

THE STANDARD

Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

VOLUME XXXV

JUNE 1, 1959 — GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

NUMBER 17

MEDITATION

PREPARE TO MEET THY GOD!

"Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel!"

There are three peculiarities in this prophecy of Amos.

First, a rude man of the herds is chosen to be a prophet of Jehovah.

Second, a man of Judah is chosen to be a prophet to Israel.

Third, his prophecy is mostly doom in the midst of the greatest prosperity since Solomon.

We cannot enumerate all the doom of this prophecy, but we would just mention the doom of the immediate context, and I assure you that it is terrible.

There would be clean teeth in Israel, and that as an evidence that there was no bread to eat. There would be no rain, so that the harvest would be in jeopardy, and the people would wander from city to city to get a drink of water for their thirst. There would be the army of God's destruction, namely, the blasting, the mildew and the palmerworm, and they would destroy every green thing. There would follow as a consequence pestilence such as was inflicted on Egypt. And God would overthrow some of them as Sodom.

And therefore the prophet comes to Israel and tells them: Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel!

* * * *

It is rather plain that this meeting with Jehovah is a meeting of judgment. And this judgment is first of all the coming captivity in Babylon; and, secondly, the eternal judgment of which the captivity of Babylon is a type.

But even here, judgment is tempered by mercy.

Surely all this Scripture of Amos is a warning for God's people. There were the 7000 of the elect among them.

And the object of all this pronouncement of doom is to bring the elect on their knees in repentance to God.

Witness verse 11: they are a firebrand plucked out of the fire. Also chapter 5:4, 6, 14, and especially verse 15. There Amos tells the good: "Hate the evil and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate; it may be that the Lord God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph."

Also chapter 9:11-15. There you have the classical text which speaks of the raising up of the tabernacle of David and the closing up of the breaches of it.

And so, organically, even through these prophecies of doom the spiritual kernel is saved.

Note that the prophecy in my text is directed to God's Israel: He is *thy* God!

* * * *

And so this text has a wider and more general application. To meet God is salvation also.

Attend to Isaiah 64:5, Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness. And that surely signifies the covenant of God.

To prepare to meet God means to think on Him and to draw near to Him. It is to fear and to love Him, to have fellowship and communion with Him. Listen to James: draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you!

Hence, it is used in Scripture for final salvation. Attend to I Thess. 4:17, "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds *to meet the Lord* in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

I like to think on the positive side of meeting the Lord. It is positive ecstasy to think on meeting Jehovah. There is a psalm in David's bundle which sings of that, and it is one of the first psalms the little ones learn in the Old Country: 't Hijgend hert der jacht ontkomen! That psalm is the most beautiful in the bundle of the songs of the church. "When shall I come and appear before God?" That's the heart of that most beautiful psalm.

We meet the Lord often.

We meet Him in our prayers from the heart.

We meet Him in our worship, both in church and at the family's altar.

We meet Him in our fellowship with the saints. You taste God in them, and rejoice in the communion of saints.

We meet Him in the great catastrophes of fire, and storm, and floods, and all manner of terrible sicknesses and diseases. Then God is met, and the soul is still, for He speaks in heavy tones.

And when we are very pious, we meet Him always and everywhere, and in all circumstances. Then our life is a Bethel and we walk with Him. When our eyes open in the early dawn we see Him, and greet Him in our prayers. We look at Him before we break our fast. He goes along — no, we go along with Him to our place of work. We have Him with us all the day through.

The latter is demanded of all of us.

God loves to walk with His people.

Have you ever been jealous of Enoch and Noah?

Jehovah, through Jesus Christ, and by His Spirit and grace calls to all of you and me: Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.

* * * *

What is the content of the preparation to meet Him?

It is so to arrange our lives as to appear before Him in such a condition and state that we are well-pleasing unto Him.

That, Israel of Amos' day was not.

They were very wicked, that is, as a nation.

It was under the wicked reign of Jeroboam the Second.

They were deceitful and crooked. They were hard and cruel. They were idolatrous at Bethel and Gilgal. They tread down the poor and fatherless. They perverted judgment and verity.

Now we know that every one of God's children is wicked as to the old man of sin.

But here they were wicked in a very special sense.

Israel *multiplied* transgressions. They received a thrill in sinning. They rejoiced in corruption.

And the worst of all was that they sinned *religiously*.

And therefore we listen to Divine irony when Amos tells the people: "Come to Bethel and transgress!" God stands as it were next to their idol, and taunts them in awful irony. If we are that wicked it really gets to be "benauwd."

Neither are we by nature able to so arrange our lives so that we are pleasing to Him.

We also are evil doers from our very youth. We also are increasing in sin as we grow older, and so we become in a certain sense *habituated* to sin. None of us is prepared to meet Jehovah and His Christ. We so arrange our lives as to sin more!

And so, the admonition of my text is in place. We need this admonition every day of our lives.

We are forgetful, filled with the world and worldly things.

Instead of that we must be pleasing in His sight in order to meet Him. We must be image bearers. God delights Himself only in His own virtues. And in this connection, they are holiness, righteousness, truth, love, lovingkindness, mercy and all manner of goodness. We are to be permeated with them and exude them, reflect them from the heart.

* * * *

How is this possible?

It is really very simple. There is only one way, and that is that Jesus of Galilee dwell in our heart; by His Word and through His Spirit and grace. That's the only way to come into the condition that you are pleasing to God.

If that happens you have the Express Image of God within you. And then you are welcome to God.

Listen to just one line of a Psalm: Let Thy Spirit dwell in me!

We used to sing so often, oh so often, long, long ago: "Och, schonkt Gij mij de hulp van Uwen Geest!" There is a world of longing and yearning for God in that one line. And it fits the Christian.

And even to ask for that Spirit, for that Word and for that Grace is fruit of God's own work in you.

Even to hunger and thirst, to yearn and to long for God is *given*. Let that sink in.

And when you have the initial Gift of God, and when the text comes to you, calling you to prepare to meet thy God, you get to work. He gives more grace. And through the continual work of God to begin to work, you continue to work. You do then prepare to meet Him.

And your initial work of meeting Him is in the dust. You bow very deeply, my brother; you are very prostrate, my sister.

Oh, but God loves the humble, the prostrate, the broken-hearted, the contrite of spirit. Lower that lofty eye! He resisteth the proud. That is the very opposite of *meeting* you.

* * * *

And, pray, why should we?

Well, there are quite a few answers.

First, it is your duty. I think that should be mentioned first. After all, the Speaker is the Lord God of Hosts: HOLY is His Name!

He it is that made all things, including you. And He made them for Himself. And there is after all only one purpose. He desired to look at all things and see them reflect His own adorable Beauty.

In all your life, with all that is within you and over which

you have power, should be obedient to Him and His purposes.

Second, it is comely.

It is very ugly to be wicked. Even the very reprobates rejoice when the hero wins the battle in their novels. But when you are very humble and full of praise of God it is very beautiful. Heaven therefore is a very comely place.

Third, to prepare to meet your God is true wisdom, both from the view of the Judge and from the view of the recipient. Wisdom is that virtue which always tends to praise Jehovah. Then you will also see how the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

Finally, it is true blessedness. You know, it pays to be good. The very first fruit is the inward thrill. You may be despised by the world, and you will. You may lie in the dungeon with your feet and arms in the stocks, but when you lie there, singing and praising God, you are thrilled with heavenly ecstasy. Witness Paul at Philippi.

There is true sense in the line: "And I will *meet* Him face to face; and tell the story: Saved by Grace!"

G.V.

Announcement

The members of the board of the Reformed Free Publishing Association, publishers of *The Standard Bearer*, announce the retirement of Mr. Gerrit Pipe as Business Manager for our magazine. Since 1943 when he replaced the late Mr. Ralph Schaafsma, Mr. Pipe has been active in the affairs of our paper. He has given considerably of his time and effort to this cause of propagating the truth thru the means of our periodical.

On behalf of all our membership the board desires to express to Mr. Pipe our most sincere gratitude for the many years of devoted service he has given to the work.

The board wishes at this time to announce the appointment of Mr. James Dykstra as Business Manager. As an energetic member of the Reformed Witness Hour Radio Committee Mr. Dykstra has gained considerable experience in printing and mailing procedures and his capacity for doing a thorough job is already well-known to our board. We are most happy to secure his services as our manager and we look forward to a pleasant association with him in our work.

Board of the Reformed Free Publishing Assn.
ALBERT HEEMSTRA, *Secretary*

25th WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On June 29, 1959, our dear parents,

MR. and MRS. JOE KING

expect to celebrate their 25th Wedding Anniversary.

We thank the Lord that He has spared them through these years. We pray that He may be with them and continue to bless them in their remaining years.

Their children,

Marilyn King
Roger King

THE STANDARD BEARER

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

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

Editor — REV. HERMAN HOEKSEMA

Communications relative to contents should be addressed to
Rev. H. Hoeksema, 1139 Franklin St., S. E.,
Grand Rapids 7, Mich.

All matters relative to subscriptions should be addressed to Mr.
James Dykstra, 1326 W. Butler Ave., S. E.
Grand Rapids 7, Michigan

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

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

Subscription price: \$5.00 per year

Entered as Second Class matter at Grand Rapids, Michigan

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EDITORIALS

About The Three Points

Here follows the report of the Christian Reformed Committee that was deliberating with the schismatics about the notorious Three Points. Here, too, as we did with regard to the report of the schismatics, we, first of all, discuss what they offer on Point I:

“Regarding Point I. Inasmuch as the brethren of the Protestant Reformed Churches (sic! God forbid! H.H.) have informed us that their churches fear that our declarations in Point I jeopardize the doctrine of God’s elective decrees and the doctrine of irresistible grace, we wish to state: (1) Our committee declares that it is fully persuaded that the Synod of 1924 in no way countenanced the undermining of the important doctrines of Holy Writ, and we repudiate any interpretation of Point I which would in any way be antagonistic to these truths; (2) Our committee grants (without denying the well-meant offer of salvation—which we believe to be both biblical and confessional—and to which further reference will be made by us) that the passages in the Canons of Dort cited in the declarations of Synod 1924 (II, 5; III, 8 and 9) do not specifically state that the general offer of salvation is an evidence of God’s favor toward mankind in general; (3) That our committee also grants that the placement of this item in the context of the favorable attitude of God to all men, apparently gave rise to a measure of confusion.

“Coming back to the well-meant offer of salvation, we desire to stress however, that in the call of the gospel there is, indeed, a manifestation of a certain favor of God to all that hear that gospel. This is in harmony with the Confessions (Canons I, 1-5; II, 5; III, IV, 8 and 9) which state that God promises ‘salvation, rest of soul and eternal life’ to everyone who repents and believes; and this promise is made without distinction to all those to whom the gospel is preached. And although it is true, that among ‘those who are called by the ministry of the Word’, there are those who refuse to come and be converted . . . (the cause or guilt of their unbelief) is not the fault of the gospel, nor of Christ offered therein, nor of God who calls men by the gospel, and confers upon them various gifts . . . the fault lies wholly in themselves . . .’

“We also declare that Point I in no way countenances the teaching that in the making of the offer of the gospel God purposes to bestow upon all men who hear the gospel the gift of justifying faith Canons II, 8.”

Later in the report we read:

“Your committee believes that it can report as follows with respect to the examination of the similarities and differ-

ences as requested in our original letter to the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church in 1957:

“1. With respect to Point I . . .

“a. That both committees have agreed that there is ‘a certain favor or grace shown to the creatures in general.’

“b. With respect to the preaching of the gospel, both committees agree that it is a separate matter and should not appear in the context of Point I.

“c. With respect to the ‘well-meant’ offer of the gospel (refer to P. R. committee report). However, our committee has not reached unanimity of opinion on the question of the ‘well-meant’ offer in the context of God’s favorable attitude.”

What shall we say about this?

We remark the following:

1. That the committee of the Christian Reformed Church did not concede one tittle or iota, in regard to the First Point, to the schismatics, although the latter plainly admit that there is a grace of God to all men, wicked and righteous. They not even as much as suggest a new formulation of the First Point. It is evident that, if the schismatics are ever to be received again in the Christian Reformed Church, they will, as far as the committee is concerned, have to agree with the First Point in all its implications. Nor should this be difficult for them in view of the fact that they already admit that God is gracious to all men.*

2. It is true that the Christian Reformed committee appears to make a concession when they state that the preaching of the gospel is a separate matter and should not appear in the context of the First Point. But in reality they not even grant this. For notice, in the first place the wording of the report on this matter. They state that the Canons “do not *specifically* (Italics mine, H.H.) state that the general offer of salvation is an evidence of God’s favor toward mankind in general.” They also grant that the placing of this item in the context of the First Point “apparently gave rise to a measure of confusion.” However, in the very next paragraph they contradict this again for there they state that the well-meant offer of the gospel is indeed “a manifestation of a certain favor of God to all who hear that gospel” and they make this claim on the basis also of the very quotations from the Canons to which the Synod of 1924 refers in support of the First Point. Here, then, is a palpable contradiction. Let me put the two statements side by side so that the reader may clearly see the contradiction:

1) “Our committee grants that the passages in the Canons of Dort cited in the declarations of the Synod of 1924, II, 5, III, IV, 8 and 9, do not specifically state that the general offer of salvation is an evidence of God’s favor to mankind in general.”

*See, however, under 3.

2) "In the call of the gospel there is, indeed, a manifestation of a certain favor of God to all who hear the gospel. This is in harmony with the Confessions, Canons I, 1-5; II, 5 and 6; III, IV, 8, 9."

O, I understand very well that the committee now changes "mankind in general" into "all who hear the gospel." But what is the difference? It is not the question to how many the grace or favor of God is shown in the preaching of the gospel but whether that grace is common. It is even absurd to maintain that the preaching of the gospel is grace to all mankind. It is still more absurd to say that the preaching of the gospel is grace to "the creatures in general." But the simple question is whether the grace of God in the preaching of the gospel is common. This the committee still maintains. And it now adds to the so-called proof from the Confessions also Canons I, 1-5.

I have no space to quote this part of the Canons. I ask the reader to consult it for himself. But I claim that Canons, I, 1-5 teach the very opposite from common grace in the preaching of the gospel. They teach that even the gospel is sent to whom God wills and when He pleases, that the wrath of God abides on those that believe not, that those that believe are saved, that the guilt of unbelief is not in God but in man himself, but that faith and salvation are the free gift of God. Where in all this is there any suggestion of so-called common grace?

Hence, I still maintain that the theory, that the preaching of the gospel is common grace, is not Reformed but Arminian.

3. However, the committee appears to make one concession when it says that the preaching of the gospel is a separate matter and should not appear in the context of the First Point. In the light of what precedes, however, I cannot understand this concession. The committee has already maintained that the "well-meant offer of the gospel" is common grace. Why, then, eliminate this well-meant offer from the First Point? Besides, is not this rather dangerous? If this should be eliminated, the First Point appears entirely without any confessional basis for the only ground of the Confessions is exactly the general offer of the gospel as taught in Canons II, 5; III, IV, 8 and 9. Is it possible for a Reformed Synod to declare an altogether new doctrine, such as that God is gracious to His creatures in general, without any reference to the Confessions? I wish that the committee of the Christian Reformed Church would shed some light on this question. I seriously ask them to explain how it is possible to eliminate the preaching of the gospel from the context of the First Point without stripping this Point of all Confessional grounds. In fact, if they really mean this, they must also repudiate many of the Scriptural passages quoted in support of the First Point. And they really destroy the most important part of this Point. Hence, please, explain.

H.H.

Evolution, Long Periods, or Days

We were discussing the sixth day of the creation-week, particularly the creation of man. We said that it is impossible to harmonize what Gen. 1 tells us about the creation of man with the theory of evolution or, what is practically the same thing, with that of long periods. In proof of this, we called attention to the fact that the sixth day was certainly limited by evening and morning, i.e. by the setting and rising of the sun. We also remarked that man was created in the image of God and that such an exalted creature certainly could not gradually have developed from one of the lower animals.

Now:

3. We call attention to the fact, before the creation of man, there was a pause. God spoke: "Let us make man in our image." To whom did God say this? Certainly not to the angels, for man was not formed after the image of the angels and, besides, the angels could have no part in the creation of man. He, but God spoke to Himself as the triune God: there is here already an indication of the plurality of God's personal existence. But the point I wish to make is that this pause in the creation narrative clearly indicates that man is formed as a distinct creature. He certainly is related to the animals as well as to the entire creation over which God gave him dominion; but he is not developed from the animal but is a very distinct creature. This is indicated by the pause in the narrative, by the fact that God spoke to Himself before He created man, as well as by the contents of this speech of God.

4. The same truth, namely, that man is a very distinct creature, formed in a moment of time, and not developed from the lower creation, is also indicated by the very way in which God formed man. We read in Gen. 2:7: "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life: and man became a living soul."

Here we may note several elements that are of interest for our discussion of the creation narrative in connection with the theory of evolution and of long periods.

First of all, we may note that the narrative tells us that "the Lord God *formed* man." This is said only of the creation of man. In respect to all the rest of creation we read that God simply spoke His Word and the creature thus called came into existence. Even when fish and fowls were created from the waters, and the land animals from the earth, they were called forth by the Word of God. This, however, is not the case with man. He was not simply brought forth by the earth, nor did the earth produce him through the Word of God, but the Lord God formed him. This points to a very clear distinction from all the rest of creation, even also from the rest of the animals. All other animals are called forth from the earth. But man is separated from the

earth by a distinct act of God. He is, therefore, from the outset entirely different from the rest of the animals even as far as his form is concerned.

More about this next time, D.V.

H.H.

AS TO BOOKS

The Rise and Development of Calvinism. This book was written by four different authors with John H. Bratt as editor. Published by Wm. B. Eerdmans Co. Price \$2.75.

This book I find very interesting and instructive. The language is clear so that the book is easily accessible to the average reader. It is introduced by a chapter on the life and work of John Calvin by John H. Bratt. The next chapter describes the spread of Calvinism in Switzerland, Germany and France by Charles Miller. Then follow three chapters on the history of Calvinism in the Netherlands, in Scotland and England, and in America written respectively by Walter Lagerwey, Earl Strikwerda, and John H. Bratt. I heartily recommend this book to the interested reader.

The reader will notice that this work is chiefly historical though it is by no means without critical comments on this history. With most of these comments I can agree. However, not with all of them. Thus, for instance, I would disagree with what the author, on pp. 29-32, considers the main emphases of Calvin's program which, according to him, are five: his healthy biblicism, his Presbyterian form of church government, his theory of civil society, his "moralism" or emphasis on true godliness, and finally, his system of theology. This last, to my mind, cannot be put on a par with the other four items of emphasis mentioned by the author, but should have the first and principal place. Besides, the same author speaks rather deprecatingly of what are known as "the five points of Calvinism" or the Canons of Dort which, according to him, "stripped Calvin's ideas of their vitality and breadth." I still maintain that the doctrine of Predestination is essential to Calvinism, p. 27. Besides, in this way the book contradicts itself for Strikwerda writes on p. 82: "The Synod of Dort is a symbol of the triumph of orthodox Calvinism in the Netherlands. The orthodox Calvinistic position was now clearly defined and became the teaching of the official Reformed Churches in the Netherlands."

However, with this criticism I do not mean that this is not a good book. I recommend it to our readers. It is, indeed, instructive.

H.H.

The Institutes of the Christian Religion, by John Calvin. Translated by Henry Beveridge. Published by Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

This work by John Calvin is so well-known that it hardly needs an introduction or recommendation. That is, it is well-known by name, although I doubt whether many of our readers ever read it and I am even wondering whether many of our ministers and theologians ever studied it. Yet, I certainly would recommend it to all our readers. It is a marvellous piece of work. The *Institutes* were first written in 1536 when Calvin was still a comparatively young man. Yet, the work was universally received by the godly with great favor. As he himself expresses it in an "epistle to the reader": "In the First Edition of this work, having no expectation of the success which God has, in his goodness, been pleased to give it, I had, for the greater part, performed my office perfunctorily, as is usual in trivial undertakings. But when I perceived that almost all the godly had received it with a favor which I had never dared to wish, far less to hope for, being sincerely conscious that I had received far more than I deserved, I thought I should be very ungrateful if I did not endeavor, at least according to my humble ability, to respond to the great kindness which had been expressed towards me, and which spontaneously urged me to diligence." The work passed through several editions and although it remained essentially unaltered, the final edition of 1559 was much enlarged.

I have no time to check up on the translation which was made from the Latin in 1845.

But, once more, I wish to recommend this work of Calvin to all our readers.

H.H.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On June 7, 1959, the Lord willing, our beloved parents,

REVEREND HERMAN HOEKSEMA

and

NELLIE HOEKSEMA (KUIPER)

will celebrate their 45th 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 children and grandchildren

IN MEMORIAM

The Ladies' Society of the Protestant Reformed Church of Doon, Iowa, hereby expresses its sincere sympathy to one of its members, Mrs. Jacob Mantel, Sr., in the loss of her daughter-in-law,

MRS. PETE MANTEL

Rom. 8:28: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his purpose."

Rev. G. Van Baren, President
Mrs. Edwin Van Ginkel, Secretary

OUR DOCTRINE

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

PART TWO

CHAPTER VIII

The Two Witnesses

Revelation 11:5-13

We receive the definite information that also at the time of the end, with the second coming of the Lord for the deliverance of His people, there shall be living saints who shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump. But it does mean, in the first place, that it shall be a time of general and terrible persecution for the faithful people of God. The acts and testimony of the witnesses have roused the anger of the Antichrist. Their testimony is now finished. Antichrist comes to silence it. And he succeeds. I imagine that he will succeed in two ways. In the first place, I do not doubt but that he will persecute the people of God in the literal sense of the word. He shall put them in prison and deprive them of their liberty and property. He shall kill some of them, especially of the ministers and faithful servants. But in the second place, the true church of God shall be declared dead. They shall be cast out of society. They shall be considered outlaws. They shall be left no standing room on earth. They shall be allowed to buy or sell no more unless they bear the mark of the beast. And literally they shall be forbidden to worship. It shall be a victory for the beast, and the church shall be heard of no more. The testimony, the prayers, the powers, and the actions of the two witnesses shall have been silenced and removed. The Antichrist shall reign supreme.

Thus we can at the same time understand what it means that their dead bodies shall lie in the streets of Jerusalem, the great city, that is spiritually called Sodom and Egypt. This cannot mean that two dead bodies shall lie in the literal sense of the word in the literal streets of Jerusalem. For it is inconceivable how in that sense all nations and tongues and tribes should look upon these two dead bodies. The text itself clearly shows again that something else is meant. Jerusalem is false Christianity, the false church, now united with the show church of hypocrites, trampling under foot the holy city and rejoicing over their victory over the church of God. The church still exists in their midst, but she is now dead. She has been declared dead. She has been silenced. And she is the object of greatest contempt all over the world. "Ye shall be hated of all nations" has now become literally true. And just as the lying unburied in the street was symbolic of greatest contempt and deepest shame, so the church, silenced in her testimony, perfectly overcome,

exists in the midst of Christianity as an object of extreme contempt and shame. Her power is gone. Her influence is no more. Her prayers are silenced. She cannot pray for plagues any more. She has been annihilated as far as her manifestation in the world is concerned. And all the world rejoices because she is dead. They rejoice and make merry, they send gifts to one another, only because the church that spoke of blood and judgment has been overpowered.

However, this is not the end of these two witnesses. On the contrary, we read in the text: "And after three days and a half the spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them. And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them." Let me call your attention, in the first place, to the fact that the tribulation is to last three days and a half. This implies, in the first place, that the time of the Antichrist shall be cut short. He shall not be able to finish his work, but shall be allowed only half a week. He shall not accomplish his purpose. Just as the time of this entire dispensation in general is indicated by three and one half years, or by time, times, and a half, so also the time of the end stands in the same sign. The power of Antichrist in its culmination of the little horn of the beast that cometh up out of the abyss shall be cut short. But it means, in the second place, that the days shall be shortened for the elects' sake. This the Lord has promised definitely, and it is plainly indicated here. At the end of the three days and a half, the days of tribulation for the people of God shall be ended. But the time of the end is not there as yet. I do not know how I can make this more plain than by referring you again to Daniel. In the ninth chapter of that prophecy the prophet reveals to us the vision of the seventy weeks. Let me call your attention to the following facts, on the basis of this vision. First, that the seventy weeks as a whole indicate the period from Daniel to the end of time, when iniquity shall be finished. Secondly, that this period from the time of Daniel to the end of all time is divided into three smaller periods. The first consists of seven weeks, and reaches to the first coming of Christ. The second consists of sixty-two weeks, and reaches unto the time of the culmination of Antichrist, the twelve hundred and sixty days of the two witnesses, the building up of Jerusalem in the new dispensation. At the end of the sixty-two weeks we read that Christ shall be cut off and shall have nothing, which means the same as what is indicated in our text when it says that the witnesses are lying dead in the streets of Jerusalem. Thirdly, there is still one week left. That is the week of Antichrist, the week in which he shall reign supreme. But also in Daniel this week is cut in half. For in the midst of the week he shall have accomplished his work against the church, so that even the sacrifice and oblation has ceased. So also in our text that last period, the last week, shall be cut in half.

H.H.

A CLOUD OF WITNESSES

Jacob in Haran

"And Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice, and wept.

And Jacob told Rachel that he was her father's brother, and that he was Rebekah's son: and she ran and told her father.

And it came to pass, when Laban heard the tidings of Jacob, his sister's son, that he ran to meet him, and embraced him, and kissed him, and brought him to his house." — GEN. 29:11-13

With the Word of God echoing in his heart, Jacob left the open sanctuary of Bethel. God had promised to keep him in the place to which he was going, and it encouraged him as he made his way toward Haran. Little, however, did he realize the way in which this promise was to be kept. There cleaved still to Jacob the one great weakness which had troubled his life in the past and was to continue to do so for some time to come. He did not have the strength of faith to rely completely upon God. He loved the promises of God, but often he did not have the patience to wait for God to bring them to pass. Rather, he went forth in his own strength trying to realize these promises. In Padanaram, although God was to prosper him immensely, he was also to taste of the bitter results of this way of life.

Nonetheless, in spite of the promise of God, Jacob's journey was sad and lonely. The fact that he was fleeing as a fugitive from the anger of his brother and did not know when he would be able to return to his father's home weighed heavily upon his mind. The way which he had to travel was long, perhaps much longer than he had anticipated. Food he had not taken with him, and he had to obtain it when and where he could or go without. Finally, of the route which he was to take Jacob was often uncertain, and the fear constantly arose that he might be going astray. Thus burdened with fear and anxiety, he approached the land of Padanaram.

But the hand of God's providence cared for Jacob and brought him early one afternoon to a well where three shepherds were waiting to water their sheep. These shepherds were young — more boys than men. Because individually they could not remove the great stone that was upon the well's mouth, the shepherds of the locality had made an agreement to meet together at a certain time to water their sheep. Thus together they could remove the stone and no one would be left at the close of the day unable to obtain water. These three had come earlier than necessary, following the natural inclination which boys often have to loiter.

Approaching the well, Jacob, being the oldest, opened the conversation by enquiring where the shepherds were from. When they informed him not only that they were

from Haran but that they were acquainted with Laban and his daughter Rachel was approaching at a distance with her father's sheep, Jacob was overwhelmed with joy and relief. With strong feelings he awaited the approach of his cousin. But while he waited he noticed the inactivity of the young men. Being himself an experienced and efficient shepherd, such wasted time when the sheep could better be grazing in the fields displeased him. Further, he preferred that the young men should be gone before Rachel arrived. Thus he admonished them to water their sheep and return to the field. But the lads were ready with their excuse. They had to wait until the other shepherds arrived.

While Jacob had traveled the long and weary miles of his journey, a fugitive from his father's home, he had looked forward with eager anticipation to his arrival in his uncle's house where he could expect to be received with warmth and kindness. Now as his cousin Rachel stood before him his feelings were too pent up to express themselves. Speechless with emotion, he did the one thing he could. He, without assistance, rolled aside the great stone that covered the mouth of the well and watered his uncle's sheep. This task having been completed, he turned to Rachel, kissed her, and wept. This all must have been much to the amazement of Rachel who did not know as yet who Jacob was. For ourselves we can only understand it if we bear in mind the deep emotional nature of the oriental peoples. It would be unacceptable for us to try to understand these actions of Jacob, as is often done, on the basis of "love at first sight." This might seem more logical when compared with our modern way of life; but it would make Jacob's actions much more presumptuous than we have any right to expect him to have been.

Once Jacob had gained enough composure to tell Rachel who he was, she too responded with strong feeling by running immediately, without thinking of her flock, to tell her father. Laban in turn ran to meet Jacob and to greet him in typical oriental fashion, embracing him, kissing him, and with much hospitality bringing him into his home. After his many days of lonely travel, Jacob was deeply affected by this warm and hospitable welcome. Visiting with his uncle that evening, he poured out his heart to him telling him everything which had happened, telling him in fact too much, not realizing the deceptive ability which Laban had of turning everything to his own advantage.

For one month Jacob tarried in the home of Laban during which time Laban had opportunity to make some very interesting observations about Jacob. In the first place, he saw that Jacob was in no hurry to return to his home. The fear of Esau remained and stifled any desire which Jacob might have had to return to Canaan. In the second place, he found that Jacob was a very efficient shepherd. Not inclined to indolence, he immediately applied himself to helping in the care of Laban's flocks. Inasmuch as this was his former occupation, and even more because the blessing of God

rested upon his work, it soon became evident that the work which he did prospered. Jacob was a good man to have in his service. Finally, he observed that Jacob was developing a strong attachment for his daughter Rachel. Concerning this Jacob was troubled, for he desired to have Rachel as his wife but did not have anything to offer to Laban as a dowry. Nonetheless, Laban realized that such a marriage would be all to his favor. Although Jacob had no wealth at the time, he was to be the heir to great wealth of his father, a small part of which he had seen spectacularly displayed by the servant which had come many years before for Rebekah.

Laban was unscrupulously clever. Taking these factors into consideration, he called Jacob to him and said, "Because thou art my brother, shouldest thou therefore serve me for nought? tell me, what shall thy wages be?" It was feigned generosity. Laban knew full well that there was only one thing which Jacob desired to have, the hand of Rachel in marriage. Further he was ashamed because he had no dowry. Lest his request might be denied, he was sure to make some offer which would be to Laban's advantage. In this expectation Laban was not disappointed. Jacob offered to work for him seven years if he might have Rachel to wife. Seven years was the period of servitude for an Old Testament slave. Jacob gave himself to be a bondsman for his wife. There was not one bit of true love or generosity in the heart of Laban. To accept such an offer should have been repulsive to him. There was no real reason why he should have even expected a dowry. The purpose of a dowry was to give visible proof that the bridegroom had enough wealth to properly support a wife. Laban knew that, although Jacob had no wealth at the time, he was to receive an inheritance that would be more than ample. But Laban was concerned only with his own advantage. As though with pious words to seal the agreement, he replied, "It is better that I give her to thee, than that I should give her to another man: abide with me." In effect he sold his daughters, as they later observed, "Are we not counted of him strangers? for he hath sold us," Gen. 31:14.

If the part that Laban played in this agreement was serious, even more serious was the part played by Jacob. Not so much because he gave himself in bondage to Laban for seven years, and later for even another seven. That was a foolish offer on his part and quite unnecessary. The error was that thereby he sought to obtain the hand of Rachel in marriage. By so doing he was once again impetuously doing things his own way when he should have waited in faith on God.

Rachel was a beautiful woman. The Scriptures tell us that explicitly. She possessed all of the physical characteristics that combine to make a woman pleasing to the eye. In addition she had that vivacious approach to life that often seems so desirable, that evasive something which we call personality, that lively way of living which gives sparkle to

the eyes and furnishes the perfecting touch to beauty. It seems that Jacob fell under her charm almost from the first moment that he saw her and continued so until her dying day. But there was another and more important side to Rachel which was not so beautiful. Rachel was spiritually very weak. This is clearly demonstrated in the record which we have of her later life. She maintained a very jealous and unspiritual attitude toward her sister, her handmaid, and their children. When they left Haran, it was she who took along her father's images. In addition, although Jacob loved her very deeply, she did not return this love in equal measure. Much like her father, she was a very selfish, self-centered person. This is not to say that she was necessarily a total unbeliever, but, if there was within her a principle of true life, it was very weak, not strong enough to make her a good covenant wife and mother.

In contrast to Rachel, Leah, we read, was tender eyed. By this is meant that Leah lacked that sparkle of appearance and personality that makes a person pleasing to all. She was shy rather than lively, and it affected her whole appearance. But also in contrast to Rachel, Leah was spiritually much stronger. Her fear of God was evidenced in the names which she gave her sons. She maintained a deep and spiritual love for Jacob founded principally upon her love for the covenant and its promises. It was she that God had chosen to bring forth the line of generations from which would come the Christ.

Jacob had in mind when he came to Padanaram to obtain for himself a wife. He traveled all of that distance because he knew that his wife must be from the line of covenant generations. But when he arrived in Padanaram, he did not have the patience to wait for God to point out who that wife should be. He allowed himself to fall under the superficial charm of Rachel's beauty and thereby neglected to take into consideration the more important spiritual condition of her heart. Having made his choice in his own strength without God, he also proceeded to consummate his plans without God. Thus it was that he made his very foolish agreement with Laban.

If we may be allowed to speculate hypothetically, we might try to imagine what would have happened had Jacob been more spiritual in choosing his wife; then, God might have spared him from involvement with Rachel and Leah alone would have been his wife; then, he might not have made the foolish commitments that kept him for fourteen and more years in Padanaram removed from the land of promise; then, he might have been spared from the sorrows of a divided house such as always results from polygamy. But Jacob's greatest weakness still cleaved to him. He had not the strength to trust completely in God. God was with him as He had promised to be, chastising him that he might be delivered from this sin.

B.W.

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of Romans 14, 15

II.

(Romans 14:1)

It is well to bear in mind that the real *problem-child* in these Chapters under consideration is the weak brother or sister. If there were not this *weak* brother there would be no problem which calls for a solution of loving understanding.

Such is the starting-point of Paul in this 14th Chapter of Romans. Wherefore Paul writes in this first verse of Chapter 14, "*But him that is weak in faith receive ye, yet not to doubtful disputations.*" The latter phrase is paraphrased by some scholars as follows: "*yet not for decision of scruples.*" The problem is the weakness of the brother. However, this problem must not become a mere issue of right and wrong of the overscrupulousness of the weak brother or sister. The weakness of the weak cannot be the *norm* of the life of the church; it cannot become the water-level of spiritual life of those who are free in Christ from the condemnation and curse of the law. The weak must become stronger, to be sure; but this cannot become an accomplished reality by accepting them, and then "go to work on them" to bring a swift and final end to their scruples.

There is a vast difference between the problem and the solution.

Such an attitude and conduct on the part of the strong would simply be destructive in the church. It would be destructive of Christ's work and of God's soteriological designs for the weak, yet, redeemed brother.

Hence, the warning finger!

And thus also we have demonstrated here the area of *adiaphora* (things indifferent) in the church. If there would be no area of *adiaphora* here on earth in God's church there simply would be no acceptance of the weak by the strong, but it would be simply a question of everything or nothing. And, if such be the case, then the strong can accept the weak only to make them toe the mark. But now Paul signals another course of action in the arresting sentence, "*But him that is weak in faith receive ye, yet not to doubtful disputations*"!

We spoke above about indifferent things, matters which have been designated in the church in the New Testament dispensation as matters of "*adiaphora*."

It may be well to say a few words about this rather strange sounding term. At least those who have not studied theology in a formal sense, and who have not taken a course

in the History of Dogma and of the Creeds of Christendom, may find this term a new and strange one.

Permit me to remark, first of all, that the term "*adiaphora*" is not found in the formal, technical sense in the New Testament Scriptures. It is a term which was employed in a technical sense by the ancient Greeks. Aristotle in his *Logics* used the term in reference to "all individual objects which have no logical differentia." And we are told that the Stoic philosophy considered the "*ta adiaphora*" as the *res media*, things which are objectively *indifferentes*, that is, things neither good nor bad. Such is the technical sense of the term amongst the Greeks. See Lidell and Scott, Greek-English Lexicon.

This conception of the Stoics cannot be the conception of the Word of God. Objectively there are really no things which are "neither good nor bad." Fundamentally all things are sanctified in Christ. Every creature of God is good and nothing is to be rejected, for it is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer. I Timothy 4:4.

In the Word of God there is a definite distinction between the "things that differ." However, the things "differing" are ethically qualified by the new relationship in which we stand to Christ. It is our basic, new relation to Christ which spells the difference between what is permissible and not permissible in the matter of "*adiaphora*." The area of *adiaphora* is really the area where the church here on earth has *not yet* a full understanding in the *details* of how to work out her salvation! And also in this matter of *adiaphora* the strong have a sympathetic understanding of the weak, knowing the weaker will grow stronger in certain aspects of life, in applying the full implication of the gospel-truth of justification by faith.

Had this matter been one of unbelievers and enemies of the Cross sneaking into the church to spy out the liberty of the saints in Christ Jesus Paul would have spoken in harsher tones, and would have used his heaviest artillery. Thus he does in the case of those who would rob the Galatian churches of their freedom in Christ. Then the matter would not be one of "*adiaphora*" but rather one of the truth versus the lie, of works versus grace. In that case it becomes an "either-or" proposition. Then he that does not gather scattereth; he that is not for Christ is against him.

However, such is not the case here in this Chapter. Paul is not dealing with an "either-or" *situation*. He is dealing with the weak and the strong. Both are for Christ. Both have learned to say with Paul, "I died, and what I now live I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself in my behalf." Both are living members of Christ's body, ingrafted into Christ by a true faith. And both will one day be in glory in the perfected state.

The question is, therefore, not one of receiving the "weak" in order to make a decision on "scruples," but rather that of finding a *formula* for *living together in one church*, so

that he, who has much grace and is strong in faith, has no abundance, and he, who has little, has no lack. All things must be done for edification.

The truth of whether matters are "clean" or "common" as such is not at stake. It is not a question of either clinging to Christ the Head or not. It is a matter of clinging more strongly or less strongly to Christ the Head of the church, and of believing more strongly or less strongly that all things are of us, we of Christ, and that Christ is of God! I Cor. 3:23.

Just one little instance in this Chapter demonstrates very clearly that Paul is not defending an "either-or" proposition here. At the same time Paul is not *sacrificing* the principle of the faith in Christ either. Writes Paul in verse 14: "I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean of itself"! Here is no compromise of the fundamental position of the Gospel-freedom. What God shows Peter in the vision at Joppa and as recorded in Acts 10:15 stands unmoved as the Gibraltar, "What God hath cleansed make thou not common." That food is clean in Christ is a matter of principle. Such is the position of those, who are strong in faith, at Rome. They are right, absolutely right! Otherwise they would not be strong, would they? And, if they were not right, the weak could not be weak, could they? However, the use of good food in a sinful way is always sinful! And the sin is not in the food, the drink, but in the user when he uses it doubtfully. Wherefore Paul continues in verse 14, "save to him who accounteth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean"!

It is very obvious is it not that ethics and dogmatics are not identical, nor is our salvation in Christ objectively and the subjective working out of it simply to be equated. There is a point in a Christian's life when he does something that it is sin to him. Later, when he grows in faith it is no longer sin to him! Eating with unwashed hands was Levitically sin to the disciples prior to Jesus' teaching them of the deeper and more profound implication of what constitutes the defilement of the man (*mensch*). Confer Matthew 15:1-20. The question of washing hands or not washing hands is "indifferent" when taken as such. However, in relationship to the Lord *nothing* is "indifferent," *adiaphora*!

With this formula, which is implicit in faith working by love (Gal. 5:6), the strong can have a loving understanding of the weak, and the weak can cultivate a proper understanding of the strong. The latter will, in so doing, gradually see that their being "weak" is the *basic problem*. It is then not at all a question of "eating" or of "days"! What a tremendous demonstration this is of approving the good, acceptable and perfect will of God! Rom. 12:1, 2.

Meanwhile the problem exists. It is not a critical situation. However, there was a concrete issue and Paul uses this occasion to teach the general principles of Christian ethics applying it to the general situation at hand. Yes, ethics cannot be equated with ethics! However, neither can it be

separated. Here Paul undergirds all his ethics with the strong principles of the objective work of Christ for and in the church.

Paul admonishes in two directions here in this situation. The simple and undeniable fact is that the "weakness" of the weak in the faith is the basic problem. The danger, the very imminent danger is that this basic problem becomes the occasion of strife and division in the church, so that the strong will not *strengthen* the weak for whom Christ died, but rather despise them!

Hence, the warning finger!

Receive such weak in the faith, yet not for the decision of scruples!

Yes, it is so naturally, sinfully and psychologically true, that the strong will set at nought the weak. They will despise them from the heights of their stronger position in faith. Then their very strength becomes a pit-fall to them. They will belittle the scruples of the weak and overly scrupulous brother in the faith. It is a strange thing that when strong convictions are not tempered by love for the brother, the most strong in faith are often the least in love to the brother who is weak. Such faith is then, of course, a dead faith. It is not tempered with the proper meekness and humility. It is the faith and knowledge which puffs up, lacking love which alone can edify. How strong some churches can be in doctrine and yet how weak in walking in all good works, in spite of the very implications of that doctrine, which is at once pregnant with reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness, that the man of God be thoroughly furnished unto good works.

On the other hand there are pit-falls also for the "weak" in the faith.

Here the weak fall into the error and sin of judging their stronger, and basically more right brother! While Paul admonishes the strong he holds the weak at bay. Their very "weakness", which they look upon as their strength, also turns the dogs loose. And, sooner than they realize it, they will be at the throat of the "strong"! They would impede thus the free course of the Spirit of grace in the life of the church.

Such "judging" on the part of the weak is indeed presumptuous. Their very weakness is that they are "narrow" in their view. They are not more narrow than the "straight and narrow way which leads to life," but they are narrow differently. They have a tendency to make a narrow road of bondage where Christ has made a new and living way of freedom in his own blood. They make a way of bondage for themselves from which the Gospel will make them free eventually when they grow stronger in the faith which works by love. Hence, these weak really receive a very strong admonition from Paul in the following verses.

When they grow stronger in faith they will see that things which are *adiaphora* in relation to themselves become very much the "things differing" in relationship to Christ!

G.L.

"GOD GIVING PAUL ALL THAT SAILED WITH HIM"

In the twenty-seventh chapter of the Book of Acts we read the narrative of the voyage, which, in the providence of God, Paul took as occasioned by his appeal to Caesar when he was indicted before Festus (Ac. 25:10f.). But before Paul had made his defense before that governor he had received by promise the Divine assurance that he would be safely brought to Rome (23:11). At least that far back the Lord was forging links in the chain of events according to His sovereign ordination to bring about the realization of that expressed in our theme. Everything recorded in this eye-witness description is in marvellous accord with the science of navigation, making it possible for the account to be substantiated by nautical knowledge. But we are not interested in the investigative results of practical or theoretical seamanship, except as they may reveal the many agencies God predetermines and employs to execute and attain His eternal purpose. For if we obscure, or worse, remove from this chapter, the counsel of God, we have nothing remaining more distinctive than the Greek classics describing ancient marine travel and commonly occurring shipwreck. Therefore, that which is primarily taught here is not merely salvation from the dangers of the sea, but also the final salvation of men from the dangers of eternal destruction. With this in mind, we consider, 1) the prediction of the danger (10), 2) the reassuring revelation (23-25), and 3) the ultimate escape (24, 34, 44).

Not entering into all the details of the chapter, we note first of all that Paul in his voyage to Rome set out from Caesarea in a ship of Adramyttium (now Edremit, Turkey) as a prisoner, with his "companions in travel" and fellow-laborers, Luke ("we," v. 1) and Aristarchus (19:29, Phile. 24). Over the sea of Cicilia they sailed, buffeted by contrary winds, until finally they, after changing ships at Myra, came through strong winds to Fair Havens on the island of Crete. Here Paul advised them to remain, this being the safest course for the ship and all aboard it. This wise counsel was directed to the Roman centurion, and the master and owner of the ship, to the effect that they should be exposed to the danger of hurt, damage and of life (v. 10). In Paul's mind, this was a general premonition from God, although the particularities were not yet made known to him. That this is the meaning of the word "perceive" is made plain from Amos 3: 6-7, "shall there be evil in a city (or on the sea!), and the Lord hath not done it? Surely, the Lord God will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets." But Paul's counsel was not adopted, and this is quite understandable for why should not Julius the centurion give more credence to the opinion of the merchant marine than to a prisoner on board? So the convictions of these men became the occasion of the following disasters.

Yet something more was necessary in addition to premonitions, promises and assurances in order that this gift of souls

to Paul could be enjoyed — something without which it could not be. That something was the ordering of incidental, yet concatenated occasions, and the use of instrumental causes and means. Not that God's eternal purpose is dependent upon human agency or secondary causes, for His purpose includes all these things. In fact, God's purpose, specific and particular, embraces what will occur, how it will occur, the mutual dependence of events flowing from His decree, gear, wheel, pulley and lever in proper connection in the entire machine of existence. So is determined the number who shall be saved, the individuals who shall receive life, and the fact that their salvation is infallibly certain, and they cannot be lost.

One of the subordinate causes was Euroclydon, a typhoon (14) which drove the ship for "many days" (20), so that all hope of being saved from shipwreck and death "began to be taken away" (Gr.), which does not imply that Paul, or even every one of the others, actually lost hope; but rather that, for the majority, hope was waning. They experienced this as a result of the disregard they showed to Paul's warning (9, 10); but it only prepared them to listen to him in the future, when he said to them, "Sirs (not 'Brethren'), ye should have hearkened unto me . . ." Notice from vv. 22-26 how very courteously Paul speaks to them, not using a severe tone, insulting words, nor an overbearing manner. Paul had too much of the joy of the Gospel in his heart to be either pompous or petty. And this joy he would share with them, for he would comfort them, not by the strength of his personality, but with the Word of God revealed by an angel.

This brings us into the heart of the passage (20-26). Here we have the prediction of shipwreck, the endangering of life, yet that not one life should be lost. Paul exhorted them to good cheer, because hope of being saved was something they did not and could not expect. What Paul brought them was no Stoical courage to die like men, nor an adventurer spirit "to go down fighting," no self-inflated hope which, in all that darkness, they somehow were able to muster. No, he brought them an "I believe God!" And good cheer his address would be to them if they could believe both it and him. In order to secure their believing, Paul adds that God had informed him that He had given him all that sailed with him. God made a present to Paul of 276 souls, men who had been condemned to death, and on their way to death in Rome (cf. v. 1 with I Co. 15:32), yet had been granted not to Caesar, but to Paul. They were already, in God's view of it, his. For the decree of God is eternal, and the grant was made in eternity: "God *hath given* thee all them that sail with thee." So they learn that they are Paul's by the gift of God, and Paul is God's whom he serves. Why such a Divine grant to Paul? Why, if not that at least some of them would be brought to confess with Paul, "I believe God"! For God causes desolations and catastrophes in the earth as a means of converting His elect to Himself. Ezekiel gives proof of this: "Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I the Lord build the ruined places, and plant that

that was desolate: I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it. Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them, I will increase them with men like a flock" (36:36f.). Paul himself makes this clear when he informs us that he did "endure all things (including thrice suffering shipwreck, a night and a day in the deep, in perils in the sea, II Co. 11:25f.) for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (II Tim. 2:10). As examples of this Paul might mention the Philippian jailer, Onesimus and they of Caesar's household!

Thus the safety of all in the ship is assured; not one of them can be lost in the storm, for the will of God cannot be disappointed. When He settles a matter, it shall come to pass. This is the undeniable teaching of Scripture: "Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass, and as I have purposed, so shall it stand . . . For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and His hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back? . . . He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, 'What doest Thou?' . . . the people . . . were gathered together for to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel 'foreordained to come to pass' (Gr.) . . . For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil His will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled" (Isa. 14:24, 27; Dn. 4:35; Ac. 4:27f.; Rev. 17:17). Our Reformed Confessions are not in any stronger, more "Calvinistic," or more "objectionable" (!) language.

But the certainty of the decree of God as revealed to Paul did not make him fatalistic, careless, or think that all exhortation was needless. For Divine exhortation is often the means of realizing a promise. Such was the case here, "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved" (31). Was Paul referring to a condition in the decree of God? Is His purpose not absolute, but conditional? the condition being that all remain in the ship? So the Arminian would understand it, saying that it was in the power of these men to leave the ship and so frustrate God's purpose. If the men had not stayed on the vessel, God's purpose could not have been realized as planned. He would have to resort to the emergency measure of a miracle! The implication is concerning any sinner, that he cannot be saved without his own efforts. Scripture denies this. The promise (24) is as absolute as possible. Verse 22 declares the preordained end of the decree of God, and in that end He could have saved them by a pure miracle; but He did not. He rather ordained the use of means (31) to that end. Predestination is not inconsistent with human freedom, nor does it remove all motives for human exertion. It was absolutely certain that all those who were in the ship with Paul were to be saved. Yet it was equally certain that in order to secure this end, the sailors had to remain aboard. Both end and means are sovereignly and certainly fixed in the decree of God, and so neither must nor can fail. The means was the seafarers remaining in the

ship, and the means are always inseparably connected with the end. There is no end to be expected without the means God has ordained to the end. And failure or refusal to use God-ordained means is to tempt God (Lk. 4:9, 12). So the one means of remaining with the ship was secured by another relative means, namely this very exhortation of Paul (31), and its effect on the soldiers related in the next verse. One of the means God employs in executing His purpose is to frustrate the purposes of men (cf. v. 42f.). But God leaves nothing to chance, contingency or the whims of man; for under such circumstances God's purpose would be a failure, and the possibility would remain that not a man in the world would be saved.

Just so in the matter of the salvation of the soul, it is all settled in the ordination of God, and is, therefore, certain, absolute, unconditional; and as the decree of God is infinite, eternal and immutable, so necessary and certain is our salvation. This is the predetermined soteric end. The means are regeneration, faith, holiness, and perseverance, and are just as predetermined, for without them there is no salvation. Even such an insignificant means as eating (34) is not by God's purpose overlooked. For their strength must be kept up for the extreme exertion soon to be required of them in making their escape from their perils. Ordained means are to an ordained end, infallibly so, for it is not possible that the Word of God (24) should ever fail! Prayer too is one of these means. For when Paul "had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all: and when he had broken it, he began to eat. Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took some meat" (35, 36). This teaches us that grace at meals is to be said, even when we are in public, and is not to be omitted on such occasions, as it is just as essential then to confess God as the source of every blessing as when we eat in private. This, Paul's action, confirmed his words, showing that he sincerely believed them himself as more than pious platitudes. He practiced what he preached. This became another means that God used to hearten the men, and to bring them to do as bidden.

The fact that the centurion kept the soldiers from their purpose to kill the prisoners (42, 43) is another Divine means through which the original promise (22) is realized. We say again that the veto of ungodly men is a means God uses to attain His own purpose. But why was this centurion "willing to save Paul," and to veto the overture of the soldiers? Because "when a man's ways please the Lord, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him . . . (and) a man's heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps" (Prov. 16:7, 9). This according to the principle, "The first thing in purpose is the last thing in execution."

What then is the ultimate reason for that which we read in the words, "And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land" (44)? This: "the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord" (Pro. 16:33). Here we have the full realization of the Lord's promise to Paul. Not one was lost. All

(Continued on page 399)

IN HIS FEAR

A Million Dollar Rain

The things most essential for life are free.

Two things that we need above all for our earthly, physical life do not cost us one cent.

Yea, three things there are which we need not buy and yet need continually as indispensable for our earthly existence.

The sun comes up each morning with its life-giving light. You need not drop a coin in a slot to insure its rising tomorrow morning. It is not one of those benefits which the citizens of the world enjoy and receive out of the taxes they pay to their governments. You cannot buy that sunlight. What will you give God for it? How big a check do you suppose ought to be made out for it? Just what value do you attach to it? And that wherewith a man in his foolishness might try to reimburse God for this great gift, from whom did he get this very thing wherewith he would repay God? That this sunlight is indispensable for our very life no one will deny. Yet it is absolutely free, untaxed and given apart from all that which we may do or fail to do. You will be held accountable in the day of days for all the use you have made of that sunlight. It is a creature over which man has been placed as God's priest. He is steward also of that sunshine. But he will never be sent a bill for it. God does not run a department store. God is not a business man out to make a dollar or two. And in times of inflation that sunshine costs you no more than it did in times of depression with their lower prices. The sunshine is free.

And though there are times and ways in which you may have to pay for water, and the city sends you your water bill periodically, yet the rain is free. Millions and millions of tons of rain fall upon our land every year. We have to wait for it. It comes at most inconvenient times, and often in greater amounts than we like. But it is not a thing that we must or can buy. Indeed there are these "rainmakers" who charge a fee for their labor and for the maintenance of their equipment and supplies. We will not at this time enter into the merits or lack of merits of these attempts to obtain this free commodity, rain. But the fact remains that these clouds which these "rainmakers" seed must first come their way and come without charge. No man can direct the moist air that forms these clouds. And even if he could produce the cloud as well as seed it for a shower and "milk" it of its water, that moist air they cannot buy. That we need that rain no one in his right mind will deny. Without it no food will grow in the field. Without it our rivers and fountains will dry up. And without water man cannot live. He can live without food for a longer period than he can live without water. And freely it drips and pours out of the sky upon our land.

And again, there are times when because of a serious physical condition a tank of oxygen must be purchased. Yet

the air which we breathe all the days of our life from birth to death we inhale without receiving a bill for it monthly or annually. No one denies us the right to breathe in all the air we please. It is there free of charge by the providence of God. It, too, is an essential of our earthly lives; and without it sunshine and rain have no meaning and are of no use to us. Indeed, three things there are which we need; and yet we need not buy these or are charged one penny for them by the Living God Who supplies them free of charge, yea also to those who demand a fee from us.

There is something beneficial about living in a community that is predominantly agricultural. One learns man's dependency upon God, upon His rain and His sunshine to a degree that the factory worker and office help cannot learn it. Where men have rain gauges and compare the amounts of moisture they have received on the streets, one becomes quite conscious of what departures there are from the normal pattern and the amount needed for the proper growth of plants. Indeed, there is a measure of truth in it that a farmer loses his crop seven times during the summer only to gain it back again in the fall. We say, there is a measure of truth in it, especially when you are speaking of the farmer in general and do not speak exclusively of the child of God who plows his land, sows his seed and reaps his harvest in the fear of the Lord. But it is just as true, no, it is the truth and not simply a statement that contains a measure of the truth, that the believing farmer, the man who farms IN HIS FEAR learns a dependency upon God that men in all other occupations could very profitably learn. He sows his seed in faith. And he knows what it means to wait upon the Lord. He is keenly aware, this believing farmer, that all his efforts are in vain unless it pleases God to send him the rain in its seasons. We say again, there is something beneficial about living in a community where this truth is so close at hand. There is something spiritually wholesome and something of the more seriousness of life to be in such a position where one must wait upon the Lord and wherein one learns at first hand that close tie between God and the sustenance of our mortal frames.

And times such as those through which these parts have gone and still to a great degree are present, when applied by the Spirit of Christ, leads one to true thankfulness unto God. This, indeed, in our land of abundance and of untold luxuries even in periods of "recession" and "depression" is a rare thing. Living in the bigger cities, bringing home our pay check from the office or factory regularly, buying our food in the supermarket makes for life in which rain and sunshine are detached from our food supply. If our supermarket cannot get it here, it will get it there. The shelves of the store are always full. It is not our concern but that of the store manager where he will get his supplies. And that gratitude, that thankful heart for these essentials of life that God gives so freely is a rare thing.

Indeed, the last half year has not been one in this vicinity that would give one a smug, independent and indifferent at-

titude over against that all-important element of rain. Powder dry soil that is so lacking in moisture that even at temperatures some twenty degrees below zero it will not freeze; cracks in the soil wide enough for a man to lay his hands sideways in them because of drying out of the soil; water pipes that freeze six to eight feet below the surface of the ground because these wide cracks allow the cold air to penetrate deeply into the soil; city and town water supplies down so low that water must be rationed, cars may not be washed, lawns may not be sprinkled; farmers being forced because of dry wells to make one or two trips a day to town for a tank of water for their cattle; these are not things that make a man feel as though he is the master of his fate. Even the most outspoken unbeliever realizes that there is a power beyond his control that sends or withholds the rain. He may call it fate. He may try to explain it by cycles of dry weather or by wind currents and even atomic blasts which have changed the pattern of prevailing winds; but he feels very keenly his helplessness.

When then it pleases God to send two or three inches of this precious water from the sky, that ungodly man will speak of a million dollar rain. And we have our own flesh according to which we also understand this language. That farmer who has had this added cost of going to town and buying water for his cattle rejoices that he is saved this expense. And adding up all the instances where farmers over a vast area are required to buy water, procure gas for the tractor or truck, purchase a tank for hauling this amounts up to many, many dollars. Whether it will be a million dollar rain to save that much money depends on the amount of rain and the number of farmers who save because of it. But when a crop failure seems imminent and then the good "soaker" comes pouring out of the skies upon these dry lands, very soon a million dollars' worth of food will grow where it seemed as though all would wither away or fail even to germinate in the soil. Soon a million dollars' worth of crops are produced. And in that sense it is a rain that brings a million dollars into the pockets of those who produce the food we buy and eat.

Yet this is hardly the language to be expected upon the lips of the child of God. A million dollar rain? We insist again, it is an absolutely free rain. Man may acquire millions of dollars because of it; but it did not cost him one cent. And the expression, a million dollar rain, is a very carnal statement. It lacks every vestige of the language of faith. It is not uttered in His fear. How can it be? For it looks away from God rather than unto Him. The man who sees that rain pouring down and his dry lands drinking it in as fast as it comes down and then comes up with this statement, surely was not thinking of Him Who gave this rain so liberally and freely. He was thinking only of his flesh, of material things and how many dollars he would make on what he received free of charge. It is the expression of a man who lives by bread alone. We all live by bread. But this expres-

sion utters the thought of a soul that lives by bread alone.

Very plainly the man who can utter these words when the Almighty God changes the thirsty land into a well-watered plain is not looking at God when he makes such a remark but instead at things. It is not a theocentric expression and measures God's goodness in dollars and cents. If you please, that which God in His goodness gives free of charge, man sees only in terms of dollars and cents for his own carnal satisfaction. He who is God's priest—or at least has the calling and inescapable obligation to be such—does not see that rain, and the crops it makes possible, as that which he must consecrate and dedicate unto God, so that through him this speechless creature returns to God in uttered praise and thanksgiving. Instead he sees himself as his own possession and these material things as that which he has coming to him and as that which he may receive for himself for his own lusts. Out of such an attitude of the heart comes also the complaint which we heard on the street after the beginning of this cheering rain, "Why did those people get more than we? We need it worse than they do; and we deserve it more than they do." Imagine! That is not the speech of His fear.

The believing farmer receiving that abundance of rain does two things: he falls on his knees in thankfulness before God expressing praise unto Him as the almighty and sovereign God; and he asks for grace to use this gift to the glory of God's name. He does not speak of a million dollar rain. In His fear he speaks of a sovereign, all-wise and gracious God.

J.A.H.

"GOD GIVING PAUL ALL THAT SAILED WITH HIM"

(Continued from page 397)

this is a N. T. type of our salvation. We are safe and secure in Christ because we are predestinated unto eternal glory. For no one embraced in God's plan of salvation shall be allowed to perish. Salvation is our destined end. Yet we are at the same time saved through the use of means which include the hardships we experience in the way, afflictions, persecution, storms, quicksands, darkness, the beating waves, a leaky ship, clinging to bits of wreckage; in fact, all things which seem contrary to our ultimate salvation, yet nevertheless work together for our good. So that just as it was absolutely certain that Paul would be taken to Rome, so it is equally certain that the people of God shall be brought to heaven. "Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ . . . For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified them He also glorified" (Phil. 1:6; Ro. 8:29f.).

The good news of the Gospel is ordained to be proclaimed to the ends of the earth. God could realize this purpose by directly and individually revealing the truth to the heart of

(Continued on page 405)

Contending For The Faith

The Church and the Sacraments

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

THE SEVEN SACRAMENTS.

CONFIRMATION

We will now continue our quotation on CONFIRMATION as recorded in the New Schaff-Herzog Religious Encyclopedia as follows:

Meanwhile in certain districts in Hesse and Strasburg a rite had been introduced, instituted by Butzer, who was acquainted with the Moravian laying on of hands (the *Kirchenordnung* of Cassel, 1539). The same liturgical manual contains the formula still in use: "Receive the Holy Ghost, safeguard and shelter against all malice, strength and help toward all good, from the gracious hand of God the Father." But this rite gained ground in only a few districts of the Lutheran jurisdiction, since during the transitional negotiations this modified *confirmatio* fell under suspicion of being an unjustified concession to the Church of Rome, and was on that account rejected by the opposers of the Interim. Hence for a long time the rite was not instituted in some of the Lutheran districts, though it readily gained admission with the Calvinists. Among the Lutherans it was customary to observe only the so-called private confirmation; the catechumen, in his later boyhood, was brought by his sponsors before the qualified minister, by him examined, and thereupon if found competent, admitted to communion. The general adoption of public confirmation was expedited by the desire to enhance the effect of catechetical instruction by a ceremonial conclusion; by the endeavor to counteract the inroads of the Roman propaganda, and by the effort to implant religion in the child's receptive nature. Since, however, the introduction of public confirmation coincided in part with a time when the existing liturgies were no longer binding, the rite was frequently shaped according to the preference of individual ministers.

Now that confirmation has become in the Lutheran churches a generally solemnized ecclesiastical rite, and also a church rite which even the outer world notices with deference to family ties and friendship, theologians have naturally attempted to account for its nature and meaning. It has been regarded as supplementary to baptism (Schleiermacher), or as an act of reception into the confessional church (Wegschneider, Bretschneider); as a testimonial of majority in the case of those baptized as children (Nitzsch, Dorner); as reception into the congregation of adults, as a means of constituting a more limited congregation upon which devolves the direction of the life of the Church, but which also alone enjoys the privilege of communion (J.C.C. von Hofmann); as a consummation of the state of a baptized catechumen and

as a renewal of the baptismal bond on the subjective side; as a lay ordination and reception into the communing congregation (Zezschwitz); as a charismal communication of the Spirit through the laying on of hands (Vilmar). To all these explanations there are weighty objections. The theory of modern times, that confirmation in so far as it bestows the right to communion should be deferred, is subject to the objection that a potential participation in the Eucharist is compatible with such penitent and faithful reception as may be presupposed in the case of baptized and instructed children. So it is best to bestow the right to commune upon baptized and instructed children, by solemn confirmation or laying on of hands before the assembled congregation.

In the Anglican Church there has been a widespread popular tendency to look upon the rite in the light of a formal admission to communion, the rubric in the Prayer-book reading: "And there shall none be admitted to the Holy Communion until such time as he be confirmed, or be ready and desirous to be confirmed." But the latter alternative shows that no essential connection exists between the two; and, as a matter of fact, there is no practical difference between the teaching of at least the High-church party and that of the Roman Catholic Church on this subject. The definition in Article XXV, which includes confirmation as among "those five commonly called sacraments," but "not to be counted for sacraments of the Gospel," seems to place it with the things "have grown of the corrupt following of the Apostles"—as regards, that is, the medieval form. Omitting the chrism, and emphasizing the laying on of hands, the Anglican Church goes back to the New Testament record; but it is contended by Roman Catholic theologians that the contact with the bishop's hand in the act of unction, to say nothing of the blow upon the cheek (intended to symbolize the conferring of the character of a soldier of Christ, who must be ready to "endure hardness"), is quite sufficient to cover this point."—thus far our quotation from the New Schaff-Herzog Religious Encyclopedia.

PENANCE

On the sacrament of penance the Roman Catholic Council of Trent, in its fourteenth session, Nov. 25, 1551, expressed itself as follows:

CHAPTER I

On the necessity, and on the institution of the Sacrament of Penance.

If such, in all the regenerate, were their gratitude toward God, as that they constantly preserved the justice received in baptism by this bounty and grace, there would not have been need for another sacrament, besides that of baptism itself, to be instituted for the remission of sins. But because God, *rich in mercy, knows our frame*, he hath bestowed a remedy of life even on those who may, after baptism, have delivered themselves up to the servitude of sin and the power of the devil,—the sacrament to wit of Penance, by which the benefit of the death of Christ is applied to those who have fallen after baptism. Penitence was indeed at all times

necessary, in order to attain to grace and justice, for all men who had defiled themselves by any mortal sin, even for those who begged to be washed by the sacrament of Baptism; that so, their perverseness renounced and amended, they might, with a hatred of sin and godly sorrow of mind, detest so great an offense of God. Wherefore the prophet says: *Be converted and do penance for all your iniquities, and iniquity shall not be your ruin.*" (Notice that the Roman Catholic Church, very arbitrarily, translates this text in Ezekiel 18:30 as: "be converted and do penance for all your iniquities." Ezekiel 18:30 reads as follows: "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord God. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin." And it is plain that what the Romish Church translates as "do penance for all your iniquities," should be translated as "turn yourselves." The original Hebrew here does not permit the Romish translation. — H.V.) The Lord also said: *Except you do penance, you shall also likewise perish* (the text in Luke 13:5 reads: "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." — H.V.); and Peter, the prince of the apostles, recommending penitence to sinners who were about to be initiated by baptism, said: *Do penance, and be baptized every one of you* (Acts 2:38). Nevertheless, neither before the coming of Christ was penitence a sacrament, nor is it such since his coming, to any previously to baptism. But the Lord then principally instituted the sacrament of penance, when, being raised from the dead, he breathed upon his disciples, saying: *Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.* By which action so signal, and words so clear the consent of all the Fathers has ever understood that the power of *forgiving and retaining sins* was communicated to the apostles and their lawful successors, for the reconciling of the faithful who have fallen after baptism. And the Catholic Church with great reason repudiated and condemned as heretics the Novatians, who of old obstinately denied that power of forgiving. Wherefore, this holy Synod, approving of and receiving as most true this meaning of those words of our Lord, condemns the fanciful interpretations of those who, in opposition to the institution of this sacrament, falsely wrest those words to the power of preaching the Word of God, and of announcing the Gospel of Christ.

CHAPTER II

On the Difference between the Sacrament of Penance and that of Baptism.

For the rest, this sacrament is clearly seen to be different from baptism in many respects: for besides that it is very widely different indeed in matter and form, which constitute the essence of a sacrament, it is beyond doubt certain that the minister of baptism need not be a judge, seeing that the Church exercises judgment on no one who has not entered therein through the gate of baptism. *For, what have I, saith the apostle, to do to judge them that are without?* It is other-

wise with those who are of *the household of faith*, whom Christ our Lord has once, by laver of baptism, made the members of his own body; for such, if they should afterwards have defiled themselves by any crime, he would no longer have them cleansed by a repetition of baptism — that being nowise lawful in the Catholic Church — but be placed as criminals before this tribunal; that, by the sentence of the priests, they might be freed, not once, but as often as, being penitent, they should, from their sins committed, flee thereunto. Furthermore, one is the fruit of baptism, and another that of penance. For, by baptism *putting on Christ*, we are made therein entirely a new creature, obtaining a full and entire remission of all sins; unto which newness and entireness, however, we are no ways able to arrive by the sacrament of Penance, without many tears and great labors on our parts, the divine justice demanding this; so that penance has justly been called by holy Fathers a laborious kind of baptism. And this sacrament of Penance is, for those who have fallen after baptism, necessary unto salvation; as baptism itself is for those who have not as yet been regenerated.

CHAPTER III

On the Parts and on the Fruit of this Sacrament

The Holy Synod doth furthermore teach, that the form of the sacrament of Penance, wherein its force principally consists, is placed in those words of the minister: *I absolve thee*, etc.; to which words indeed certain prayers are, according to the custom of holy Church, laudably joined, which nevertheless by no means regard the essence of that form, neither are they necessary for administration of the sacrament itself. But the acts of the penitent himself, to wit, contrition, confession, and satisfaction, are as it were the matter of this sacrament. Which acts, inasmuch as they are, by God's institution, required in the penitent for the integrity of the sacrament, and for the full and perfect remission of sins, are for this reason called the parts of penance. But the thing signified indeed, and the effect of this sacrament, as far as regards its force and efficacy, is reconciliation with God, which sometimes, in persons who are pious and who receive this sacrament with devotion, is wont to be followed by peace and serenity of conscience, with exceeding consolation of spirit. The holy Synod, whilst delivering these things touching the parts and the effect of this sacrament, condemns at the same time the opinions of those who contend that the terrors which agitate the conscience, and faith, are the parts of penance.

H.V.

Announcement

Classis East of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet the Lord willing on July 1, 1959 in the Southwest Protestant Reformed Church at 9:00 A. M. Delegates to this classis will please take note of the time and place as decided at the last meeting.

REV. M. SCHIPPER, *Stated Clerk*

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 10 (continued)

The first element in this personal assurance of perseverance is presented in Article 10 as follows: "This assurance . . . springs from faith in God's promises, which he has most abundantly revealed in his Word for our comfort." We may immediately notice three aspects of this proposition. In the first place, our assurance has its source in the promises of God. This is the key to all assurance. We noted previously that if the child of God is to have assurance, he must have God's own Word to him personally, telling him that he is His child, assuring him that he is a true and living member of the church of Christ, and giving him the certainty that he shall forever remain such a member of Christ's church. Our assurance must proceed from God, not from ourselves. This is not at all to say that this assurance is not *within* us; it certainly is. But that assurance in us does not have its *source* in us. Our assurance of sonship, and thus of heirship, cannot have its ground in us as sons, but must necessarily come from God as our Father. Suppose that we would say on some subjective ground or other that we are children of God, that we are heirs of God, but that we would never hear a single word from the mouth of our Father in heaven telling us that He owns us as His sons and heirs. What would that subjective assurance be worth as long as God did not acknowledge us as His children? It would be worthless. Assurance cannot proceed from the children in relation to the Father, but must proceed from the Father in relation to the children. And therefore the key element is the promises of God. All the promises of God, comprehended in the one promise, the sworn oath of God that He will lead all His elect in Christ to glory through the means of faith, form the ground of that assurance. Those promises are variously stated from various points of view, and they designate the children of God by various spiritual names. But they all express the one promise of God, His oath that He will lead the heirs of the promise, His beloved elect in Christ Jesus, unto everlasting life and glory.

Secondly, there is the element in this first proposition of the *Word*. The promises of God are most abundantly revealed in His Word for our comfort. This is of the utmost importance. We have already called attention to this from a negative point of view when we explained the position of false mysticism which is rejected in Article 10. The only knowledge of the promises of God that is available is in the Word of the Scriptures. Apart from them there is no promise

of God. God does not speak directly from heaven. The Word made flesh no more sojourns among us. No longer does God reveal His Word by prophets and apostles. But He has preserved His Word, revealed through prophets and apostles, in the Holy Scriptures. From those Scriptures, which are beginning to end the Word of God without error, unmixed with any word of man, and from them alone, is the knowledge of the promises of God derived. Without that Word of God our knowledge of God's promises and our assurance can have no content. Hence, we must have the Word of God. In that Word God reveals Himself as the God of our salvation in Christ Jesus. In that Word God reveals all the riches of His grace. In that Word God makes known the riches of the everlasting inheritance. In that Word God makes known who the heirs of the promise are. In that Word God gives His own divine guarantee that neither the inheritance nor the heirs of that inheritance shall ever perish. That is at once the practical, spiritual reason why the maintenance of the pure preaching of the Word is of such crucial importance. Adulterate that Word, and to whatever degree you adulterate it you necessarily deprive the children of God of the promises of God. Deny that Word, or replace it with the word of man completely, and the church has no more contact with the promises of God. And then assurance becomes impossible. For remember too that according to our Reformed faith, it is not merely the Bible, but it is the *Word preached* that is necessary for the assurance of faith. From this it also follows that a diligent use of the means of grace is necessary for a lively assurance. All other things being equal, that Christian who lives closest to the Word of God and makes faithful use of the means of grace, diligently attending to the preaching of the Word, will have the strongest assurance.

Thirdly, we find the element here of faith. This assurance springs from *faith* in the promises of God, which He has most abundantly revealed in His Word for our comfort. By faith I must appropriate the promises of God personally. A mere hearing of the Word of God's promise, and a mere intellectual knowledge of His promises, derived from His Word is not sufficient. In the first place, I must hold that Word of God to be true and reliable. But in the second place, I must receive that Word of God, which after all reveals His promises objectively, without mentioning me by my natural name,—I must receive that Word of God as directed to me. There must be such an act of heart and mind and will, receiving the promises of God, that results in a testimony of and in my spirit, "I am a child of God. I am an heir of His promises. I am and forever shall remain a living member of His church." That is assurance.

This brings us to the second proposition of this article: "This assurance springs from the testimony of the Holy Spirit, witnessing with our spirit, that we are children and heirs of God." This language is taken from Romans 8:16, 17: "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we

suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.”

After all the question still remains: whence is this faith-testimony of our spirit that we are the children and heirs of God? It is at this juncture that we must be very careful to preserve our Reformed heritage. That faith, as a conscious act of the child of God, is a reality in the soul of the saint no one cares to deny. And also that faith is absolutely necessary, that without it there is no assurance, is also in the very nature of the case. But that faith is the condition of assurance on our part, that this faith has its origin in us, that this testimony of our spirit that we are children of God originates in our spirit, either as to its power or its activity, is utterly foreign to Reformed thought. It militates against the very genius of the Reformed faith. And that idea makes all assurance essentially impossible. The moment that this assurance becomes in any sense and in the least degree the work of man, at that moment it is no more assurance. Assurance, if it is to be stable and sure, must be solely the work of God, independent of and unadulterated by any element of the work of man. But how, then, is it attained? Whence is that testimony of my own spirit that I am a child of God and an heir? How do I become personally certain that the promises of God, including all the promises of a sure inheritance and a certain obtaining of that inheritance, are for me personally? The Scriptures themselves are not sufficient. Their testimony is purely objective. They do not mention me by my natural name. They only reveal that God has chosen a people, that He adopts children, that He sealed that adoption in the blood of Jesus Christ, and that He has in store for all His children an everlasting inheritance of glory. They only reveal the identity of God's children from a spiritual viewpoint. They are the believers, the hungry and thirsty for righteousness, the poor in spirit, the meek, the mourners, the merciful, the pure in heart, the laboring and heavy laden, those who love God, those who keep His commandments, etc., etc. That is all objective. In itself that can never lead to the personal assurance of my being a child and heir. What then? Does God leave it to me to fill the position of sonship, offer me the opportunity of being a son? That would be hopeless. For as a natural child of the devil I could not and would not accept such an offer. Of myself I will always despise any assurance from Him. Does God perhaps ask us to let His Holy Spirit into our hearts, so that His Spirit, the Spirit of adoption, may then give us assurance? Then assurance is still dependent on us; and as long as that is the case, the door of our heart will be forever closed to the Holy Spirit. No, the answer of the Scriptures given by our *Canons* is that the Spirit witnesses with our spirit that we are children and heirs. The Holy Spirit so operates and applies the Word of God, His own Word, inspired by Him, to our hearts that we have the personal assurance of being children and heirs of God. Thus, and thus alone, do I have assurance that is firm and sure, based upon God's own Word to me personally. Let us sum it up briefly.

There is, in the first place, the speech of God objectively in His Word, the Word of the Scriptures that are inspired by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of our adoption. There is, in the second place, the testimony of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of adoption, with our spirit. He takes that objective revelation of God's promises in the Scriptures, and applies it effectually and irresistibly, — for He is God! — to our hearts. And there is, in the third place, the resultant faith-testimony of our own spirit, “I am a child and heir of God.”

One more element this article mentions, equally important: “This assurance springs, lastly, from a serious and holy exercise of a good conscience and of good works.” Once more we must be careful not to sail in Arminian waters in this connection. The question is: what is the relation between this last element and the preceding two? Does the work of man begin at this stage? Is the exercise of a good conscience and of good works, — briefly, sanctification, — the condition of the Spirit's testimony? Granted: there is no assurance for him who does not exercise a good conscience and good works. Granted: there is no testimony of the Spirit that we are children and heirs for him who walks in the way of the ungodly and continues in sin. But the question is: why? And the very root answer is: because the Spirit of adoption is the HOLY Spirit. And indeed that means that He operates to assure the people of God only in the sphere of holiness, in the light, not in the darkness. But it means more. He is the author of the light and of holiness. He is the author of holiness also in the heart and life of the elect. He takes the blessings of salvation in Christ and applies them to the elect. He takes the righteousness of Christ, the holiness of Christ, the adoption that is accomplished in Christ's blood and resurrection, and applies them to God's elect. He not only gives assurance of adoption, but He realizes our adoption and makes us actual children of God. His work is such that its inevitable fruit is the production of a sanctified and holy child of God, a saint. And now His work and His testimony, His sanctification and His assurance, cannot be separated. He does not assure children of the devil, who are and remain children of the devil, that they are children of God. But He changes children of the devil into children of the living God, and to those children of the living God, and to them only, He gives the assurance that they are God's children and heirs. Hence, it is not because sanctification is the condition of assurance, but because sanctification is the inevitable fruit of the operation of the Spirit of adoption, that assurance springs from an earnest and holy exercise of a good conscience and of good works. The child of God who by faith clears his conscience of the accusation of guilt by fleeing to God for forgiveness, the child of God who fights against and forsakes sin and has an earnest desire to walk in all good works, — that child of God, under the preaching of the promise and by the testimony of the Holy Spirit with his spirit, has the assurance of certain perseverance.

Hence, it is the old and ever wonderful gospel: all of God, nothing of us. *Soli Deo gloria!* H.C.H.

DECENCY and ORDER

Sundry Matters Under Article 37

The main principle of Article 37 of the Church Order we have discussed in our last article. This concerned the question whether or not the deacons are part of the consistory. The Church Order definitely favors the view that the consistory is composed only of ministers and elders. To this the deacons may be added by special regulation and then only when the consistory is small in number. Others, however, include all the office-bearers of the church in the consistory and then make distinction in the labors to be performed according to the nature of the special offices. Under this arrangement, separate meetings of elders and deacons tends to greater efficiency and expediency and, therefore, should be held when practicable. Favoring this view is the Belgic Confession and the proposed revision of Article 37 of the Church Order that is now being considered by the Christian Reformed Synod.

Beside this question there are various related matters that are either expressed or implied in this article. Of considerable significance for Reformed Church Polity is the statement found in this article: "*In all churches there shall be a consistory . . .*" The institute of the church cannot exist without a consistory and the consistory cannot exist without the institute. The consistory is an integral part of the church institute so that whenever a congregation is established, a consistory must immediately be constituted. This view refutes the idea of congregationalism which vests the government of the church in the congregation. The church is not a *self-ruling* body but it is ruled by Christ through men who are placed in the offices, and who, in those offices, form the consistory of the church. Related to this principle is the fact that in Reformed churches the congregation takes part in the appointment of men to the offices and the consistory also consults and acknowledges the congregation in various matters. However, the authority to decide is vested in the consistory and not in the congregation. Voetius states that the consistory is the organ through which the church functions, even as the eye is the organ through which the body sees. And Dr. Bouwman says that the members of the visible manifestation of the body of Christ, i.e., the members of each particular church, exercise their rights and duties as an organism organically, through the offices. When a church is to be organized the believers appoint certain brethren to office, under guidance of neighboring churches if possible. However, as soon as the offices have been instituted, these offices begin to govern and guide the affairs of the church. Hence, "*In all churches there shall be a consistory . . .*"

Article 37 further states: "The minister of the Word (or the ministers, if there be more than one, in turn) shall preside and regulate the proceedings." There is no principle involved in this ruling but this is done because, as a rule,

ministers are better qualified by reason of their special training and more extended experience. It is simply a matter of good order to have the best qualified member of the consistory preside over the gathering. This is a point that consistories may well keep in mind when they choose the various functionaries, particularly the vice-president of the consistory. If a congregation should be without a minister, the vice-president of the consistory will have to preside and regulate the proceedings. This role should therefore be assigned to the best qualified elder. The function of presiding officer in the consistory does not endow the minister of the church with greater powers or broader authority than the other elders. His function is merely to regulate the proceedings, to see to it that all things are done decently and in good order, and this he must do as a brother amongst brethren and in no way lord it over his fellow office-bearers.

The rule that in congregations where there are more than one minister, these shall preside in turn, is designed undoubtedly to avoid hierarchy, or the lording of one office-bearer over another. The Church Order knows of no distinction such as *pastor* and *assistant pastor* as is often used. The term *associate pastor* is to be preferred. Where there are more than one minister in a congregation, they are all ministers of equal rank and position and as such they by rotation preside over the meetings of the consistory. This is equality and a proper arrangement.

The article also makes mention of the frequency of consistorial meetings. This is interesting because it is undoubtedly one of those more-or-less arbitrary rules that is scarcely observed today. In most churches the consistory meetings are held biweekly or monthly but the Church Order stipulates that "*at least in larger congregations the consistory shall, as a rule, meet once a week.*" The very wording of this rule allows for some flexibility. Originally the Synod of Emden in 1571 made this ruling but it soon became evident that in many churches it was not at all necessary to meet this often. In the redaction of 1905 the rule was relinquished somewhat by providing that consistories *in larger churches* should *as a rule* meet once a week. We have retained this provision in our Church Order to the present but in the questions that are asked by the Church Visitors we have: "*Ques. 7 — Does the consistory meet regularly in accord with the needs of the congregation, at least once a month?*" This is a reasonable rule. Consistories should meet and be required to meet as often as the needs of the congregation require. The minimum number of meetings should be twelve a year and these, as well as the deacons' meetings, if separately held, should be announced to the congregation so that opportunity may be given to any member to be present if so desired. Special consistory meetings or meetings called to finish work that could not be done at the regular meeting need not be announced.

It is interesting to observe that three of the four decisions recorded in connection with Article 37 had to do with

congregational meetings. Obviously the reason that these decisions are recorded here is twofold: Firstly, because nowhere in the body of the Church Order proper are congregational meetings mentioned. The Church Order knows of only three ecclesiastical gatherings: the consistory, the classis, and the synod. In the second place, a mere glance at these decisions indicates the close relationship between the consistory and the congregational meetings and, therefore, they are pertinent to the article that treats *the consistory*. The decisions contain the following:

a) the officers of the consistory shall function at congregational meetings.

b) the minutes of these meetings are to be entered into the minute-book of the consistory.

c) only matters brought by the consistory may be treated on the congregational meeting.

d) the consistory has the prerogative to determine the extent and manner in which any matter a member may desire to have treated at the congregational meeting shall be treated.

From all this it appears that our so-called congregational meetings are held under the direct supervision and jurisdiction of the consistory. Furthermore, it is generally agreed that the congregational meetings have no real, official, decisive status. They are not a determinative body. They can probably be called deliberative or advisory gatherings. Sometimes they are construed as consistory meetings to which all the male (and in our day in many Reformed circles also female) members in full and regular standing are invited in order that certain matters may be considered under the direction of the consistory. The decisions, therefore, that are made at these meetings are not valid until the consistory has ratified them by expressing its approval. Usually that approval is assumed so that in its action the consistory somewhat automatically follows the opinion and desire expressed at the congregational meeting.

This, however, does not necessarily have to be the case. It is conceivable that a certain matter, for example, was decided by the congregation but that shortly after that meeting circumstances arose that would make it unwise to carry out that decision. The consistory is then responsible to see to it that this unwise course is not followed. If need be they can call another meeting of the congregation and have the whole matter reconsidered but this is not imperative. They can simply stop the matter by refraining from executing the decision that has been made by the congregation. Or, better still, they can overrule that decision and so inform the congregation giving the valid reasons for this action also.

This does not mean, however, that the consistory can simply ignore the decisions of the congregation. Then there would be no point in even having congregational meetings. The consistory must have very good reasons to overrule such decisions and must always act in the best interests of the congregation and not according to their own wishes if these should conflict with the desires of the church. They may

never "lord it over God's heritage but always must be examples to the flock" (I Peter 5:4).

Finally, there is the matter connection with Article 37 in which consistories are required annually to furnish the Synod with an exact count of their membership. The importance of this is that on the basis of the statistics furnished by the consistories the Classical and Synodical assessments are levied. If these statistics are not correctly computed, it can make considerable difference in both the budget of the local church and that of the Synod. It can result in serious inequities in that a church is assessed too much or too little. This will be not the case if consistories carefully observe the rules given under Article 37. These rules cover instances where either the husband or wife is a confessing member of the church, where a widower or widow functions as the head of the family and where there are several individual members in a church. Three of the latter are to be regarded as one family. These rules give lucid instruction as to how to compute the number of families. In spite of this clarity, however, miscalculations do occur. Only last year our Synod had to call the attention of all the churches to these rules. Consistories must observe them very seriously. They are part of the Church Order and their strict observance contributes to good order and decency.

G.V.D.B.

"GOD GIVING PAUL ALL THAT SAILED WITH HIM"

(Continued from page 399)

men without the use of any means. He could let down from heaven in a great sheet all the Bibles necessary to all men to read the truth. But this is not His method. The Gospel is not spread in this way. God uses the agency of His church to disseminate the Word and preach the tidings of comfort and joy. There is, then, nothing of truth in the contention that the effect of faith in God's absolute, unconditional decree is to render all exertion needless and of no avail. Fatalism and carelessness are not the result of faith in the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. Such a faith quickens us to the use of God's appointed means. For we are elect (Eph. 1:4) unto faith (2:8) and the use of many God-ordained works (2:10). Therefore we are assured that "there shall be no loss of any man's life," that God hath given us (the elect) all those that are in the Ark of safety, that "there shall not an hair fall from the head of any," that only the ship (the reprobate shell) shall be lost, but we escape "all safe to land." "So shalt thou dwell within the land."

R.C.H.

Announcement

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

ALL AROUND US

"The Answer"

This is the title of a little pamphlet concerning which I wrote in the last issue of *The Standard Bearer*, excerpts of which I compared with the latest stand taken on the matter of common grace by those who left us in 1953. This time I would like to quote as much of the pamphlet as our space will allow. Our purpose is three-fold. First, that those in the Christian Reformed Church responsible for seeking reunion with those who left us may know exactly what they believed and confessed when they were still with us. Second, that those who were carried along in the schism of 1953 may be reminded of what they believed and confessed when they were still with us, and urging them to return from the error their leaders would have them now embrace which clearly militates against their former confession. And third, that our own Protestant Reformed people may read once more what they have always subscribed to as it was expressed by those who now have forsaken the truth. The pamphlet, as we wrote last time, was written some years ago by the Revs. M. Gritters and A. Cammenga, who with others have been negotiating with a committee of the Christian Reformed Church for a return to that church. Without further comment we quote the pamphlet.

"Undoubtedly at some time or other you have heard about the Protestant Reformed Churches. And there is no question in our minds but that you also have been informed through some source or other as to the history of these Protestant Reformed Churches, how they came into existence, what they teach, how they are actively engaged in the various fields belonging to church activity, etc. Possibly you have been honestly and well informed, but it is just as well possible that your source of information was unreliable and false. Possibly, too, there are still some questions left unanswered which you have asked or would like to ask about these Protestant Reformed Churches. Therefore for your personal information and benefit, as well as in justice to ourselves, we present in this little pamphlet the most common questions asked over and over again about these churches and together with these questions we present you an honest answer, hoping and praying that in some little measure it may serve you that you, too, may help defend the glorious and precious heritage of our Reformed fathers for which the Protestant Reformed Churches stand.

"Here, then follow the questions most generally asked about these churches, and with these questions we present the answers:

"1. What is signified by the name PROTESTANT REFORMED? Does it differ from what is commonly known as Reformed or Christian Reformed?

Answer: By the name PROTESTANT REFORMED

we signify that we champion the truth which the fathers championed in the Reformation of the sixteenth century over against the doctrines of Pelagianism and Arminianism. In this they differ from the Reformed and Christian Reformed Churches of today in that this glorious and specific doctrine of the Reformation is revived, emphasized and strictly adhered to in the Protestant Reformed Churches rather than taking the middle-of-the-road position as is done in so many circles incorporating the name 'Reformed.'

"2. What is the doctrine of the Arminians and Pelagians which is so vigorously opposed by any true Reformed church?

Answer: Briefly stated their doctrine contains the following errors: (a) The saving grace of God is intended for all men individually, thus denying sovereign election. (b) Universal atonement, maintaining that Christ died for all men. (c) A denial of man's total depravity. (d) That God's saving grace can be resisted by man, making salvation dependent on man's free will. (e) A denial of the perseverance of saints, that is, true faith and grace can ultimately be lost by those who once possessed it.

"3. What is so objectionable to this doctrine?

Answer: It is a denial of God's sovereignty since it makes God dependent on the free will of man; and a denial of God's sovereignty is a denial of God Himself.

"4. Do the Protestant Reformed Churches teach something new?

Answer: Indeed not! The Protestant Reformed Churches strictly adhere to Calvinism, emphasizing the following points: God's sovereignty in His counsel of election and reprobation; particular atonement; the total depravity of man; perseverance of saints; irresistible grace.

"5. Upon what Confessions or Creeds are the Protestant Reformed Churches based?

Answer: Upon the Three Forms of Unity, which are the basis of all churches of Reformed persuasion, consisting of: The Heidelberg Catechism, The Netherlands or Belgic Confession, The Canons of Dordt.

"6. But did not the Protestant Reformed Churches add the so-called 'Three Points' to their Confessions?

Answer: Indeed not! The so-called 'Three Points' were composed and adopted by the CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCHES at their Synod of 1924. (See Acts of Chr. Ref. Synod, 1924, pgs. 145, 146.)

"7. Why did the Christian Reformed Churches formulate these 'Three Points'?

Answer: They are supposedly an explanation of the Confession but were primarily intended to depose certain ministers of their group who did not agree with the doctrine of Common Grace which was becoming popular in the Christian Reformed Churches.

"8. What is actually taught in the 'Three Points' of the Christian Reformed Churches?

Answer: In brief, the following: Point I teaches that besides the saving grace of God shown only to the elect there is also a certain favor of God which He shows to His

creatures in general, including the wicked reprobate. As proof for this contention Point I refers to the so-called *general offer of the Gospel*. Point II teaches that through the operation of the Holy Spirit, without renewing the heart of man, God protects the good that remains in man since the fall so that the progress of sin is checked and restrained, with the result that man did not become as corrupt as we might expect, and therefore did not fully die as God had said. Point III teaches that man *would have been* and *would be* totally depraved, that is, wholly incapable of doing any good and inclined to all evil, if there were no general operation of God's Spirit in the heart of unregenerated man; but now, through God's common grace, man is not totally depraved which implies that man is able to do a measure of good in the sight of God.

"9. Why did the Protestant Reformed Churches so vehemently oppose these 'Three Points'?

Answer: Because the 'Three Points' imply all the fundamental errors of Arminianism and Pelagianism. The First Point is principally a denial that the grace of God is particular, since it teaches that the preaching of the Gospel is grace to all that hear the gospel, while Scripture itself teaches that for many it is a savour of death unto death (II Cor. 2:16). The Second and Third Points are fundamentally a denial of the Scriptural doctrine of the total depravity of natural man (Rom. 3). And these errors are all the more dangerous because they *pretend* to be in conformity with the Reformed Confessions while in reality they are contrary to the Reformed truth and undermine the church of Christ.

"10. What is the theory of Common Grace which is so often mentioned in connection with the controversy between the Christian Reformed and the Protestant Reformed Churches?

Answer: Besides the saving grace of God there is another grace which God shows to the elect and reprobate alike, the godly and ungodly, alleged to be manifest in the things of this present time as they are common to all men. This latter grace is called 'common grace.' This theory was adopted by the Christian Reformed Churches in 1924 and it forms the heart and soul of the 'Three Points.' In fact, in Point I the Christian Reformed Churches teach that common grace is evidenced in the preaching of the gospel since by it God indicates that He is graciously inclined to and bestows grace upon all the hearers, and is therefore gracious to all.

"11. Why do Protestant Reformed Churches object to the theory of Common grace?

Answer: Common grace is a denial of sovereign election and reprobation and of particular atonement and naturally implies that Christ died for all and therefore salvation depends upon the choice and free will of the sinner. It is contrary to Scripture and the Reformed Confessions which teach that God is gracious only to His people and is a God of wrath to all those who choose to walk in sin. (Prov. 3:32-35; Ps. 146:7-9; Ps. 147:6; Ps. 73:18-20.)

"12. But would it not have been better if the Protestant Reformed people had remained in the Christian Reformed Churches and tried to improve conditions?

Answer: The Protestant Reformed people had no choice in this matter, for it should be remembered that they did not *leave* the Christian Reformed Churches but that they were *cast out*.

"13. But why were the Protestant Reformed people cast out of the Christian Reformed Churches?

Answer: Because certain consistories together with their pastors refused to sign and agree to the 'Three Points' because they were convinced that the 'Three Points' were contrary to Scripture and the Confessions.

"14. Is it not true that one of the Christian Reformed Synods had declared that the doctrine of these ministers, whom they deposed because of their refusal to sign the 'Three Points,' was REFORMED? How, then, could such ministers be deposed?

Answer: Yes, the Synod of the Christian Reformed Churches of 1924 declared: 'It cannot be denied that they (nl. these ministers) are *Reformed* in respect to the fundamental truths as they are formulated in the Confessions even though it be with an inclination to onesidedness.' (Acts of Christian Reformed Synod, 1924, pg. 147.) How these ministers with their consistories could still be deposed can only be explained by saying that such deposition was an act of greatest injustice caused by a sad dislike for the true Reformed doctrine." So far the pamphlet.

I see that I do not have room to quote the rest in this issue. So, the Lord willing, we will do this the next time. We also at the beginning of this article had not planned to make any further comment. But there are, however, two remarks we still wish to make.

In the first place, if the reader will refer to question 14 once more he will notice that the Revs. M. Gritters and A. Cammenga had strong convictions as to the reasons why certain ministers and their consistories were deposed by the Christian Reformed Church in 1924. They conceive of these depositions as "an act of greatest injustice" and "caused by a sad dislike for the true Reformed doctrine." Now it is quite apparent from the reports of the committees negotiating the return of the Revs. Gritters and Cammenga et al to the Christian Reformed Church that this matter is not up for discussion. Nowhere do you read that the sin of deposing men who were confessionally Reformed was even considered. In our judgment this is a plain case of dishonesty especially on the part of those who left us.

But notice in the second place, the charges the Revs. Gritters and Cammenga laid at the feet of the Christian Reformed Church. How can the latter even talk about receiving those who left us back into their fold until these serious charges are properly disposed of? Or, is this another case of letting by-gones be by-gones with no concern about the sin that has been committed? To charge that the Christian Reformed Church is guilty of gross injustice and the cause of

this guilt is a sad dislike for the true Reformed doctrine, it seems to me is worthy of the most sincere investigation before there can even be talk about any doctrinal differences.

M.S.

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

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

May 20, 1959

The Deficit Drive Committee of Adams St. School joyfully announced that their goal had been reached—and topped by 15%. This drive was conducted by mail, the Lord impressing the need of that kingdom cause upon the hearts of the people so that they might use the privilege of fulfilling their covenant promise, "to help or cause them to be instructed therein to the utmost of your power."

Redlands has called the Rev. H. Veldman from a trio which also included the Revs. H. Hanko and J. Heys.

Rev. C. Hanko, of First Church, was prevented from preaching May 10 and 17 due to recurrence of stomach ulcers. The last severe attack was about one year ago and prevented him from occupying a delegate's seat at Synod.

Concerning Miss Alice Reitsma, Church News Editor of the *Beacon Lights*, First's bulletin reports: ". . . is confined to her bed much of the time, but expresses that our God is the ever present help in every trouble."

A Family Night has been scheduled to be held at Adams St. School, May 22nd. An enjoyable evening has been planned, starting with a cafeteria style supper at 5:30, and an auction sale and entertainment following.

A 60th wedding anniversary was celebrated by Mr. and Mrs. J. Schaap of First Church, May 13th. The bulletin expressed the prayer, "May their expectation be upon Father's House with its many mansions."

Hope's congregation anticipate the improvement of their parking facilities and new sidewalks decided upon at the last congregational meeting.

These coming events cast their shadows ahead of them: South Holland's congregational picnic at Sweet Woods South on Memorial Day; Hope School picnic at Hughes Park at Hudsonville, June 11. The Memorial Day picnic just mentioned features a Ladies' Aid Sale designed to build up the fund being raised to purchase new Bibles for the church auditorium.

Oak Lawn's and South Holland's young people planned a get-together May 13th at Oak Lawn. Rev. H. C. Hoeksema was slated for a talk; a short program and games, with refreshments comprised the evening's entertainment.

Did you know that . . .

Rev. and Mrs. H. Hoeksema will celebrate their 45th wedding anniversary June 7, and that the congregation plans to meet together Wednesday evening, June 10, to congratulate them, D.V.;

Rev. G. M. Ophoff attends divine worship services every Sunday, though he has not yet taken up any of his former duties;

Hudsonville conducts Sunday School only during the summer months, and the pastor's wife is the kindergarten teacher;

The Young People's Society of Kalamazoo held their annual outing at Milham Park, May 12th.

The Male Chorus' program at First Church, May 24th, provided an opportunity for the audience to help Southeast Church swell their New Organ Fund total.

Redlands enjoyed the ministrations of Rev. H. Veldman, breaking the Bread of Life for them May 3rd and 10th, and also on Ascension Day.

The following membership roll changes were noted: First Church received a family from Southwest; Hudsonville received a family from Hope; Redlands transferred a family to Hope; First lost a member who, we may believe, was transferred to the Church Triumphant; Kalamazoo gained an individual confessing member; Hull welcomed three new infants, Hope greeted two, and Lynden and Southwest each received one.

Quotable Quote: "The general assumption is (even though it be not plainly formulated) there is so little wrong with the fallen descendants of Adam that all they need to do is read the Bible and hear the Gospel preached, and they will easily turn to Christ. A little information, plus a little earnest persuasion, and almost anyone can be induced to sign a card and 'accept Christ as his personal Saviour.' Consequently, the humble, dependent, fervent, united and patient waiting upon God for the power of His Spirit is a thing of the past." (Lynden's bulletin quoting from the works of A. W. Pink.)

Revs. J. Heys and H. Veldman, Classis West's Church Visitors, travelled over 5700 miles in twelve days, with a week-end stop in Lynden and overnight stops in Redlands and Denver (in the home of one of Loveland's Elders) reaching home Saturday afternoon. They report that our people in those far-flung areas enjoy even those little contacts with our churches.

Until the next issue let us ponder the words of Solomon as recorded in Prov. 17:9: "He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends."

. . . see you in church.

J.M.F.