction in foolishness rather than in wisdom because in his teaching he opposes the Word of God. Never mind trying to har-

monize the Word of God with science. Follow not after an instructor who walks in that way. Reject his teachings, and you have more understanding and wisdom than he. Do not let him teach you that God created the world in millions of years. Such an one in spite of all his degrees and experience does not know the A B C's of truth. The principle, the beginning of all wisdom is to fear God and to take Him at His Word. It is folly to contradict His Word because some unbelieving "scientist" has made a discovery which he does not understand and cannot explain in the light of God's Word. And surely it is folly for man who lives on this side of the Flood and knows absolutely nothing of conditions before the Flood to base all his theories on the present conditions and to rule out the possibility of vastly different conditions in an age of which man today has no knowledge. That is not even scientific. Rest assured that if we knew the conditions of that era when men lived to be nine hundred years old, and a mist came up and watered the face of the earth, when there was a tree of life that had fruit which was able to sustain man's earthly life—(shall we deny this, too, because no "scientific" evidence can demonstrate and prove its reality today?) we might well have an explanation of these things as the life of carbon-14. At any rate, the Scriptures declare that the serpent was cursed and was caused to go on its belly. That is not evolution but degradation. No "scientific" evidence of this. Shall we deny it too and say that Scripture gives only a figure of speech? What then can we believe?

No, graduates, regardless of what your class motto was, let me give you one we all should accept and by which we should live, "Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee," Psalm 119:11. May God bless you when you seek further education at a higher level. May He bless you if you have come to the end of your formal education and be with you in the work to which you have set your hands. May He keep you in His fear and make you wise unto salvation.

Faternally yours in Christ,

J.A.H.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On May 22, 1959, our beloved parents,

MR. and MRS. M. GAASTRA (nee VANDER WAL)

celebrated their 35th wedding anniversary.

We are deeply grateful to our covenant God for all the blessings He has bestowed upon them and us; and we trust and pray that according to His will they may be spared for each other and for us unto fulness of years, and that they may continue to experience Jehovah's loving kindness all the days of their pilgrimage.

Their children,
Mr. and Mrs. Phillip Lindeman
Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Gritters
Mr. and Mrs. Ray Gaastra
Mr. and Mrs. Otto Gaastra
and ten grandchildren.

Redlands, California

Contending For The Faith

The Church and the Sacraments

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

THE SEVEN SACRAMENTS.

PENANCE

CHAPTER IV.

On Contrition

Contrition, which holds the first place amongst the aforesaid acts of the penitent, is a sorrow of mind, and a detestation for sin committed, with the purpose of not sinning for the future. This movement of contrition was at all times necessary for obtaining the pardon of sins; and, in one who has fallen after baptism, it then at length prepares for the remission of sins, when it is united with confidence in the divine mercy, and with the desire of performing the other things which are required for rightly receiving this sacrament. Wherefore the holy Synod declares, that this contrition contains not only a cessation from sin, and the purpose and the beginning of a new life, but also a hatred of the old, agreeably to that saying: *Cast away from you all your iniquities, wherein you have transgressed, and make to yourselves a new heart and a new spirit.* And assuredly he who has considered those cries of the saints: *To thee only have I sinned, and have done evil before thee; I have labored in my groaning, every night I will wash my bed; I will recount to thee all my years, in the bitterness of my soul;* and others of this kind, will easily understand that they flowed from a certain vehement hatred of their past life, and from an exceeding detestation of sins. The Synod teaches moreover, that, although it sometimes happens that this contrition is perfect through charity, and reconciles man with God before this sacrament be actually received, the said reconciliation, nevertheless, is not to be ascribed to that contrition, independently of the desire of the sacrament which is included therein. And as to that imperfect contrition, which is called attrition, because that it is commonly conceived either from the consideration of the turpitude of sin, or from the fear of hell and of punishment, it declares that if, with the hope of pardon, it exclude the wish to sin, it not only does not make a man a hypocrite, and a greater sinner, but that it is even a gift of God, and an impulse of the Holy Ghost, — who does not indeed as yet dwell in the penitent, but only moves him, — whereby the penitent being assisted prepares a way for himself unto justice. And although this (attrition) can not of itself, without the sacrament of Penance, conduct the sinner to justification, yet does it dispose him to obtain the grace of God in the sacrament of Penance. For, smitten profitably with this fear, the Ninevites, at the preaching of

Jonas, did fearful penance, and obtained mercy from the Lord. Wherefore falsely do some calumniate Catholic writers, as if they had maintained that the sacrament of Penance confers grace without any good motion on the part of those who receive it: a thing which the Church of God never taught, or thought; and falsely also do they assert that contrition is extorted and forced, not free and voluntary.

CHAPTER V

On Confession

From the institution of the sacrament of Penance, as already explained, the universal Church has always understood that the entire confession of sins was also instituted by the Lord, and is of divine right necessary for all who have fallen after baptism; because that our Lord Jesus Christ, when about to ascend from earth to heaven, left priests his own vicars, as presidents and judges, unto whom all the mortal crimes, into which the faithful of Christ may have fallen, should be carried, in order that, in accordance with the power of the keys, they may pronounce the sentence of forgiveness or retention of sins. For it is manifest that priests could not have exercised judgment without knowledge of the cause; neither indeed could they have observed equity in enjoining punishments, if the said faithful should have declared their sins in general only, and not rather specifically, and one by one. Whence it is gathered that all the mortal sins, of which, after a diligent examination of themselves, they are conscious, must needs be by penitents enumerated in confession, even though those sins be most hidden, and committed only against the two last precepts of the decalogue, — sins which sometimes wound the soul more grievously, and are more dangerous, than those which are committed outwardly. For venial sins, whereby we are not excluded from the grace of God, and into which we fall more frequently, although they be rightly and profitably, and without any presumption, declared in confession, as the custom of pious persons demonstrates, yet may they be omitted without guilt, and be expiated by many other remedies. But, whereas all mortal sins, even those of thought, render men *children of wrath*, and enemies of God, it is necessary to seek also for the pardon of them all from God, with an open and modest confession. Wherefore, while the faithful of Christ are careful to confess all the sins which occur to their memory, they without doubt lay them all bare before the mercy of God to be pardoned: whereas they who act otherwise, and knowingly keep back certain sins, such set nothing before the divine bounty to be forgiven through the priest; for if the sick be ashamed to show his wound to the physician, his medical art cures not that which it knows not of. We gather, furthermore, that those circumstances which change the species of the sin are also to be explained in confession, because that, without them, the sins themselves are neither entirely set forth by the penitents, nor are they known clearly to the judges; and it can not be that they can estimate rightly

the grievousness of the crimes, and impose on the penitents the punishment which ought to be inflicted on account of them. Whence it is unreasonable to teach that these circumstances have been invented by idle men; or that one circumstance only is to be confessed, to wit, that one has sinned against a brother. But it is also impious to assert, that confession, enjoined to be made in this manner, is impossible, or to call it a slaughter-house of consciences; for it is certain, that in the Church nothing else is required of penitents, but that, after each has examined himself diligently, and searched all the folds and recesses of his conscience, he confess those sins by which he shall remember that he has mortally offended his Lord and God: whilst the other sins, which do not occur to him after diligent thought, are understood to be included as a whole in that same confession; for which sins we confidently say with the prophet: *From my secret sins cleanse me, O Lord*. Now, the very difficulty of a confession like this, and the shame of making known one's sins, might indeed seem a grievous thing, were it not alleviated by the so many and so great advantages and consolations, which are most assuredly bestowed by absolution upon all who worthily approach to this sacrament. For the rest, as to the manner of confessing secretly to a priest alone, although Christ has not forbidden that a person may,—in punishment of his sins, and for his own humiliation, as well for an example to others as for the edification of the Church that has been scandalized,—confess his sins publicly, nevertheless this is not commanded by a divine precept; neither would it be very prudent to enjoin by any human law, that sins, especially such as are secret, should be made known by a public confession. Wherefore, whereas the secret sacramental confession, which was in use from the beginning in holy Church, and is still also in use, has always been commended by the most holy and the most ancient Fathers with a great and unanimous consent, the vain calumny of those is manifestly refuted, who are not ashamed to teach that confession is alien from the divine command, and is a human invention, and that it took its rise from the Fathers assembled in the Council of Lateran: for the Church did not, through the Council of Lateran, ordain that the faithful of Christ should confess,—a thing which it knew to be necessary, and to be instituted of divine right,—but that the precept of confession should be complied with, at least once a year, by all and each, when they have attained to years of discretion. Whence, throughout the whole Church, the salutary custom is, to the great benefit of the souls of the faithful, now observed, of confessing at that most sacred and most acceptable time of Lent,—a custom which this holy Synod most highly approves of and embraces, as pious and worthy of being retained.—end of quote of Chapter V.

In connection with what we have thus far quoted from the decrees of the Council of Trent, we wish to state briefly the following. First, we read in these chapters of "mortal sins." The word "mortal" here stands over against the word "venial." Venial sins, then, are sins that may be pardoned

or overlooked, sins that are excusable. Mortal sins, on the other hand, are deadly sins, sins that incur the penalty of eternal death. Secondly, the Roman Catholic conception of penance views penance as a sacrament which consists of three parts: Contrition, Confession with the mouth to the priest, and Satisfaction. Thus far we have already quoted the two chapters on Contrition and Confession.

CHAPTER VI

On the Ministry of this Sacrament, and Absolution

But, as regards the minister of this sacrament, the holy Synod declares all those doctrines to be false, and utterly alien from the truth of the Gospel, which perniciously extend the ministry of the keys to any others so ever besides bishops and priests; imagining, contrary to the institution of this sacrament, that those words of our Lord, *Whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound also in heaven, and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth shall be loosed also in heaven*, and, *Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained*, were in such wise addressed to all the faithful of Christ indifferently and indiscriminately, as that every one has the power of forgiving sins,—public sins to wit by rebuke, provided he that is rebuked shall acquiesce, and secret sins by a voluntary confession made to any individual whatsoever. It also teaches, that even priests, who are in mortal sin, exercise, through the virtue of the Holy Ghost which was bestowed in ordination, the office of forgiving sins, as the ministers of Christ; and that their sentiment is erroneous who contend that this power exists not in bad priests. But although the absolution of the priest is the dispensation of another's bounty, yet is it not a bare ministry only, whether of announcing the Gospel, or of declaring that sins are forgiven, but is after the manner of a judicial act, whereby sentence is pronounced by the priest as by a judge; and therefore the penitent ought not so to confide in his own personal faith as to think that,—even though there be no contrition on his part, or no intention on the part of the priest of acting seriously and absolving truly,—he is nevertheless truly and in God's sight absolved, on account of his faith alone. For neither would faith without penance bestow any remission of sins, nor would he be otherwise than most careless of his own salvation, who, knowing that a priest but absolved him in jest, should not carefully seek for another who would act in earnest.

H.V.

Announcement

Announcements and obituaries rates are changed from \$1.00 to \$2.00, effective July 1.

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 11. The Scripture moreover testifies, that believers in this life have to struggle with various carnal doubts, and that under grievous temptations they are not always sensible of this full assurance of faith and certainty of persevering. But God, who is the Father of all consolation, does not suffer them to be tempted above that they are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that they may be able to bear it, I Cor. 10:13, and by the Holy Spirit again inspires them with the comfortable assurance of persevering.

As far as the translation is concerned we offer the following by way of correction: 1) "moreover" should be "meanwhile." 2) "who is the Father of all consolation" could better be shortened to the appositive, "the Father of all consolation." 3) The English version inserts a part of I Cor. 10:13 which was not quoted in the original Latin, namely, "that they may be able to bear it." 4) The last clause should read: "and by the Holy Spirit he again awakens (excites) in them the certainty of perseverance."

* * * *

We should bear in mind that the primary purpose of this article is again to present the Reformed view of the assurance of perseverance over against the caricature of that Reformed view with which the Arminians attempted to burden the fathers in the eyes of the people. This explains in part why our fathers in this article go out of their way to explain what we would perhaps think is perfectly obvious and is a patent fact in the life of every Christian. After all, who does not know by experience that the Christian must struggle with various carnal doubts in this life? Who does not understand too that where there is doubt there is a proportionate lack of assurance? Who has not experienced that the child of God is placed in grave temptations and is the object of grievous attacks by the prince of darkness and his host? And what child of God who knows the Scriptures cannot mention instances of saints whose doubts and temptations and spiritual struggles are recorded in Holy Writ? Why then mention such an obvious fact? What is the need of it? The answer to this question, as we indicated above, is to be sought in the fact that the Reformed faith is here set forth in opposition to the Arminian caricature of that Reformed faith. The

Arminians presented matters as though they, in distinction from our fathers, were the ones who truly believed the facts set forth in the first part of this article. They tried to make people believe that our Reformed faith does not take into account the realities of the Christian life, the reality of carnal doubts and temptations and spiritual struggles. They wanted people to believe that the Reformed view of the Christian in this life was the picture of a saint that enjoyed a kind of carnal security, a saint who went happily on his way with never a doubt nor a fear, who had no battle to fight, who passed through no struggles of soul, who with never any interruption or spiritual wavering enjoyed the perfectly blissful assurance of his perseverance. They, the Arminians, were the realists! They knew and took into account these spiritual realities. They understood quite well that such assurance was a fanciful myth. They realized that the ordinary child of God had to struggle with various carnal doubts and that he frequently found himself in the tension of grave temptations. But these Reformed people who taught the sure perseverance of the saints and the certainty of such perseverance on the part of believers did not know life! They had no place in their view for the small, for the weak, for the struggling. They had a cold, unrealistic, unsympathetic doctrine! Such were the accusations which the fathers had to contend against and over against which they state the true Reformed view in this eleventh article.

Indeed this was a foul attack. And do not forget that the design of this attack was not concerned as such with the question of these doubts and temptations. No, the Arminians meant to destroy the Reformed doctrine of perseverance and of the assurance of perseverance. They meant to show that because the Reformed faith could not allow room for these spiritual realities in the life of the saint, therefore it could not possibly be the true doctrine. The nature of the argument is really the same as the argument which is used later on, namely, that this doctrine makes men careless and profane, and that because of this it is an immoral doctrine, which cannot possibly be true.

Now before we enter into the contents of the article, we may make some observations which may be of value in limiting and circumscribing the exact scope of this article. In the first place, we may say that this article certainly excludes from the Reformed family such as maintain that the saints in this life always enjoy the full assurance of faith and certainty of perseverance. There are those who maintain this doctrine. There are those who will say that the true child of God never doubts, and that as long as he doubts he cannot be a true child of God. They are indeed proud people. They brashly lay claim to the assurance of faith and act as though it were below their spiritual dignity ever to entertain the least doubt or to have the slightest spiritual struggle. And they are people of a shallow soul. They do not know life. They do not know themselves. They have but a very shallow conception of their own sin and of their own sinful nature. They exalt themselves above such

eminent children of God as David and John the Baptist and Peter and Paul. Their doctrine, moreover, is a stumbling-block to the true, though weak, believer. When the latter considers himself in the light of such a doctrine, he can only come to the conclusion that he is not a child of God. He is not helped and comforted by such a doctrine. He is only pushed deeper into the slough of despair and hopelessness. Hence, let it be well understood, as our fathers also make plain here, that this doctrine has nothing in common with the Reformed faith. The Reformed faith wants nothing of such a view. That view would indeed give justification to the Arminian charge mentioned above. But Reformed doctrine rejects that view and repudiates the charge. In this respect, while we must remember that this article was not written as such against this doctrine, but against the Arminians, it nevertheless constitutes a healthy warning against such an improper view of assurance.

In the second place,—and at the opposite pole as far as limiting the scope of this article is concerned,—we must observe that the purpose of this eleventh article is not at all to give aid and comfort to those who would present a state of doubt as being normal for the Christian, and who would even teach that such doubt is a kind of special mark of piety. There are also such. And it is difficult sometimes to determine which is more repulsive and nauseating, the former view or the view which glories in doubt. Both views are essentially proud. The former view proudly imagines that the Christian never doubts; the latter view presents doubt as a special mark of piety, is really proud of doubting, and pictures the saint who has the least degree of assurance as really impious and vain, and delights in causing children of God to continue in their mournful misery. But no more than the Reformed faith as set forth in this article allows room for the first view, no more does it intend in the slightest degree to foster the second view. Bear in mind that the fathers do not speak, in the first place, of chronic doubting, but of various carnal doubts. Notice, in the second place, that the article does not set its stamp of approval upon these doubts and temptations, but simply mentions them as facts in the Christian life. Observe, in the third place, that the article takes the fundamental position that doubt is sin. It does not and cannot arise out of faith. It is the opposite of faith. For notice that these doubts are characterized as “carnal.” And notice, too, that temptations certainly are authored by the tempter, the devil and his cohorts. And keep in mind, in the fourth place, that the article itself presents these doubts as something against which the believers have to *struggle*. Now that struggle certainly implies that doubt is not pious and that the Christian does not and ought not to delight in his doubts. For one only struggles against that which is not good, against that which must be overcome. To live in doubt and to delight in doubt and to consider doubt as a mark of piety, therefore, is certainly wrong. And to wait in the midst of one’s miserable doubting for some kind of special and direct assurance from heaven,

while continuing in one’s doubt and while ignoring the God-ordained way of assurance described in Article 10, is tantamount to tempting the Almighty. No, to doubt is not pious; but *to struggle against doubt* is pious and is also necessary and normal in the life of the Christian here below. Hence, to sum up our second observation, the view that doubting is normal and even pious is both spiritually sickly and un-Reformed.

The contents of this article are not difficult to understand for the simple reason that they are a matter of experience for the child of God in the midst of the world. Besides, this same matter has been referred to in the earlier articles of this Head of Doctrine. In Articles 1-5 especially much attention was devoted to the realities of the remains of indwelling sin in the Christian, to his deviations from the guidance of divine grace, and to the temptations against which he has to watch and pray and into which he sometimes falls deeply. Especially in connection with Article 4 we have enlarged on some of these matters; and we refer the reader to this earlier material. The difference is that here, in Article 11, the fathers treat these doubts and temptations in their relation to our *assurance* of perseverance. And this is indeed a worthwhile and spiritually valuable subject to consider. Only we must remember that all that is stated here with respect to the loss of and the regaining of this assurance is based squarely upon what our *Canons* teach concerning the grace of perseverance and the manner of its operation in Articles 6-8. In other words, one cannot have the proper view of his temptations and struggles in relation to his assurance unless he has a correct view of the grace of perseverance (preservation) itself in relation to the remains of indwelling sin in the Christian. The latter is the foundation of the former. This accounts for the fact that just as you find a relation of contrast between Articles 1-5 and Articles 6-8, so you find that same contrast in regard to assurance within this very article: “. . . *believers* in this life have to struggle . . . and are not always sensible of this full assurance of faith . . . *But God* . . .” In other words, with application to our assurance of perseverance, the fundamental truth of this article is that of the opening words of Article 4: “. . . the weakness of the flesh cannot prevail against the power of God.”

To this we will call attention in detail in a following article.
H.C.H.

IN MEMORIAM

The Mr. and Mrs. Society wishes to express our sympathy to our fellow member, Mrs. Erne Miedema, née Bouma, in the loss of her

FATHER

May our God comfort the hearts of the bereaved with His glorious grace.

The Hudsonville Prot. Ref. Mr. and Mrs. Society:
Rev. G. Vos, President
Mrs. R. Van Baren, Secretary

DECENCY and ORDER

Article 38, D.K.O.

"In places where the consistory is to be constituted for the first time or anew, this shall not take place except with the advice of the classis."

Decisions pertaining to this article.

"The customary usage for the organization of a new congregation is as follows:

1. A letter of request is directed to the classis or mission committee, expressing the desire to organize a congregation in a certain named locality, and signed by the heads of families or by adult single persons who live in that locality.

2. The classis or the mission committee shall thereupon deliberate whether such organization is possible or desirable, observing whether there be among the signators, persons suitable for consistory members, at the same time taking into account the neighboring churches. In case classis or the mission committee decides to grant the request it appoints a committee to carry out the organization.

3. In order to organize the congregation the committee meets with the persons concerned, who have meanwhile requested their certificates of membership, or if it be impossible to have their certificates transferred, those present shall give testimony one of another that they were members in full communion and of good report in the congregation from which they are now separating. After a service of worship shall have been conducted under the guidance of the committee, the latter shall request those present to tender their certificates, in as far as possible. The committee having found the certificates in good order and having accepted them, they shall proceed to election of officebearers, who shall immediately upon their election be installed in their respective offices.

4. In such situations as this the election cannot be performed otherwise than by free election by the vote of the male membership, whose testimonials were found in order and accepted. Following the rule for free election it is required, in order to be chosen by the first ballot, to receive a two-thirds majority. In case of a reballoting an unqualified majority shall be decisive.

5. It is recommended that at this same meeting, in the presence of a notary public, the documents pertaining to the incorporation of a new congregation be brought in order."

(Adopted by the classis of June 6, 7, 1934; and Synod of 1944, Arts. 66, 67.)

Before we discuss the content of Article 38, we wish to make a few sundry remarks about the decisions of our Classis and Synod pertaining to this article. About a year

and a half ago Classis West was confronted with the situation where the present congregation of Loveland, Colorado, desired affiliation with our churches and made application to the Classis. Article 38 was cited as a ground for directing this request to Classis West instead of to the Mission Committee. Or, rather, since the congregation of Loveland was an already organized church, the Mission Committee deemed it outside of their jurisdiction to admit them into the denomination and advised them to apply to Classis West, which they also did. However, Classis West took cognizance of the fact that the rules under Article 38 were adopted prior to the organization of our Synod and, therefore, felt that where the term "classis" appears in these rules, no single classis is meant but the General Classis which is equivalent to the present Synod. Moreover, it was felt that when a church is admitted into the denomination, this is a matter of denominational interest and concern rather than of any individual Classis and so Classis West referred this request to the Synod.

If this action was proper, it would seem that here again we have an instance where the committee on re-editing the Church Order could make a few corrections by changing the word "classis" to "synod" since our ecclesiastical structure is now complete. However, before that is done it might be worthy to note that the Christian Reformed Church obviously does not take the position that was taken in our Classis West. Their rules as found in "The Manual of Church Order" by Stuart and Hoeksema speak of "presenting the petition for organization to the Classis" and, further, "the Classis considers whether such organization is possible." Now it is understood that there is perhaps a difference between a group that seeks organization in a certain denomination of churches or an already organized church that seeks affiliation with a certain denomination. However, essentially we do not see that it makes any difference. It is solely a question as to whether the admitting of a group or an organized church from without is a matter for Classical or Synodical determination. Our opinion would be that it belongs to the latter since the group or church that is admitted is not admitted merely into a certain Classis but is admitted into the denomination. We would not say that it is wrong in a larger church organization to empower the Classes to act in matters such as these provided that is done with the approval of and in the presence of the deputies of Synod. For the latter, however, there is no provision made in this article or in the attached rules.

The second thing we want to mention in this connection are the elements that are mentioned in rule 2 and that determine whether the request for organization is to be granted. I would suppose that other things could be added here but only two things are mentioned: (1) whether there is suitable, qualified, capable material in the group seeking organization to be office-bearers; and (2) whether such organization is deemed advisable in light of the proximity of the group to other churches.

The first of these is undoubtedly of fundamental importance. A church cannot exist without the offices and the offices cannot function without competent, qualified men who are fitted by God to perform the work of His church. Wherever God calls His church into manifestation in the world, He also places therein men whom He has equipped and called to serve Him in the offices. Where, therefore, these are lacking it would be wrong to proceed to organize a congregation. It would be building on the foundation of men rather than upon the foundation of the Word of Truth and such a structure would not stand.

The second element mentioned in this connection may mean various things. It may, for example, have reference to geographic proximity. The meaning then is that investigation reveals that this group that seeks organization is geographically situated so that it is very impractical, if not impossible, for them to affiliate with a neighboring church. No other church is near enough. It may also mean, however, to reflect upon the relation of a group that seeks organization to the church or churches of its own vicinity. For example, a group may consider that the church to which it belongs is too big. Its very largeness is detrimental spiritually in various ways. It sees advantages in organizing a smaller church. Should it then make such a request, the Classis would have to determine whether or not this is advisable in light of all the circumstances. And, finally, when the rule speaks of "taking into account the neighboring churches" the element of agreement of faith is not to be ruled out. A new group seeks affiliation with a group of established, neighboring churches. A fundamental element which will determine whether or not that group will be admitted as a sister church is the question as to whether or not they are agreed in the faith. It may be argued that no group would request affiliation if this were not the case. Certainly they would not ask to be admitted into a federation of churches with which they were doctrinally in disagreement! However, other factors enter into such requests so that this is not always the case even though normally it should be. History has shown this as is evident from our own experiences in Hamilton and Chatham and, therefore, too much caution cannot be exercised in determining the spiritual, confessional proximity of any group that may seek admission into the federation of our churches.

Another matter mentioned in these rules that is worthy of consideration is the manner in which the organization of a new church is to take place. The directives set forth in rule 3 are very plain so that we may refrain from further comment on this for the present. We can speak of this in connection with the article itself.

Of interest is the fourth rule under Article 38. In the first place because the rule limits voting to the male membership, a practice we are convinced is not only Biblical and, therefore, maintained by our churches to this day but also a practice that is rapidly falling into disuse in Reformed

circles generally. The Reformed Churches no longer speak of women voting. That is a generally accepted practice. They have gone a step further in the wrong direction and at the last held Synod were occupied with the question of women holding office in the church. The Synod took the position that this was not permissible but we would predict that it is only a matter of time before this issue will reappear and be adopted. If women are allowed the vote, they cannot be refused the office. In the Christian Reformed Churches there is, as far as I know, no unanimity of thought on this matter. I believe that the practice is to leave the question of women suffrage up to each consistory and the result of this is that if you are a woman and belong to one church you will be refused this privilege but if you transfer your membership to a neighboring church of the same denomination it will be granted to you. There should be a Synodical rule in matters of this nature so that there is uniformity of practice throughout the denomination. In our Protestant Reformed Churches the stand is taken that limits the vote to male-membership as is proper. It is the historically Reformed position based on Scripture.

Rule 4 also mentions a two-thirds majority vote as necessary for the election of office bearers on the first ballot in a newly organized church. It has often been said that our church order knows only of a simple majority (Art. 31). Here, however, is an instance where more than a simple majority is required and if it is necessary in this case, there is no reason why there could not be other circumstances in the church where decisions can be made only by more than a simple majority. For example, a decision to rescind a previous action where our present rules require only a simple majority.

G.V.D.B.

AS TO BOOKS

Champion of Geneva, by Peter de Rover. Translated from the Dutch by Wm. B. Eerdmans who is also the publisher. Price thirty-five cents per copy. In larger quantities twenty-five cents per copy.

This little book of only about thirty pages is, to my mind, a most excellent brief sketch of the life of John Calvin. All our young people and even our older children ought to read it. By this I do not mean that our older people should not read it, for they, too, will find it interesting.

Perhaps, some of our societies could even make a little money by buying a certain quantity of the booklet for twenty-five cents and distributing them for thirty-five cents.

At any rate, I heartily recommend this little book.

H.H.

OUR 1959 SYNOD*

With the singing of "Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow" and a concluding prayer of thanksgiving the sessions of our 1959 Synod drew to a close at last on Tuesday afternoon, June 16. I say "at last" because this was one of the longest continuous meetings of Synod in recent years: exclusive of Saturdays and Sundays we met every day for two full weeks. It is the intention of this article to give a brief report, along with a few comments, of this Synod's doings. It is to be understood that this report is not official and that the comments are the personal views of the author. At the same time, this report is offered with the purpose of keeping our readers informed and with the hope that this brief report will serve as an incentive to kindle enough interest and healthy curiosity that our people will avail themselves of the full and official report of the "1959 Acts and Yearbook," which will appear in a couple months.

We had a busy Synod. The size of the Agenda necessitated having four committees of pre-advice, to each of which several matters, some important and some less important, were entrusted. All of these committees did their work the first Wednesday that Synod met, some of them working far into the evening. And some of the committees were sent out again later in the course of Synod's meetings to prepare further advice. From the viewpoint of the material under consideration, this would not be called a crucial Synod, but neither would it be called an unimportant Synod. With the exception of a couple items that reminded us of the unpleasant history of the schism of 1953, the matters under consideration were such that the Synod could be characterized, I believe, as a positive and forward-looking Synod. Someone commented that the problems we had were problems of living, not of dying,—referring, of course, to the life of our churches. In this connection, it might also be noted that on the whole Synod's problems were connected with our denominational activities. There was nothing in the Agenda directly concerned with doctrinal matters. Nor could the Synod be characterized as controversial, though there was sharp and spirited debate on several matters.

I believe it was also an efficient Synod, on the whole. Credit in this respect must be given to our moderamen, and especially to our capable chairman, the Rev. J. A. Heys. The delegates usually stayed, or were kept, pretty well on the subject; and when Synod was ripe for decisions, such decisions were not delayed. At the same time, Synod was not hasty or impetuous. There was evident an attempt to wrestle with the various problems, to deliberate carefully, and to come to healthy and careful conclusions and decisions. I base this conclusion especially on two facts. In the first place, Synod was by no means ready always to follow the

advice of its committees, as is evident from the fact that several decisions were quite different from that which was proposed by the advisory committees. The delegates were quite willing to be led, but they were independent enough to reject advice for which they could not see proper grounds. And, in the second place, there were several matters which Synod referred to Study Committees and on which the delegates were not ready to take final decisions this year. The latter, of course, will be up for consideration at our next Synod.

Another noteworthy aspect of the 1959 Synod was the persistence of the delegates and their willingness to stay at work to the very end. We not only had full representation from both classes at the entire Synod, but with the exception of a couple isolated instances, in which it was necessary for a delegate to be replaced briefly by his alternate, all the delegates "kept their shoulders to the wheel." For such a lengthy Synod this is especially commendable on the part of our elder delegates. And the elders voiced their opinions too!

By way of constructive criticism, however, I feel there are also some comments to be made. This is not meant in any other way than constructively, let me assure all concerned. Personally, I felt that perhaps the greatest weakness of the Synod lay in the field of its committee work. The fact that in so many instances advice of committees was laid aside was an indication to me that the work of the committees could have been a bit more thorough and efficient. Concretely, I would suggest: 1) That there was a little too much of a tendency,—and this applies also to an extent to the reports of our standing committees,—to throw matters directly into Synod's lap. It is true, of course, that final decisions rest with Synod. But a little more studied effort on the part of the committees to come with well-formulated and well-grounded advice which could readily be adopted by the Synod would make for a more efficient assembly. This applies both to the form and the content of the advisory reports. And undersigned felt that especially the reports of the Mission Board and the Theological School Committee might have been more detailed in their information and more concise in their recommendations. In fact, on one important matter the Mission Board failed to come with any recommendation at all. 2) Too often advisory committees failed to ground their advice. Synod should surely not take ungrounded decisions; and by the same token advisory committees should not come with ungrounded advice. Nor should the grounds for advice be left to oral comments of committee members on the floor of Synod. The committees should come with advice in detailed formulations and present the grounds with their advice. Then Synod can efficiently deliberate upon and decide the matters before it. 3) Synod's committees of advice might in some instances have taken more pains to look up previous decisions taken on matters committed to them. It happened more than once that the Synod itself inquired

*By mutual agreement this brief report of our Synod appears in this issue in place of Rev. M. Schipper's usual "All Around Us."

H.C.H.

into the previous history of a matter and into past decisions, and soon reached conclusions quite different from those of its committees. If this work had been done in committee and the results of such inquiry were incorporated in advisory reports, Synod might have finished its work more quickly.

So much for general comments. Now for some information.

Mission Matters

One of the most important, and also one of the most time-consuming, problems before the Synod was the request of the two congregations of Isabel and Forbes for affiliation with our Protestant Reformed Churches. The brethren and sisters from Dakota-land, among whom our missionary, Rev. G. Lubbers, has labored diligently the past 15 months, felt that they were ready for this step, and accordingly had brought their request to our Synod through the Mission Board. After long and rather spirited discussion, the Synod decided that it was best not to accede to this request as yet. This was done for the best interest both of these congregations and of our churches. There was a measure of disappointment involved in this decision. However, the Synod by no means intended to abandon these little flocks. Instead the Mission Board was mandated to conduct further labors and investigation, and especially to inquire into the possibility of extending our mission labors beyond the confines of the two congregations. Hence, in the coming year the needs of these congregations will be supplied (in part, by sending various of our ministers to labor there); and at the next Synod further decision will be necessary.

Various other questions concerning the mandate of our Mission Board were considered. Two items of special interest we may mention: 1) Synod was informed that in the past year the Mission Board and the Board of the R.F.P.A. began a cooperative project involving the use of our *Standard Bearer* in our mission witness. This arrangement was approved. 2) In a report of a study committee appointed last year recommendations were brought to Synod concerning radio and mission labors. The gist of this report was a recommendation that broadcasting on the part of the Mission Board should be closely integrated with our mission labors. And Synod gave the Mission Board a mandate to review and revise its present broadcasting activities to bring them into harmony with the study-report which was adopted.

Theological School

A favorable report of the activities of our school during the past year was received both from the School Committee and the Rector.

But the illness of Rev. G. M. Ophoff and his consequent request for emeritation confronted Synod with one of its weightiest problems. It was undoubtedly with no little feeling of sadness that the Synod granted emeritus-status to

Rev. Ophoff. A synodical resolution in this regard will be found elsewhere in this issue. Rev. Ophoff's absence from our school will be strongly felt. All of our present ministers, with the exception of Rev. H. Hoeksema, his co-laborer in the school, have had their instruction from Rev. Ophoff. And we all have learned to know him for his stability, his love of the truth, and his faithful labors. This event marks the passing of an era in our school and in our churches. Meanwhile, the Synod felt compelled to provide for the future of our school, the center of our churches, and to elect a new professor. Undersigned was extended this weighty and difficult call, with the Rev. H. Hanko as alternate. A decision in this matter must be reached by about mid-July. The prayers of our churches are besought for our school and for the undersigned in the consideration of this call, as well as for the congregation of South Holland, which is undeniably involved in this matter.

Overtures and Studies

Various study committees reported at this Synod and overtures involving future study committees were treated. We report briefly the following:

1) The Catechism Book Committee gave a progress-report, according to which three books will be ready for trial use in our churches this fall.

2) A Foreign Mission Study Report was submitted, which was referred to our churches for further study before adoption.

3) A new Student Aid Committee was established (replacing the former E.B.P. Committee), and regulations for this committee were adopted.

4) An interesting overture from Southeast Church concerning the baptism of adopted children was referred to a study committee.

5) The overture from First Church concerning revision of Article 69 of the Church Order and the possible use of hymns in our churches was also referred to a study committee.

6) The committee to cooperate in the Bible Translation project proposed by the Chr. Ref. Church was continued. An interesting report on this matter will be found in the Acts.

7) A protest which originated with Rev. G. Vanden Berg against a past decision of Synod resulted in the appointment of a study committee.

Financial Matters

Toward the close of Synod's sessions these matters were treated. The Synod gave extensive consideration to the various subsidy requests. We received a favorable report from our efficient treasurer, Mr. C. Pastoor. And, though fears had been expressed concerning increased assessments,

the financial picture was such that without an increase in assessments the budget requirements can nicely be met in the coming year.

Thus we conclude our report, once more urging you to purchase the Acts and Yearbook in order to get the full picture. I assure you it will be worthwhile.

And, may our God bless the decisions reached and prosper our churches through them.

H.C.H.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Hagar and Ishmael

In the Nov. 15 issue of *The Standard Bearer* we wrote on "Ishmael Blessed"; now we recommend that this be read with your open Bible at hand for ready reference. With all that has been written on the general subject, some of which goes back many years in TSB, we agree. But we do differ with the assertion that the allegory of Gal. 4 refers to Ishmael personally, while the historical account of Gen. 17 (esp. v. 20) refers to him only representatively. For the allegory presents Ishmael allegorically, and the history of Gen. 17 speaks of him historically. In the Galatian passage Ishmael is figuratively drawn to illustrate from his unregeneracy a certain aspect of spiritual truth applied to the carnal worshipers in the dispensation of the covenant. In the O. T. passage Ishmael appears not merely prophetically, but personally. The personal reference is evident in the context of Gen. 17. (Review the aforesaid Nov. article.) This is plain from Abraham's ejaculatory prayer, "O that Ishmael might live before Thee!" How this petition is to be understood as it was in the soul of Abraham is that Ishmael personally might live. The words must be understood in the full force of the term "live," which means life in its largest sense of eternal life; and in the light of "before Thee," which means "before Thy face," *coram Deo*, in the beatific presence of God. Abraham desired nothing less than that for his son Ishmael. (See Hos. 6:2 for the sense of this latter expression.) The Lord answered that prayer, "As for Ishmael I have blessed him," and not "as for thy (carnal) seed." He is as much individually and personally in view as is Sarah in v. 16, where it is twice declared "I will bless *her*." The very name *Ishmael* ("God-shall-hear") indicates answered prayer—first, the answer of his mother's prayer (16:11), and then the answer of his father's prayer, "As for Ishmael (God shall hear), I have heard thee"; and finally God heard the lad Ishmael himself (21:17).

The "fear not" in this verse is a word from which Hagar might take comfort. Why? "For God hath heard the voice of the lad." This is in keeping with the current use of the expression, for if he were reprobated she would have nothing

of comfort and everything to fear, for God does not hear the reprobate; their prayer is an abomination to Him (Pro. 15:8, 29; 28:9). Nor would Abraham's answer have brought him any comfort. But how did he understand, "Behold, I have blessed him"? Not as having exclusive reference to some in the nation (descendants) of Ishmael, but in keeping with what he asked and hoped for from God for his son, viz., the blessing of eternal life. Was Abraham in error in entertaining such an expectation? Not in view of the answer, "I have blessed *him*," which is as personal as "I will make *him* fruitful, and will multiply *him* . . . twelve princes shall *he beget*" (the context is as personal as possible). This blessing is principally the same as that given to Isaac (25:11; 26:3, 12, 24), and to Samson (Jud. 13:24), the blessing according to election, for the word is not, "I *will* bless his seed (Nebaioth and Kedar), but "I *have* blessed *him*," the past tense referring to eternal election. Such is Scripture usage: "*hath* blessed us" (Eph. 1:3, 4). And the content of that blessing? According to the context, I "will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly."

This pronouncement is used in Genesis as the content of a blessing which falls upon the elect. Words to this effect were spoken to Adam and Eve (1:28), concerning the animals (8:1), to Noah and his sons (9:1, 7), to Hagar (16:10), to Abraham (17:6), to Jacob (28:3, 4), of God's people in Egypt (47:27), and of Israel in the land (Lv. 26:9). The expression is used in Scripture in connection with a blessing, or as the content of a blessing. For this reason the words do not apply to the reprobate; for never are they blessed!

This same consistency obtains in the appearances of the Angel of the Lord. He appeared to Hagar, Abraham, Sarah (cf. 18:1-10 with 21:1), Jacob, Moses, the elect under Joshua (Ju. 2:1), Gideon, Manoah and his wife, David, Gad, Elijah, and Joshua the high priest. In the few exceptions that He appears to the reprobate, He does so to oppose them, as, e.g., Balaam (Nu. 22:23), and condemned Israel (I Chr. 21:16). But there is no such opposition in His dealings with Hagar, but only such as is in harmony with the majority of His appearances. Why did this Angel of the Lord appear first under this name to an Egyptian bondwoman? Why should Elijah perform his first miracle for the benefit of a widow of Sidon? Why should Christ incarnate first appear to humble shepherds, and not to the world's great? Why should Christ risen first appear to Mary Magdalene, rather than to Mary His mother, or to John His closest disciple? Because God is sovereign, and often reveals His sovereignty in coming first to the lowliest and poorest. But also that Hagar may be able to say, "Thou *God* seest *me*!" as indicative of the fact that *she* saw *God*! The language of that Angel to her (16:8) is not like that directed to Cain, but similar to that directed to Adam (3:9, 11, 13). This is further brought out in 16:10, which we have already shown is language not used with respect to the reprobate. The

passage (v. 11) continues in this vein predicting the birth and name of Hagar's son. (The fulfilment of this reveals that she was saved in child-bearing, I Tim. 2:15, not merely by providence, but by promise.) There are five other real parallels of this in Scripture where God foretells the birth and name of a son: cf. Isaac (17:19), Solomon (I Chr. 22:9), Josiah (I Ki. 13:1), John (Lk. 1:13), Jesus (Matt. 1:21). From these I will venture to say that (1) never does the Lord foretell to parent(s) the birth and name to be given a reprobate; and (2) that the name *Ishmael* therefore does not refer to a personification of his descendants. The name *Jacob* does, indeed, often stand as a general designation for the people, whereas *Isaac* is only rarely so employed (Am. 7:9, 16), and *Abraham* never occurs as a mere tribal name.

That which we wrote before of Hagar's affliction we reaffirm. The full meaning of the name *Ishmael*, then, really is, "God hath heard thy affliction." With your concordance trace the word "affliction" in the O. T. Read also II Sam. 22:26-28 in this connection. Her words, "Thou God seest me" reveal her knowledge of God, seeing Him as the omniscient God of providence and mercy. For God saw her in her sin, in her contempt of her mistress (16:4), saw her in her flight from Sarah, saw her by the well, in the wilderness, saw all things! That she saw *Him* as the living God is evident in her naming the well "the well of Him that liveth and seeth me." Was this mere intellectual insight, as, perhaps, with Nebuchadnezzar (Dn. 4:34, 37)? Not to one who heard the words from heaven, "fear not!" (21:17). And that word was spoken in view of the fact that God had heard the voice of the lad (21:17, twice), and that divine hearing (answer) is given as the reason why she ought not to fear: "*God was with the lad!*" (21:20). For the Scripture use of the expression God (or the Lord) *being with* a person, compare Gen. 39:2, 3, 21; Jud. 6:12; I Sam. 3:19; 18:14. True, in *one* instance it is used of a reprobate (I Sam. 10:7); but the context reveals in all the other places that He is so *with* the person as that there is nothing to fear. "God was with the lad" (v. 20) in the same sense in which He said of Abraham, "God is with thee" (v. 22).

See all the consistency evinced so far! The whole character of Genesis reveals a wonderful mark of unity throughout! Its language bears a consistent similarity, and its *usus loquendi* is simple and singular. No one has ever been able to make it twofold.

R.C.H.

"Providence is not the bare foresight of foreknowledge of God, but it also includes the will of God, just as *pronoia* which we translate providence, signifies with the Greeks, both a knowledge and a care of things."

Zacharias Ursinus, Heidelberg Catechism
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CALL TO ASPIRANTS TO THE MINISTRY

All young men desiring to study for the ministry of the Word in the Protestant Reformed Churches kindly appear at the next meeting of the Theological School Committee which will be held D.V., on Monday evening, July 20, at 7:30 p.m. in the consistory room of First Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

The qualifications requisite to enrollment in our Seminary are the following:

1. You must present a letter from your local consistory certifying that you are upright in walk and pure in doctrine.
2. You must have a certificate of health signed by a reputable physician.
3. You must be a graduate from High School and show evidence that you have completed a one year course in High School in History General and Church History; and also have completed the following College courses: Latin — two years, Greek — two years, German — two years, Philosophy — one year, Psychology — one year, Logic — one semester.

All correspondence relative to the above announcement should be sent to the undersigned:

Secretary of the Theol. School Committee,
REV. M. SCHIPPER
1636 Martindale Ave., S.W.
Grand Rapids 9, Michigan

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On July 2nd, 1959, the Lord willing, our beloved parents,

MR. and MRS. JOHANNES (JOHN) SCHIPPER
(nee Kline)

will celebrate their 35th wedding anniversary. On this occasion we join them in thankfulness to our heavenly Father that He has kept them for one another and for us through these years and in gratitude for all that we might receive by their word and example. May the Lord be gracious and good to them in the evening of their life.

Their grateful children,

Mr. and Mrs. James Dykstra
Connie Schipper
Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Schipper
Oscar Schipper
and 5 grandchildren

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

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

June 20, 1959

The 1959 Synod is history. Rev. G. Vos, president of the last Synod, conducted the Pre-Synodical Prayer Service, preaching on the phrase, "Go, sit down in the lowest room," found in Luke 14:10. The Rev. exhorted the delegates to the exercise of that Christian virtue, humility. Some of the decisions made are: Rev. G. M. Ophoff was granted his request to be made emeritus-professor; a call was issued to Rev. H. C. Hoeksema to be professor in our Seminary; and, our Missionary was mandated to labor in the Isabel-Forbes area for another year, thereby postponing a decision to receive them as sister churches in the interim. The coming Year Book will contain all the decisions of Synod besides the statistics of our churches — be sure to get a copy.

The Protestant Reformed Men's Chorus Spring Concert fulfilled all our anticipations. They rendered a program of high Christian caliber in a manner pleasing to the audience and, we believe, well pleasing to God Whose Name was extolled in every number. A cornet duet by Ken Schuiteman and Don Veltman and a vocal duet by Herman and Edward Ophoff assisted the chorus in the praise-worship of the God of our Salvation. The closing number of the chorus, "Creation," was truly a masterpiece! One could enjoy a "pre-hearing" of the song of the angels when they shall extol the Creator's greatness in the New Heavens and the New Earth, when we shall learn from them the details of the Creation in all its grandeur.

The congregation of First Church celebrated the 45th wedding anniversary of Rev. and Mrs. H. Hoeksema, June 10th, with an evening of Christian entertainment and fellowship. The entertainment was provided by each of the societies in the church. Delegates presented solos and duets, vocal and instrumental; felicitations were given in poetry and prose composed for the occasion. One of the special numbers, rendered by the Men's Chorus, was composed by the director, and was based on the call to praise found in Psalm 25. It mattered little what form they took, they all were given and received in the love that binds a minister and his wife to their congregation. Letters of congratulations were read, one from Rev. C. Hanko from his hospital bed, and another from a minister in far off Hungary. A purse was presented to the celebrating couple as a token of love, and of appreciation for the faithful labor of the minister and the faithful support of his helpmate. After the program in the auditorium the people gathered in the church parlors for refreshments, and opportunity was given to extend the personal well wishes of the people to their beloved "Dominee and Juffrouw."

There was rejoicing in the manse at Doon when Rev. and Mrs. Gise Van Baren became the happy parents of a baby daughter, born May 22nd. The month of May brought joy to the family and friends of Mr. and Mrs. I. Korhorn, members of Hope Church. They were privileged to celebrate their 54th wedding anniversary on the 17th of that month.

Rev. C. Hanko of First Church, submitted to surgery for pyloric ulcer June 4th. He has returned to his home and is making satisfactory recovery at this writing.

Do you know . . .

That there is a Committee for Protestant Reformed Action which has a flourishing life in the churches of Classis West? In a recent report published by the Board of this committee they call attention to the fact that the committee is not extinct, and that it has not outlived its usefulness, but, on the contrary, it is very much alive and active. Quoting from a recent letter sent out by the committee: "Dear Christian Friends, We are sending you a list of free pamphlets which are available upon request. Your request involves you in no obligation whatever. . . . we feel that the nature of these pamphlets is too valuable to be limited to one small group . . . possibly you will find some which will be of assistance to you in society discussion, or will guide you in answering questions you have often wondered about. For your convenience we are enclosing a self addressed stamped postal card. Simply check number of pamphlets in which you are interested, and write down your mailing address . . ." The Board was gratified to receive better than 13% response to this advertisement, to date 134 requests for 1,137 pamphlets — fruit of 1,000 letters addressed mostly to members of Christian Reformed Churches. The pamphlets advertised? Those which may be found in the pamphlet racks in all of our churches. If you desire more information regarding the work of that Committee, or wish to help them in any manner, write to Rev. H. Veldman, Edgerton, Minn., or Mr. Peter Vander Top, Rock Rapids, Iowa.

And that . . .

There is an Association for Protestant Reformed Education in action in the Oak Lawn, South Holland area. As the name implies, the Association, through its Board, is striving towards the goal of having a School Society made up of members of Prot. Ref. Churches, and building and maintaining a school inculcating P. R. principles, taught by P. R. teachers. At the May 10th Annual meeting a decision was reached to conduct a financial drive with the goal, "the opening of our own school in 1960."

This month's Proverb: "Where no wood is, the fire goeth out; so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth." PROV. 26:20.

. . . see you in church.

J.M.F.