

THE STANDARD

Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

VOLUME XXXV

APRIL 1, 1959 — GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

NUMBER 13

MEDITATION

SAVED BY THE RESURRECTION

"The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." I PETER 3:21

After Jesus was raised from the dead, He went by the Spirit to hell, and having arrived in hell, He preached to a special audience there.

A special, a peculiar audience Christ preached to. And He did not preach to them the Gospel of deliverance, but He heralded to them His wondrous victory over death, the grave, and hell. He told them that after all Noah had the victory: he was saved with his eight souls.

At no other time in the history of God's church on earth did their cause seem as hopeless as in the days of Noah. Imagine: the cause of Jesus Christ in the world had dwindled down to the occupants of one home: Noah's.

But he was saved, and he was saved by the waters of the flood.

That was the preaching of Jesus on this occasion.

And His audience in hell were the spirits of those men, women and children who were disobedient to the 120 years of preaching by Noah.

Noah was saved by the waters of the flood.

* * * *

That salvation was a figure.

There is a better salvation. And by a better flood.

I have in mind the flood of the blood of Jesus.

And a figure, a like figure we have with us today. It is the figure of baptism. And Peter tells us that we are saved again by water, namely, the water of baptism.

In passing I may say that once more the Church of Jesus

Christ was saved by water. I have reference to the salvation which was wrought by Moses when he led Israel through the Red Sea. And again the enemy is drowned.

And the whole New Testament Church is saved by the water of baptism.

However, when I say that you are saved by baptism I have no reference to the natural bath of the natural water.

All that a water bath can do for you is to cleanse you from the filth of the flesh. There is no spiritual worth to that outward bath at all. And I am persuaded that Paul had this in mind when he said: "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God," I Cor. 7:19. And also: "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love," Gal. 5:6. Baptism as such availeth nothing either. What could a few drops of water on your forehead do to you?

So also Peter in our verse also. Baptism saves you! Oh yes. But not the outward baptism of water. Water, natural water is very good for the cleansing of the filth of the flesh, but that is all.

Shall we then not baptize our children? Oh yes. But only if we understand that the rite of baptism is a sign and a seal of something else.

And that something else Peter will teach us.

* * * *

What is that "something else"?

Here it is: "the answer of a good conscience toward God"!

It sounds strange, but the Holland translation of the word "answer" is the very opposite, namely, "question." In the Holland Bible you read: "a question of a good conscience toward God."

And, in passing, let me tell you that all the translators have had difficulty with this word. In the Revised version we read: "interrogation," and they add in a side-note: "inquiry," "appeal." In the German we read: "der Bund eines

guten Gewissens mit Gott." And "Bund" means "band, tie, covenant." In the French we read: "L'engagement," which means to induce, to persuade, to be bound (this is somewhat like the German "Bund").

Baptism saves us. But not the outward sign by water. That is the sign and seal.

What then?

The Greek language in which Peter's letter is written has a word which primarily means: a craving, an intensive desire, an earnest seeking, to long for something.

So the Greek seems to favor the Holland translation. And yet, we should not discard the other translations. The question and the answer are one work, one great work of God in those that are saved.

Let us see.

Baptism is the bath of regeneration. It signifies that we are risen from the dead. And as soon as we become conscious of this new life from God, we hear His inquiry, engagement, interrogation: "What do you think of Me? What do you think of My Christ, My Bible, My cause in the world? What do you think of yourself, of your sins and guilt, your future?" There are a thousand questions which assail the converted child of God.

And the *good* conscience answers God.

The conscience is literally what the word says: knowledge with. The conscience shares knowledge with Someone, and that Someone is God.

The *good* conscience gives the right answer, since it is operated upon by the pure Word of God as applied by the Holy Spirit of Christ.

Through baptism a "Bund" is operating between God and His child. God engages His child every day and night, and never leaves him to himself anymore, to answer the thousands of questions that assail him.

And the answer of that good conscience is forthcoming.

That answer is a thousandfold.

Here is one: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God! My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?"

Here is another: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

And you yourself can supply a thousand more "answers" of your *good* conscience.

And it is all a fruit of God's "Bund" with you, of His "engagement" with you. It is the answer to God's constant "interrogation."

* * * *

And this all came about because you were baptized in the flood of the blood of Christ.

It came about because you were baptized into the death of Christ, and rose with Him to a new life, the life of God's Covenant.

Noah and his eight souls began to rise when the 120 years were spent. He came closer and closer to heaven. And behind him, under him was the water of the Deluge.

That Deluge was two things: 1) it was the death of the world; and 2) it was the death of Jesus Christ.

Christ's death liberated Noah and his eight souls from their enemies, and saved them with a figurative salvation.

Christ's death, and the flood of His blood saves the whole Church of God from all their sins and guilt and damnation and eternal death.

Christ's death was the death eternal of the church, suffered by Him in their stead.

And they arose with Him when He was raised from the dead.

Note that Peter says: Baptism now saves us by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

And the means is baptism as to its spiritual essence.

You may put it this way: Regeneration now saves us by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

* * * *

The answer (or the question) of a good conscience.

O, beloved reader, listen to Christ's question and answer.

You may find it (among other places) in Matthew 27:46: "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" Shudder, tremble when you read these words.

If anyone had a good conscience, it was Jesus of Nazareth. If ever there was a "Bundes-Drang," it was in that pure Heart of our Saviour when God interrogated Him. Oh yes, God had an "engagement" with Him.

Standing on the bottomless bottom of hell, Jesus called, cried and roared to His Father: O why hast Thou forsaken Me, My God, My God!

Listen to His cry already in the Old Testament where prophets suffered Christ's suffering before: "Awake, why sleepest Thou, O Lord? cast Me not off forever! Wherefore hidest Thou Thy face, and forgettest My affliction and My oppression?"

O, how Jesus gave the answers to God's continuous (eternal) interrogation! In the days of His flesh He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death! Heb. 5:7a.

And here is the everlasting Gospel: He was heard in that He feared! Heb. 5:7b.

God heard Jesus: He had always heard Him, even though it was very dark on Good Friday. God had placed His Hand before the Sun: Jesus might not have any light while He drank the cup of the wrath of God to the very bottom.

Oh yes, He heard.

For Jesus rose from the dead.

The resurrection is God's answer to all questions, even as Jesus' death was the answer to God's interrogation.

And the flood of life and glory and joy is the fruit of all this "engagement."

Jesus gave the perfect answer to God's perfect question.

* * * *

And you give the answer to God's question out of a good conscience, and why?

It is because Jesus dwells in you.

Jesus works a most wonderful work in you.

Here it is: I will let the fathers speak.

"It is evidently a supernatural work, most powerful, and at the same time most delightful, astonishing, mysterious, and ineffable; not inferior in efficacy to creation, or *the resurrection from the dead*, as the Scripture inspired by the Author of this work declares, so that all in whose heart God works in this marvellous manner, are certainly, infallibly, and effectually regenerated, and do actually believe."

That is the meaning of "Easter."

G.V.

IN MEMORIAM

Our Society extends its sincere sympathy to one of its members, Mrs. Henry Kuiper, in the death of her son-in-law

MR. ABBIE DE GROOT

May our heavenly Father comfort the bereaved with the assurance that He doeth all things well.

The Martha Ladies' Aid Society
of the Doon Prot. Ref. Church
Rev. G. Van Baren, President
Mrs. Edwin Van Ginkel, Secretary

IN MEMORIAM

The Protestant Reformed Men's Chorus of Grand Rapids, Mich., herewith expresses its sympathy to four of its members, Mr. H. Brands Sr., Mr. H. Brands Jr., Mr. Art Docter and Mr. Bertus Docter in the loss of their mother-in-law and grandmother,

MRS. GRACE DOCTER

May our covenant God comfort and sustain them in their sorrow.

Mr. C. Jonker, President
Mr. D. Knoper, Vice Secy-Treas.

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 \$1.00 for each notice.

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

Subscription price: \$5.00 per year

Entered as Second Class matter at Grand Rapids, Michigan

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EDITORIALS

Evolution, Long Periods, or Days

On the fifth and sixth days God created fish, fowl and the land animals. Of this we read in Gen. 1:20-25: "And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven. And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth. And the evening and the morning were the fifth day. And God said, let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so. And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good."

Also this passage of the creation narrative is quite opposed to the theory of evolution as well as to that of long periods instead of days. The former cannot possibly be brought into harmony with the latter. We must choose between the two, we cannot believe both. If we maintain that the theory of evolution is correct or that the creation days were long periods of millions or even billions of years (which is only a camouflaged form of the theory of evolution), we must not pretend that we believe the creation narrative as recorded in Gen. 1, and the narrative of the creation of the animals on the fifth and sixth days.

The theory of evolution has it that God did not create all creatures separately by the word of His power but that all the different creatures, living or otherwise, organic or inorganic, have a common origin, developed from some original cell. This, of course, is no science in the true sense of the word, but mere philosophy. Besides, it does not mean anything, for if we deny that God is, and that He is the Creator of the universe, we will never find or understand the origin of all things. It seems, however, that the philosophy of evolution is based on two facts: the similarity of the creatures; and the gradually ascending scale from the lower to the higher creatures.

Now, Scripture also teaches the same facts, without, however, drawing the conclusion that the lower creatures are the evolutionary source of the higher. Notice the ascending scale of the living creatures: plants, fish, fowl, the land animals and, finally, as the crown of them all: man. But notice also that the creation narrative emphasizes throughout that every one of these creatures is created after his kind: the different creatures are formed separately so that the species are closed. They did not evolve from one another. And seeing that this

is the case, the creation narrative stands not only opposed to the theory of evolution, but also to that of long periods instead of days. For why should God create one species first, let it exist for millions of years on the earth, say this were even possible or conceivable, and then create the next kind?

But now let us study the text, informing us what God created on the fifth and sixth days, a little more in detail.

First of all, the creature formed on those days is described as the moving creature that hath life. This distinguishes it from the plant. The fowl is created to fly in the open firmament of heaven, vs. 20. The text speaks of every living creature that moveth and every winged fowl, vs. 21. It speaks of every living creature after his kind and of every beast of the earth after his kind, vs. 24. Again, in vs. 28, we read that man is given dominion "over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." And also in vs. 30 we read: "And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life."

Notice, in the second place, that God blessed them. This means, of course, that God spoke His Word to them, the Word of His favor, and that Word of God is always powerful and efficacious. It is true that this is said only of the fish and fowl, but it is safe to assume that it includes also the land animals. The contents of this Word of blessing is, evidently, expressed in the words: "be fruitful, and multiply." Through the Word of God, they are able, therefore, to multiply and reproduce their own kind by an act of their own will or incentive.

The animal, therefore, is described in the text as a living and moving creature that is able to reproduce its own kind through the Word of blessing which God spoke to it. The plant, too, is living, but it does not move, it is rooted in the earth. The plant, too, reproduces its own kind, but not by a conscious act of its own incentive. But the animal is free from the earth. It determines from within its own movements, in the water, in the air, on the land; swimming, flying, creeping, running. The plant has no consciousness. It does not know itself nor the world outside of itself. But the animal has a certain soul-life ("the soul of the animal is in his blood") though in various degrees in different animals. Hence, the animal has senses, the sense of sight, of hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling. Through those senses it is not only conscious of the outside world but also of self. It has a certain measure of perception and understanding, of will and desires, of memory and imagination.

This is not to be understood as if the soul of the animal is at all like the soul of man. Man's soul is spiritual, the animal's is not. We must speak of the creation of man in our next editorial, but even now we may note that man, and that, too, the individual man was created by a special act of God: He formed him by His own hands from the dust of the ground. Thus man became a living soul in distinction from the animal.

Finally, we may note that each creature is formed from its own sphere in which it lives and moves. The waters bring forth the fish, undoubtedly by the brooding of the Spirit and by the powerful Word of God calling them into existence. For do not forget that we read in vs. 20: "And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life." God spake and it was so and that, too, immediately. Perhaps, the fowls were created both from the waters and from the earth. For although we read in Gen. 1:20 that they were created from the waters only, yet in Gen. 2:19 we read: "And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air." At any rate, the beasts of the field were created by calling them from the ground. They belonged entirely to the sphere of the earth, were earthy, and out of that sphere they were created.

H.H.

About The Three Points

We will not attempt to explain all the passages of Scripture which the Synod of 1924 or rather the committee of Synod adduced in support of the First Point. Synod itself or its committee gave no exegesis but only quoted the texts. Besides, we are not discussing the "Three Points" in all their implications but giving an answer to Dr. Klooster's article on the subject in *Torch and Trumpet*. We will, therefore, proceed to consider what Klooster has to say on the Second Point.

First of all, he considers the appeal to Scripture in support of the Second Point weak. Writes he:

"I regret to state that I believe the Synodical decision with its appeal to the Scripture passages mentioned in the Committee report is unfortunately weak at this point again. Not that I think the decision incorrect or that there are no valid Scriptural data. On the contrary, the Committee did not in my estimation adduce the strongest Scriptural evidence which was available. The passages are simply listed, and yet the difference between Hoeksema and the Committee concerned precisely the proper understanding of each passage quoted. Gen. 6:3 is quoted for example, but such venerable exegetes as G. Vos and G. C. Aalders interpret the passage in such a way that it has no real bearing upon the second point of 1924. Although the passages quoted — Ps. 81:12, 13; Acts 7:42; Rom. 1:24, 25, 28; II Thess. 2:6, 7 — do have bearing on the question of the restraint of sin, they are not clear proof for the decision taken. It seems to me that an analysis of the restraint of sin resulting from the confusion of tongues at Babel would have been more significant. Further Scriptural analysis of this sort would substantially have strengthened the Biblical support for the second point."

At the present moment, I wish to ask Dr. Klooster just one question. It is this: Do you consider it proper for the Christian Reformed Church, or for any church, for that

matter, to adopt doctrines that have never been officially adopted in or by any Reformed Church *on such admittedly weak grounds*? You understand, I use the language of Dr. Klooster when I speak of "weak grounds." For me they are no grounds at all.

Again, do you condemn or consider it proper, on such a "weak" basis, to cast out ministers that were and to this very day are still considered Reformed and whose writings are read and used in all the Reformed Churches as well as in others? If in your opinion this is proper, I have nothing to say except that I radically differ with you. But if you condemn this action of 1924, you must also consider it proper that, even at this late date, before we appear in judgment together, the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church should adopt an apology for what they have done to us in 1924.

This is my conviction.

But let now, first of all, quote the Second Point:

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

The passages from Scripture to which Synod refers are mentioned in the quotation from the article by Dr. Klooster. We will, therefore, not mention them here again.

The quotations from the Confessions are the following:

"In whom we do entirely trust; being persuaded that he so restrains the devil and all our enemies, that without his will and permission they cannot hurt us." Netherland Conf. Art. 13.

And from Art. 36 of the same Confession: "Willing that the world should be governed by certain laws and policies; to the end that the dissoluteness of men might be restrained."

That is all. Is this proof? If so, for what?

Remember that also the Second Point means to teach and support the theory of "common grace."

It does not merely teach that the sinner is restrained and controlled by God in his outward actions, so that he cannot always carry out his evil intentions. If this were the teaching of the Second Point it would propose nothing new or strange. Every Reformed Christian, in fact any Bible believing man, believes this. We all heartily believe and confess that God by what is called His providence controls all the

deeds of the wicked, both devils and men, so that they certainly can never do anything at all against His will and so that He even realizes His counsel through them. He does this often directly by His power, frustrating the plans of the ungodly in a way which is even beyond our comprehension: Their very thoughts and desires are under His control. They cannot so much as move a finger without His power. Not only so, but He also controls and restrains the wicked and frustrates their plans mediately and indirectly. The ungodly are limited by and dependent on time and place and circumstances in their entire life, as well as by their powers and talents and means. And all these are absolutely in the power and under the control of God. This outward restraint of the actions of the ungodly no one denies.

But this is not the teaching of the Second Point. This could not possibly be called "common grace."

But it teaches:

1. That there is an operation of "common grace" by the Holy Spirit upon and in the heart of the ungodly.
2. That this operation of the Holy Spirit does not regenerate him but restrains within him the process of corruption.
3. As a result the remnant of his original righteousness or "natural light" is constantly being preserved within him; and this also bears fruit in his actual life in many good works.

Such is the meaning of the Second Point.

H.H.

Attention

Standing and Special Synodical Committees

Pursuant to Article VII of the Synodical Rules, said committees are herewith reminded that:

"1. The reports of all committees, special and standing, shall be included in the Agenda, (deadline of April 15) so that all churches may be duly informed.

"2. Standing committees may make supplemental reports of matters arising after the deadline for the Agenda. Such reports, however, shall be distributed in mimeographed form to all members of Synod at the opening session, and the committee concerned shall be responsible for this."

G. VANDEN BERG, *Stated Clerk*

Announcement

Attention, all deacons, present and former. Deacons' Conference to be held April 17 at Hope Prot. Ref. Church.

Topic: "Is it the duty of the deacons to look for the poor?" Speaker: The Rev. H. Hanko.

Jay Bomers

Sec. Diaconate Hope Prot. Ref. Church

OUR DOCTRINE

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

PART TWO

CHAPTER VI

An Interlude

Revelation 10:8-11

So also in this case John received the revelation of the Word of God. And to the mouth of the believer the Word of God is sweet, never to the unbeliever. To him that word is nauseating from the beginning. His taste is corrupt. The Word does not even appeal to him, and therefore he does not even swallow the book, but spews it out. But in the case of the believer it is quite different. He has been changed by the grace of God. He has received a new taste, the taste of faith. And to that taste of faith the Word of God appeals, always appeals, so that he takes it and eats it whenever that Word is given him. But does this mean that this same Word has no bitter after-effects when it reaches the spiritual digestive organs? By no means; the process of assimilation and digestion is often a painful one, not because that Word is deceiving and different from what it is promised to be, but because the power of sin is still in our hearts and minds. Now the Word has a battle against the influence of the flesh and the lusts thereof. And this battle of the Word, however sweet it was when taken and swallowed by faith, is a painful one. It causes bitterness and struggle till the medicine of the Word of God has done its work and transformed us. And this is especially the case with the word of this prophecy, of the prophecy as we have it in the book of Revelation. Surely, the book speaks of redemption and of salvation, of heavenly glory and a new creation, of highest joy and eternal life. But the book speaks of this only after it has pictured the battle of faithful witnessing, of self-denial and suffering. It holds before our eyes the glory of the future, but only at the end of a dark and terrible road to travel. It is the road of battle for the kingdom of God. It is the road of persecution and mockery on the part of the world. It is the road alongside of which you may read the notice, "He that shall save his life shall lose it, but he that shall lose his life for my sake shall save it." And that is hard. That is not according to the flesh. That causes inward pain and battle. And therefore the bitterness of the book when it begins to work its work of transformation. May that also be the result on our part. May the study of this little book in the future have this effect, that it is indeed sweet to our taste because it is the Word of God, sweeter than honey to the taste of faith, so that we do not rebel but swallow it, eat it, and hide it in our inmost heart. But may it also have this result, that when it begins

its work of transformation, the truth of the book may at first seem painful as it mortifies the old man, and more and more leave nothing but one desire, that the kingdom of God may come. That should be the effect of our assimilating this little book of prophecy.

CHAPTER VII

The Measuring of the Temple

Revelation 11:1, 2

1. And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.
2. But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given to the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.

The eleventh chapter of the book of Revelation is one of the most important chapters of the entire book. It is not an easy chapter to be understood in its full significance. And yet it is of the utmost importance that we do understand the meaning of it as clearly as possible. If we understand this chapter not only as such but also in its relation to the sequel of the entire book, we will have less difficulty to grasp the significance of the rest of the book. But misunderstanding of the chapter we must now discuss leads us in the wrong direction with regard to practically all that follows. We have in this portion a general picture of the church as she exists in the present dispensation, a general description of the line of development that must be expected in the future, a general outline of the great battle the church will be called upon to fight throughout this dispensation, but especially toward the end. And at the same time we have in this chapter a brief indication of how the church in special times will receive special grace and strength and how she shall finally be delivered even before the time of the end. All the great truths which the Lord Jesus Christ has already predicted in His discourses of His second coming,—the development and struggle, the great tribulation of the church, but also the shortening of the days for the sake of the elect,—are pictured to us here in a very general outline. And therefore we may rightly say that here we have a general description of what will be presented to us in detail in the rest of the book. It is not as such a revelation of the seventh trumpet; yet it is closely connected with that trumpet. And in the rest of the book we must expect to find many an individual picture taken from the same period that is already described in the chapter we are now considering. In the future we shall understand the relation of this chapter to the rest of the book better than we are able to grasp the connection at this point. But this brief warning we have to sound so that the more we may ourselves pay attention to what the Spirit saith unto the churches, set ourselves to make prayerful study also of this part of the book of comfort, set ourselves to give heed to the warnings issued in the preceding chapter, namely, that

we must eat, that we must thoroughly appropriate, the contents of the little book, so that they may determine our entire life.

Concerning the text we are discussing at present there needs to be no misunderstanding whatsoever. John is called in the vision to do something. A reed, a measuring rod, is given him; and the commission is given him that with this reed he must proceed to the holy city, Jerusalem, and measure the temple. It may be said from the outset that although he is called to measure the temple only, distinction is made between three different areas. In the first place, the text makes mention of the temple as such, the sanctuary proper, the building of the temple with its holy and most holy places and the altar and the people that congregate there for worship. In the second place, mention is made of the outer court, the open space that surrounds the temple building proper in distinction from the temple as such. And in the third place, the text speaks of a still wider area, namely, the holy city, which shall be surrendered together with the outer court to the Gentiles, to be trodden under foot forty and two months. Three areas, therefore, are spoken of. The widest is the holy city itself. Within that is the narrower space of the outer court. And again, within that outer court is the still more limited space of the temple proper. And with regard to these three John is commissioned to measure the temple and the altar and those that worship therein, while he must not measure the outer court, nor, of course, the holy city. And he is told that only the temple will remain undefiled, but that the outer court and the holy city will be surrendered, or rather, is surrendered by this measuring to the power and the mercy of the Gentiles. This rather general picture of the text must, in the first place, be clearly understood; and from it we must draw our conclusion with regard to the explanation.

So far, then, there is no difficulty, and there can be no difference of opinion. But a different story it becomes when we ask the further question: how must we conceive of this part of the book? Must we take it all in the literal sense of the word, so that the temple means the holy and most holy place as it once stood in Jerusalem, the outer court refers literally to the space surrounding the temple, and the holy city is literally the capital of the holy land as it once stood in all its glory but was made a miserable heap of ruins in the year 70 A.D.? It is then that interpreters begin to differ. And it is the choice at this point that will determine our entire view of the chapter, and, in fact, largely of the entire book in its sequel. There are many interpreters who maintain that we must take this all in the literal sense of the word. Many maintain that at this period the church is already in heaven and has nothing to do with the tribulation of this present time any more. At the call from heaven to John to “come up hither” the church has followed the apostle and therefore has nothing to do any more with matters mundane, but rejoices in her salvation. And because this is the case, the possibility that by temple in this case the church

might be indicated is ruled out from the beginning. No, the text pictures to us merely the condition of the latter days. Jerusalem is again to be built. The temple is to be restored. The Jews shall again worship in that temple in connection with the altar of incense and of burnt offering. And the old Jewish glory shall for a time shine forth once more. Only, they shall not be unmolested. On the contrary, the Antichrist shall come and shall claim a large part of this territory. He shall capture the holy city and shall lay siege to the temple. He shall take possession of the outer court, and he shall defile this part of the possession of the holy people. Only the sanctuary proper shall not be delivered in their power. From that sanctuary proper the witnesses shall appear and testify of the name of their great King till the enemy shall overpower them. In a word, what we have in our text must be taken in the most literal sense of the word. Jerusalem is the holy city; the outer court is the court of the temple; the temple is the Old Testament sanctuary restored; and the people that worship there are Jews; and the nations shall literally trample under foot the holy city and the court.

We cannot possibly agree with this interpretation. And our reasons are the following. In the first place, the idea that the church at this period and before the great tribulation is already in heaven rests upon the very slender and far-fetched and mistaken evidence that John in the vision is "called thither" in chapter four, verse one. This cannot stand for a moment, as we have seen before. For John remained on the earth. And if he represents the church, the church necessarily remains on earth with him. In the second place, we must remember that the book of Revelation is given for the church in her comfort. The Lord told the church that she must expect tribulation such as never was before. And knowing her need of comfort, He gave her this book that she might stand in the time of trouble. But if this portion merely pertains to the Jews as such, as a nation, and if the church is already in heaven, it stands to reason that the church has nothing to do with the rest of the book whatsoever. It can derive neither instruction nor comfort from it. In the third place—and this is a far weightier reason—I find in the entire New Testament, outside then of this particular portion, no mention made of the temple and of Jerusalem in the literal sense of the word. I find abundant warnings to assure the people of the New Testament dispensation that the temple in Jerusalem has served its purpose and that they must not turn again to sacrifice and ceremony. But nowhere do I find any indication that we must expect once more a literal holy city and a literal temple. Hence, if this passage speaks of such a temple, it is the only passage in the New Testament that speaks of such things. Still more, if this part speaks of a literal temple, I must come to the conclusion that the rest of the New Testament is positively misleading. For in the first place, we must remember that Christ Himself speaks of the destruction of Jerusalem and of the temple, but never with a word does He speak of the

restoration of either or both. Paul repeatedly speaks of the New Testament church as the temple of God, the spiritual temple of the new dispensation. In I Cor. 3:16 he asks the question, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God?" thus referring to the church of Christ at Corinth. And in II Cor. 6:16, with a literal reference to a passage from the Old Testament, he writes: "For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." Again, in his epistle to the Ephesians, which is based on the very idea that the church as the body of Christ is the temple of God, he says, 2:20-22: "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." The same is true with regard to the New Testament presentation of Jerusalem. The holy city in the literal sense of the word is never mentioned. But Paul refers to Jerusalem that is above, which is the mother of us all. Gal. 4:25, 26. And in the epistle to the Hebrews we find that the author speaks of the believers of the New Testament day when he says: "But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem," Heb. 12:22. It is therefore beyond all dispute that the New Testament speaks of a temple and of a Jerusalem different from that city and that building with which we become acquainted in the Old Testament. And if, therefore, we are inclined to take these terms in the symbolical sense and refuse to take them literally, we do so with the entire New Testament backing us. This might not be permissible if the case were thus, that either this portion or other portions in the book of Revelation indicated that John speaks of the literal temple and the literal city whenever he mentions them. But also this is not the case. On the contrary, even in this very book the temple and Jerusalem are symbolic of something far different. In chapter three, verse 12 we read the promise to the church of Thyatira: "He that overcometh, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go out thence no more; and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven." Needless to say that neither a literal pillar nor a literal temple nor a literal city are meant. And in Rev. 21:2, 10, 22 we read: "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." In the face of all these indications in the New Testament, we dare not assume that without any special mention John would speak of a literal temple and a literal city in the words of our text. But in the light of Scripture we maintain that there is but

one possible explanation, namely, that here we have the same symbolic language as elsewhere, and that therefore we must take this passage in the figurative sense of the word. True, many will speak of passages in the Old Testament that seem to prophesy a restoration of the old temple and altar and all its ceremonies. And especially are men fond of pointing to the last chapters of the book of Ezekiel in order to maintain this point. Of course, we cannot now discuss these portions in detail. But, in the first place, I remind you of the simple rule that in the interpretation of Scripture the Old Testament must be explained in the light of the New. And in the second place, if the objection is raised that one dare not explain the detailed description of the temple in Ezekiel in the symbolical sense, then I would refer you to the detailed description of Jerusalem in the last chapters of the book of Revelation, and ask whether you ever hesitate to understand this all in the figurative sense of the word. And therefore, once more, I maintain that the text does not speak of a literal temple and city, but of that temple and of that Jerusalem in the figurative sense of the word that is repeatedly mentioned in the New Testament.

In order to understand the words of our text we must first of all remember that throughout the history of the world a holy city and temple are in the making — not a city in the literal sense of the word, but a city of which our city is but a vague symbol or type, a city of God. With us a city is constituted of a group of dwellingplaces, sometimes surrounded by a wall or by forts to keep out the enemy. It is simply a habitation or a dwellingplace for men in social communion. So the city of God, which is in the process of completion throughout the history of the world, is the dwellingplace of God Most High. And instead of the dwellingplaces of wood and stone, in this city the people of God constitute the habitations, and in them God dwells in Christ Jesus. Needless to say that this city is the church of Christ, in which God lives and abides in Christ Jesus our Lord. But now we must consider three stages in the process of completion of this spiritual temple or of this holy city of our God. In the first place, we must have before us the stage of perfection, when that city shall have been perfected and completed. It is pictured to us in the last chapter of this book of Revelation in highly symbolic language as coming down out of heaven from our God. We shall discuss this in detail when we reach that passage, the Lord willing. But here we must note one peculiarity which is mentioned with special emphasis in that connection, namely, that in that city there is no temple, for the Lord God and the Lamb are the temple thereof. Now the question is: what does that mean? Why is there no temple in this city? And the answer is also very evident: in the state of perfection the city and the temple are one, they are completely identified. As long as there is a temple in a city, it shows that God does not yet dwell in the entire city but merely in that particular house which is called the temple. There He lives in separation from the rest of the city. To be

sure, He dwells in the city, but not in the entire city. He does not fill the city. That shall be no more the case in the state of perfection. When the holy city shall have been completed, there shall be no special dwellingplace of God in the city for the simple reason that He shall dwell in the entire city, that is, in the heart of every citizen. You do not have any more to enter the city and ask, "Where is the house of God?" For the city itself is God's dwellingplace, and the temple and the city have become identical. That is the ideal. That state must be reached. And all history must serve to bring that city of God to completion.

But that city has not yet reached its state of perfection in this dispensation. And therefore we must place ourselves, in the second place, before the question: how does that city exist here upon earth? How does it reveal itself? And then there is a difference between the old and the new dispensation. In the old dispensation that city existed typically in Jerusalem, the capital of the land of Canaan. It was the type of the eternal habitation, of the eternal holy city. For that reason it is called more than once "the city of God." Psalm 46:4, 48:1; Isaiah 60:14. It is called "the city of the great king," Psalm 48:1; Matt. 4:5, "the city of truth," Zech. 8:3, "the city of righteousness," Isaiah 1:26, "the faithful city," Isaiah 1:21, 26, "the holy city," Nehemiah 11:1, Isaiah 48:2, "the throne of the Lord," Jeremiah 3:17. It is very plain that these appellations are not given to the city because of any inherent truth and holiness and faithfulness. For then indeed these names are but poorly chosen. Spiritually, our chapter informs us, the city is also called Sodom and Egypt. And in the prophets of the Old Testament we read time and again that they denounce the city in the name of the Lord because of its unrighteousness and unholiness, its shedding of blood and its adultery, its idolatry and abominations. It is in that city where also our Lord is crucified. But it is called holy, the faithful, the righteous city, the throne of the Lord, and the city of God, for no other reason than that it was a type of the heavenly Jerusalem and that the Lord dwelt there. But we must remember that Jerusalem was but a very imperfect type. It is rather a type of the spiritual city of God in the present dispensation than of that city in its state of final perfection. For in Jerusalem there was a temple. God did not dwell in all the city. His presence did not fill the city, but He dwelt in a particular house. If you entered Jerusalem as a stranger, you would not immediately be aware of the presence of God, but you would naturally ask, "Where does the Lord dwell in this city?" And the answer would naturally be: "In the temple, on Mt. Moriah." But even here we must once more distinguish. If we imagine that we approach the temple at the time when the Lord was on earth — the form of the temple which John undoubtedly had in mind, the temple of Herod, since John never knew any other — then we must not imagine that the Lord dwelt in all that was called the temple.

H.H.

A CLOUD OF WITNESSES

Isaac, The Pilgrim

"And there was a famine in the land, beside the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went unto Abimelech, king of the Philistines unto Gerar.

"And the Lord appeared unto him, and said, Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of:

"Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee;" GEN. 26:1-3a

We must be careful in evaluating the life of Isaac not to underestimate the extent of his faith. When we think upon the life of Isaac there is always one great fact that comes to the fore in our minds, that is, that he preferred Esau over Jacob, that he tried to give the blessing of the birthright to Esau, that he thereby refused to follow the clearly revealed will of God. That that was a sin, a very great sin, cannot be denied. Nonetheless, let us not forget that Isaac was a child of God; he partook of the grace of God. Thus his life also revealed positive fruits that manifested the excellency of the power of God that worked within him.

We read in Hebrews 12:6, "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Isaac was a son of God and thus it was that the Lord chastened and tried him also. The Lord sent to him, as He had to his father Abraham, a famine. It was the land of Canaan in which he dwelt, the land of promise, the land which was to be a blessing unto him and unto his seed forever. But that land became dry and unproductive before his sight. It withered and failed to bring forth the vegetation necessary for sustaining the life of his household. It became a test of Isaac's faith to continue to look upon the land as that in which the blessings of God would be given to him and his children.

The reaction of Isaac to that trial was quite natural. As his father had done before him, he decided to remove himself to Egypt, a land which with its natural irrigation was spared from all but the most severe of famines. His discernment dulled by the pressing need of the moment, he allowed himself to forget the spiritual commitment of faith that bound him to the land of Canaan. He lived by faith in the promise of God which was to be realized in Canaan not in Egypt. But the hardship was great, and Isaac gathered his family around him and made his way toward Egypt.

But before this sin could be perpetrated God interfered. He stopped Isaac on the way, before he had left the boundaries of Canaan, and warned him not to go into Egypt. He repeated to him the covenant promise which had been given to his father before him laying stress upon the fact that it was to be fulfilled in the land of Canaan. "Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I

will perform the oath which I swore unto Abraham thy father," Gen. 26:3. So it was that Isaac was halted upon his way and came to settle in Gerar of the Philistines.

Gerar was within the boundaries of Canaan; but still it would have been better for Isaac that he had remained by the well Lahairoi. Gerar was a city; dwelling there he was in the midst of the enemy. The neighbors that surrounded him in Gerar were unprincipled people for they did not fear God. Isaac soon realized this and it made him afraid. When the men of the city asked him concerning Rebekah, he did not have the courage to say that she was his wife lest his own life should be endangered. But again the Lord was with Isaac, and before Rebekah could be defiled, He brought it to the attention of Abimelech, the king of the Philistines, that Isaac's attitude toward Rebekah was not that of a brother but that of a husband. After reprimanding Isaac, Abimelech commanded that no one was to lay hands on either Isaac or his wife. It was the hand of the Lord that overshadowed Isaac and kept him from evil.

These actions of Isaac, of course, are not such as would commend him to us as an example to be followed. They rather manifest the gracious intervention of God which prevented him from becoming as involved in the results of his weakness as he might have. But neither should our condemnation of Isaac be overly harsh at this point. It is to be remembered that these sinful reactions were essentially no different than those of his father Abraham, who lived in closest communion with God, under similar circumstances. This does not excuse him, but it does remind us that the trial of these circumstances was very severe. Nor should we forget that under great economic trials we often yield as readily to deceptive words and actions. It is, however, not here but in that which followed that the strength of Isaac shines forth.

The person difficult to understand in this account is Abimelech. He was king of the wicked Philistines and was observed by Isaac to hate him. Yet he allowed Isaac to dwell in his land for a time; he forbade his people to molest Isaac or his family; he was eager to make a covenant or truce with Isaac.

This is not the first time that the name Abimelech appears in Scripture. In Gen. 20 and 21 Abimelech is mentioned in conjunction with Abraham under very much the same circumstances. Then too Abraham had gone to dwell in the land of the Philistines; there he had trouble with the inhabitants over water; and a covenant was made between Abimelech and Abraham. But that was nearly one hundred years before. From this we would conclude that the Abimelech which dealt with Isaac was not the same person which had dealt with his father. The name Abimelech was the royal title of the kings of the Philistines just as Pharaoh was the title of the kings of Egypt. The Abimelech that ruled over the Philistines in the time of Isaac was probably the son of the one that Abraham knew. This accounts for the attitude which Abimelech maintained toward Isaac. From

his father Abimelech had learned about the divine power which overshadowed the family of Abraham causing them to prosper and protecting them from evil. He knew of the inheritance that the Lord maintained in the land of Canaan for the seed of Abraham. Therefore he both feared Isaac and hated him. He hated Isaac because he saw in him a contender for the possession of the land. But he recognized the greatness of Isaac's God, and he was afraid to misuse Isaac lest the anger of Isaac's God should come upon him.

When Isaac came with his possessions into the land of the Philistines Abimelech did not dare to forbid him the right to tarry in the land. Rather he saw it to be to his advantage to obligate as powerful a man as Isaac to himself. For much the same reason he took care to warn his people not to molest Isaac, his wife, or his family. Abimelech was very much afraid of the retribution which might be brought upon him if he mistreated Isaac in any way.

When Isaac first entered the land, he had been merely passing through on the way to Egypt. But when God forbade him to leave the land of Canaan, he settled down in Gerar; and still Abimelech did not object. But when Isaac began to sow grain, difficulty arose. It was not the fact that he sowed the grain that bothered; it was the fact that his efforts brought forth a harvest of a hundredfold. Ordinarily that land brought forth a harvest of thirty to sixtyfold. But now a famine was upon the land and it was practically barren. Yet the fields of Isaac brought forth inconceivable bounty. The Lord was blessing the labors of Isaac. He was showing to Isaac that He could and would uphold him in the land even in the midst of a famine. For the Philistines, however, the prosperity of Isaac was an occasion for dissatisfaction. It moved them to envy to see the fields of a stranger far surpassing their own in productivity. Where there is envy, hatred does not take long to follow. Abimelech saw in the growing wealth and strength of Isaac a challenge to his own supremacy. He commanded Isaac to remove himself from Gerar.

Isaac was not one to strive unnecessarily, and he willingly left the city and pitched his tent in a valley not far removed from Gerar. Still the Lord was with him, and although the land was dry, when he digged a well it brought forth water. This was but a new occasion for the Philistines to envy him. Soon they came to use the water of his well and to claim it for their own. Peaceably Isaac refused to maintain a continued fight over anything as material as water. He quietly went on to dig another well in another place but the envious Philistines followed to claim also that well for their own. So he was finally forced to leave the land of the Philistines, and he came to Rehoboth, so named because there the Lord gave him room to dwell.

Perhaps we do not appreciate the meekness of Isaac by which he refused to fight for that which was rightfully his. We would rather see him stand up for his rights. We would rather see him challenge the Philistines to take his wells by

force. We would rather see him demonstrate his might. But is it not because we do not fully appreciate the virtue of true meekness? Christ said, "But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also, And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away," Matt. 5:39-42. This Isaac had learned to do. He had learned what it was to live as a stranger and a pilgrim upon the earth. Had it been a matter of principle he would have undoubtedly stood fast. Had the Lord commanded him to fight he would have done so. But it was merely a matter of earthly water. He was to wait patiently for the Lord to give him the land and not try to take it in his own strength. Thus he lived in a way often far more difficult. He meekly bore the affliction which came to him trusting only in the faithfulness of his God.

This determination of Isaac to live by faith in God and not by the strength of his own arm Isaac affirmed in the oath which he made to Abimelech. Even though Isaac had left his land Abimelech still feared the power which upheld him and made him to prosper. Abimelech went to him claiming to have done to him nothing but good and to have sent him away in peace. This Isaac recognized to be entirely false and told Abimelech that he had sent him away in hatred. Nonetheless, he was willing to affirm, as his father had done before him, that he would not be the cause of hurt to the Philistines. This was not an affirmation of friendship but only a testimony to Abimelech that he sought the promised land not by the strength of his own hand. He trusted in the Lord to give him that land in the way and at the time that He saw to be proper.

This meeting took place immediately after Isaac had moved to a new dwelling place at Beersheba. When coming there the Lord had appeared to him reaffirming the covenant promise given to his father, Abraham. There he built an altar to the Lord, and there he digged a well. It was after the meeting with Abimelech that we read, "And it came to pass the same day, that Isaac's servants came, and told him concerning the well which they had digged, and said unto him, We have found water." It was as a testimony from God that the way in which he walked was pleasing in His sight. B.W.

Notice

NEXT EASTERN LADIES' LEAGUE MEETING

Speaker: REV. G. VANDEN BERG

Topic: *How to Teach Our Children to Pray*

Place: First Church

Time: Thursday evening, April 16, at 8:00 o'clock

Mrs. Jacob Kuiper, Ass't Sec'y

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of Matthew 24 and 25

XV.

(Matthew 25:31-46)

b.

In contemplating with believing hearts the "Final Judgment Scene" as here portrayed in Matthew 25:31-46 it should be borne in mind that the history of *the world* is the *history of the church*!

There are those who fail to keep this in mind, expositors of the Bible, and then raise the question: who is Jesus really speaking of as being judged in that day? Is he speaking of the judgment simply of the wicked? Or will both be judged in that day? We believe that the latter is true. It should be kept in mind that even as there is a resurrection unto life and a resurrection unto damnation, thus also there is a judgment unto condemnation and a judgment unto acquittal!

We believe that for a proper understanding of the judgment we must bear in mind that this the judgment of the world in which the Son of Man, suffered, died, and arose again and ascended unto the right hand of His Father. What we confess in the Apostolicum (Twelve Articles of Faith) concerning the Triune God; God, the Father and our creation, God, the Son, and our redemption, and God, the Holy Ghost and our sanctification must be kept in full relevancy. For, strictly speaking, in these Articles we have the *historical* order of the Trinity revealed in the economy of salvation, and particularly of God, in Christ, as He shall come again to judge the *living* and the *dead* in that Great Day! And, it should be clearly understood, "living" and "dead" are not those who have not yet died physical death and those who have, but it refers to those "who are in Christ" and those who are *not* "in Christ."

We should keep in mind that in that day when the "Son of Man shall sit in His glory and when all the nations shall come before Him," it is a very *Christocentric* day. It is wholly a day in which the *glory* of the Son of Man will be revealed. It is a day in which God will rejoice! For it is the day in which will be openly manifested that it was God's good-pleasure that "all the fulness of the Godhead should dwell in Him." And God will have all those "in derision" who would not have this Son to reign in Zion! In that day it will be openly manifested "that God hath made this Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ," Acts 2:36; Col. 1:19. Graphically it will then be heard: "He that sitteth in the heaven shall laugh: the LORD shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex (trouble) them in his sore displeasure. Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the

LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee"! When the "King shall sit" in that very sitting we see what God "hath begotten" when He raised His Son out of the dead and set Him at His own right hand. For do we not read in Acts 13:32, 33: "and we declare unto you glad tidings, now that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again: as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." To be sure, here we are told that this "begetting of the Son" refers to the "coming into the flesh of the Son of God, born from the virgin Mary, and finally set down on God's right hand."

It will be the *Christocentric* day!

It will be the day of the Divine Theodicy, in Christ His Son!

In no sense of the word will it be a day of judgment according to *moralistic principles*. Even the judgment of God's people will be their relationship to this Son and the "kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world," Matthew 25:34. And the wicked will be judged in how they treated Christ! For what was not done to the "least of these of mine, *was not done to Me*"!

Thus we understand just a bit of the nature of that day!

It is the final stone in the Consummation (Volending) of the history of the world which all *concentrates* in the history of the Church, which is one with Christ! It is the day when the "birthpangs" in history as it gives birth to "this day have I begotten thee," will be finished. Then shall the sorrows of history be remembered no more for "joy that the Man-child is born"! It is the last chapter of the Protevangel! Gen. 3:15.

The Seed of the woman shall fully triumph over the seed of the Serpent.

But if this be the "day" of God's First-born Son, the First-born of every creature as he is the First-born out of the dead, (Col. 1:16,18) then surely the judgment is also most singular. Let us notice the text, "*Then shall be gathered before him all nations, and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divided (his) sheep from the goats.*"

In this world the "sheep" and the "goats" were together! Their lives were rather intertwined. The church did not enjoy a "harbor of seclusiveness" but was in the *center of history*! Where the church is there is history, *recorded* history! It cannot be the history of the world, and, therefore, the history of the church. Quite conversely, it is the history of the church. Surely the "field," which is "the world" in the Parable of the "tares" in Matthew 13:24-30; 36-43, is not a field of tares with wheat sown in it, but it is a field of wheat with "tares" sown in it. From the viewpoint of the Son of Man the history of the "field" is not the history of the "tares" but it is the history of the "field of wheat"! And thus also the flock of the shepherd is not a flock of sheep and goats, but it is a flock of sheep with goats in it. The separa-

tion here is not at all on the basis of an equality in *Status Quo*!

What does this mean?

That when judgment is made it is not to "find out" which are "sheep" and which are "goats," but it is to *put the goats from among the sheep*! "The blessed of the Father must receive the inheritance prepared for them from the foundation of the world"!

And through much tribulation the "sheep" are to receive this "inheritance"! It is through the long and hard way of temptation. And the "righteous" (verse 46) look for their reward. For righteous they were in an evil world. It was ever the "goats" in the midst of the "flock" which made life so miserable for the "flock." Especially is this the case when the "goats" claim to be the "blessed of the Father," when they insult the "sheep" and claim to be the "flock"!

It is very unbearable when those who are not of the First-born Son among many brethren, claim that they are these brethren!

But let it be a great comfort to the "righteous" that presently the Son of man shall sit on the Throne of His glory. His verdict will be final. It will be no mere "Kangaroo Court"!

And judgment will begin at the house of God!

Does not the apostle Peter write: "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God; and if it begin at us, what shall be the end of them that obey not the Gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?" (I Peter 4:17, 18.)

If we bear in mind that "church history is world history" then we can understand that judgment *begins* at the house of God. It begins in the center of the church on earth where the Word of God is preached, where the Sacraments are administered in Christ's Name, and where Christian Discipline is exercised in Christ's name. It begins there where what is "bound on earth is bound in heaven"! And in ever widening circles it moves out into the world. Thus we see it in the revealing passage in Romans 2. Do we not read in the verses 6-9 the following: "Who will render to every man according to his deeds . . . tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first and also of the Gentile"? And will not "as many as have sinned without law also perish without law"? And again, will not those "as have sinned in the law also be judged by the law"? Verse 12. Does this not imply that there are those, on the periphery of the circle of the world and the nations, who stand in a different proximity to "the law" than those who "sin in the law"?

It is, therefore, indeed a judgment which begins at the house of God! Yet, it will be such a judgment that "all the nations shall be gathered together" before the throne!

And to the "sheep" it will be said in that day: "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." We notice here the following elements:

1. That the "sheep" are called the "Blessed of the Father," as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. This brings to mind the beautiful passage of Ephesians 1:3-7, where we read, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good-pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he made us accepted in the beloved, in whom we have the redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."

2. That whatever they receive is purely theirs "by inheritance"! Since these sheep are sons, in the First-born Son among many brethren, therefore they are also heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. Rom. 8:17-18; Gal. 3:29.

3. That this "inheritance" was prepared up to the present moment for them. God never swerved from that purpose. He gave these "sheep" to Christ, and these sheep are known by name to Him, and in the judgment they will be the full recipients of this great benefit of the grace of election!

And the "ground" of *the judgment* must not be confused with the "ground" of *our salvation*!

It is a fine and clear point of distinction.

There is a vast difference between the "ground of judgment" and the "ground of salvation"! These two must never be separated in the case of the righteous, to be sure! But not to distinguish these properly, either leads to the maelstrom of Antinomianism or to that of proud Pharisaism, self-righteousness. These two are but the antipoles of the same error: not properly distinguishing the "ground of *salvation*" and the "ground of *judgment*"!

It seems that Christ makes the "ground" of judgment in both cases the "works" of either the righteous or of the wicked, does it not? We believe it does! The Lord willing we shall have more to say about that in the next article in *The Standard Bearer*.

We must listen carefully to the text on this point.

We must neither be stranded on the rock of "Antinomianism" nor upon the sand-bar of moralism and self-righteousness, parading as Christian sanctification.

D.V., then, the next time.

G.L.

IN MEMORIAM

The Protestant Reformed Men's Chorus of the Protestant Reformed Churches of Grand Rapids, Mich., hereby wish to express its sincere sympathy to one of their members, Mr. Phil Lotterman, in the loss of his father-in-law,

JACOB PIPER

May the God of all grace, comfort and sustain the bereaved in their sorrow.

In the name of the Chorus,

C. Jonker, President
Art Docter, Secretary

THE DECEPTION OF AI

A wonderful victory was accomplished at Jericho. Under God's guidance, the walls of the city had fallen down. The people of that city, together with all their possessions, had been destroyed. Israel had seen the power of God whereby He would defend His people and give unto them the promised land of Canaan.

In the light of such a victory the capture of the next city, Ai, appeared certain. After all, God was on their side. Besides, the city was comparatively insignificant and very small (it numbered about 12,000 inhabitants). The spies, sent out to view the city, had so reported to Joshua: "Let not all the people go up; but let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai; and make not all the people to labor thither; for they are but few." Accordingly, about three thousand men had been sent out to capture the city. But Israel's army was defeated, thirty-six of them being smitten. And "the hearts of the people melted, and became as water," for apparently the promise of God had failed.

Then it was, after Joshua comes to God in earnest prayer, that God revealed that Israel had sinned. The cause of the sin, Achan, was found out and punished according to the law of God.

Once more Israel is to go up against Ai. Now, however, God gives to Joshua the positive assurance of victory. The city and its inhabitants must be destroyed, but the spoils were to be given to Israel. What is more, God gives to Joshua the exact plan of attack. Of 30,000 men, 5,000 were sent to lie in ambush on the west side of Ai between this city and the neighboring city of Bethel. The following day Joshua and the remaining men were to approach Ai and then feint flight, as previously the 3,000 of Israel were forced to flee. Then, upon the signal of Joshua, the men in ambush were to set on fire the exposed city of Ai. Afterward the two forces of the Israelites were to meet, thus trapping and destroying the army of Ai (together with the men of Bethel) which was located between their two forces.

The plan, as set forth by God Himself, is completely successful. From here Israel, with Joshua as its leader, enters further into the land of Canaan and defeats and destroys the wicked nations of the land.

It is particularly with the second attack of the children of Israel against Ai that we are concerned. Two incidents of that attack stand out clearly. First of all, there were men placed in ambush to the west of the city; and secondly, Israel pretends flight from the army of Ai. These two things are the occasion for this article. The title, "The deception of Ai," implies a charge. Ai was deceived, God commanded this deception, hence God then is guilty of deceiving. Possibly the charge could be stated: God is guilty of commanding that which is inconsistent with His perfect being. Deception, after all, is that which misleads, deludes, or even cheats. How is it ever possible that God could command His people to act under anything as corrupt as that implied in deception?

We can not, however, question the fact that God is truth and there is in Him no lie whatsoever. If the "deception" of Ai is brought up in order to question the veracity of God, then there would be no point in continuing the discussion further. Such a person would plainly be denying the inspiration of the Word of God; hence arguments from Scripture would be of no avail, and mere human arguments would easily be discredited. Scripture plainly teaches that God is truth. "This then is the message which we have heard of him and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all" (I John 1:5).

We must say then that what God commanded Joshua to do at Ai was certainly right; it was in perfect harmony with His Holy Being. Upon that basis alone can we continue. This does not mean that the question is removed. Although the question may not be the veracity of God, we may still have the question as to how the "deception" of Ai is to be harmonized with that veracity. That there is such harmony we can never doubt.

The answer to the question concerning the "deception" of Ai depends first of all whether or not war is right. There is no war in the new heavens and new earth for "... they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Micah 4:3).

That there is war on this earth is a self-evident fact. The history of the world is a history of wars and rumors of wars. And wars are caused by, or are the result of, sin. "From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?" James 4:1.

Principally that warfare is the war of the devil and his seed against the woman and her seed. Of this God had spoken immediately after the fall (Gen. 3:15). Throughout the history of the world that warfare is revealed. "And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 12:17). It is a warfare, therefore, in which the wicked try to crush Christ first of all, and following from that, they try to crush His church.

There is most surely a righteous warfare. Christ Himself fights: "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war." Rev. 19:11. Michael and the angels fight the devil and his angels. Rev. 12:7, Jude 9. And the church is always called to fight the warfare of faith against the devil, the world, and its own flesh.

So the tribes of Israel were to enter into the promised land of Canaan and bring war upon its inhabitants. Moses, shortly before his death, repeated to Israel the promise of God: "The Lord thy God, he will go over before thee, and he will destroy these nations from before thee, and thou shalt possess them: and Joshua, he shall go over before thee, as the

Lord hath said." Deut. 31:3. The battles of Israel too were principally battles of faith. They overcame only through the power of the Lord. For though they fought physical battles, it was always God that gave them the victory. That fact is evident throughout their long history. Israel lived in the time of type and shadow. Their battles, though also battles of faith, were typical of the spiritual battle of the church in the midst of the world.

Proceeding from the fact that warfare is proper for the child of God, as it is conducted according to the command of God, we can also see the strategy which Israel employs at Ai at the command of God was also proper. Warfare, if conducted properly, involves the wise deployment of forces in order to attain the prescribed goal. That is true in the spiritual warfare as well as a physical warfare. This is often called the stratagem, or strategy of warfare. Both opponents are very well aware that the other one intends to use its forces to the best advantage. Properly speaking therefore, one could not call this deception in its generally understood sense. The enemy is not deceived concerning the intention, but is unaware of the way that intention is to be carried out. That naturally must be the case. No general is going to inform the enemy concerning his plan of attack, nor could the fact that he keeps his plans secret make him guilty of deception.

Such was also true concerning the command of God to Israel. If Israel were commanded to approach the city as friends and allies, and then (after they had thus gained entrance into the city) smite it with the edge of the sword, they would have been guilty of the lie, of deception. But such was not the case. Ai knew the intention of Israel, but they did not know how God would command Israel to carry out that intention. God Who is the Righteous God does not deceive in this evil sense of the word, but in righteousness He does defeat the wicked and gives His people the land.

There is yet one question which arises in connection with this same incident. Why did God work in this way? Was it not generally true that God taught His people that it was not their might but rather the power of His arm that defeated the enemy? It was God, not Israel, Who caused the walls of Jericho to fall down. God showed that with the band of 300 with Gideon He gave the victory over an innumerable host of the Midianites. Why is it that now God does not work in the same way? Could not God have dealt with Ai as He did with Jericho? The fact was that the total number of inhabitants of Ai numbered only about 12,000. It has been estimated that there were then probably only 3,000 fighting men — possibly less. Yet at the command of God at least 30,000 Israelites were sent against Ai — a force 10 times the size of that located in this little city. Besides, they were deployed in such a way as to take that city by surprise. The preparations are of such a nature that one would almost begin to think that Ai had many more men than Israel. One wonders why Israel could not have met this army head-on. Or else, why does not God simply destroy

the city with fire from heaven?

There is no question about what God could have done. The reason that God commanded Joshua to proceed in this particular way was undoubtedly for the sake of Israel itself. In the first place we must bear in mind the former attempt of Israel to capture Ai. Then, evidently without consulting God, only 3,000 men had been sent against Ai. Israel had followed the advice of the spies: "Make not all the people to labor thither." One receives the impression that they thought it too much to fight as a nation. After all, they had just captured Jericho, that large city. God had given them the victory. Surely now with a few men God will also give them the victory over Ai. This seems not to be a confession of faith that God can give victory whether there be many or few, but it appears rather to be spiritual laziness. Why should all the people enter the fight when they could get by with few?

God teaches Israel otherwise. Certainly it is not of man but of God that the victory comes. Yet it is exactly because the church has the victory of God through Christ that the church must and does fight. And in that fight the church uses all of the means that God gives unto them. There is no room for laziness in the warfare of faith. The church must know that there is always a fight in the midst of the world, and the church is always in the "thick of the fight." That fight continues even until the end of time. So God teaches Israel, and us, that the battle is one in which the whole church is involved — it can not be delegated to a few as was their intention.

Secondly, we must also remember (God certainly knew) that "the hearts of the people melted, and became as water." Surely such gives evidence of a lack of trust in the promise of God. Nevertheless, it would appear that Israel had much reason to fear; not merely of Ai, but of all the surrounding nations. If God had departed from them, would not these nations come upon them and destroy them as wolves among the sheep? No, we may not try to excuse this lack of trust. But God also remembers the frailty of His people, and He leads them as a father does his children. Because of their fear, as well as to teach them that the whole church must fight, He commands them to send forth so large a number against the small city of Ai. In this way He is not teaching them that now they must rely on the arm of flesh, on the numbers of men, in the fight with the wicked. Rather, and it is very plain throughout the account, God teaches His people that it is He Who directs the battle from beginning unto the end; and it is He Who gives His people the victory even as He assures His people that the victory is theirs before they ever enter into the battle.

Can we not then declare with the Psalmist: "Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart . . . My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever . . . I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all thy works."

G.V.B.

Contending For The Faith

The Church and the Sacraments

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

THE SEVEN SACRAMENTS.

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC DOCTRINE OF TRANSUBSTANTIATION.

(Continued)

"It is another objection to this doctrine (the Roman Catholic doctrine of Transubstantiation—H.V.) that it logically leads, and in fact has led, to the greatest practical evils. It has led to superstitious, in the place of rational and Scriptural reverence for the sacrament; to the idolatrous worship of the consecrated wafer; to attributing to it magical, or supernatural virtue contrary to Scripture; to perverting a simple sacrament into a propitiatory sacrifice, and to investing the ministers of Christ with the character of sacrificing priests, empowered to offer, for money, a propitiatory oblation securing forgiveness even for the sins of the departed. It has been made a mine of wealth to the priesthood and the Church. It was principally the popular belief in this great error, that secured the transfer of the greater part of the land and wealth of Europe into the hands of the clergy and gave them almost unlimited power over the people."—end of quote of Hodge on Rome's proof for its doctrine of Transubstantiation.

The Roman Catholic doctrine of the Lord's Supper as a sacrifice.

Also this doctrine is set forth by Rome in the twenty-second session of its Council of Trent, Sept. 17, 1562. First of all, we will quote this doctrine as positively set forth by this Council. This doctrine is set forth positively in chapters I to VIII as follows:

CHAPTER I

On the Institution of the most holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Forasmuch as, under the former Testament, according to the testimony of the Apostle Paul, there was no *perfection*, because of the weakness of the Levitical priesthood; there was need, God, the Father of mercies, so ordaining, that another priest should rise, according to the order of Melchisedech, our Lord Jesus Christ, who might consummate, and lead to what is perfect, as many as were to be sanctified. He, therefore, our God and Lord, though he was about to offer himself once on the altar of the cross unto God the Father, by means of his death, there to operate an eternal redemption; nevertheless, because that his priesthood was not to be extinguished by his death, in the Last Supper, on the night in which he was betrayed,—that he might leave, to his own beloved Spouse the Church, a visible sacrifice, such as the nature of man requires, whereby that bloody sacrifice, once to be accomplished on the cross, might be represented, and the

memory thereof remain even unto the end of the world, and its salutary virtue be applied to the remission of those sins which we daily commit,—declaring himself constituted a priest forever, according to the order of Melchisedech, he offered up to God the Father his own body and blood under the species of bread and wine; and, under the symbols of those same things, he delivered (his own body and blood) to be received by his apostles, whom he then constituted priests of the New Testament; and by those words, he commanded them and their successors in the priesthood to offer (them); even as the Catholic Church has always understood and taught. For, having celebrated the ancient Passover, which the multitude of the children of Israel immolated in memory of their going out of Egypt, he instituted the new Passover (to wit), himself to be immolated, under visible signs, by the Church through (the ministry of) priests, in memory of his own passage from this world unto the Father, when by the effusion of his own blood he redeemed us, and delivered us from the power of darkness, and translated us into his kingdom. And this is indeed that clean oblation, which can not be defiled by any unworthiness, or malice of those that offer (it); which the Lord foretold by Malachias was to be offered in every place, clean to his name, which was to be great amongst the Gentiles, and which the Apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthians, has not obscurely indicated, when he says, that they who are defiled by the participation of the table of devils, can not be partakers of the table of the Lord; by the table, meaning in both places the altar. This, in fine, is that oblation which was prefigured by various types of sacrifices, during the period of nature, and of the law; inasmuch as it comprises all the good things signified by those sacrifices, as being the consummation and perfection of them all.

CHAPTER II

That the Sacrifice of the Mass is Propitiatory, both for the Living and the Dead.

And forasmuch as, in this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the mass, that same Christ is contained and immolated in an unbloody manner who once offered himself in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross; the holy Synod teaches, that this sacrifice is truly propitiatory, and that by means thereof this is effected, that we obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid, if we draw nigh unto God, contrite and penitent, with a sincere heart and upright faith, with fear and reverence. For the Lord, appeased by the oblation thereof, and granting the grace and gift of penitence, forgives even heinous crimes and sins. For the victim is one and the same, the same now offering by the ministry of priests, who then offered himself on the cross, the manner alone of offering being different. The fruits indeed of which oblation, of that bloody one to wit, are received most plentifully through this unbloody one; so far is this (latter) from derogating in any way from that (former oblation). Wherefore, not only for the sins, punishments, satisfactions, and other necessities of the faithful who are living, but also for

those who are departed in Christ, and who are not as yet fully purified, is it rightly offered, agreeably to a tradition of the apostles.

CHAPTER III

On Masses in Honor of the Saints.

And although the Church has been accustomed at times to celebrate certain masses in honor and memory of the saints; not therefore, however, doth she teach that sacrifice is offered unto them, but unto God alone, who crowned them; whence neither is the priest wont to say, "I offer sacrifice to thee, Peter or Paul"; but giving thanks to God for their victories, he implores their patronage that they may vouchsafe to intercede for us in heaven, whose memory we celebrate upon earth.

CHAPTER IV

On the Canon of the Mass.

And whereas it beseemeth that holy things be administered in a holy manner, and of all holy things this sacrifice is the most holy; to the end that it might be worthily and reverently offered and received, the Catholic Church instituted, many years ago, the sacred Canon, so pure from every error, that nothing is contained therein which does not in the highest degree savor of a certain holiness and piety, and raise up unto God the minds of those that offer. For it is composed out of the very words of the Lord, the traditions of the Apostles, and the pious institutions also of holy Pontiffs.

CHAPTER V

On the Solemn Ceremonies of the Sacrifice of the Mass.

And, whereas such is the nature of man, that, without external helps, he can not easily be raised to the meditation of divine things; therefore has holy Mother Church instituted certain rites, to wit, that certain things be pronounced in the mass in a low, and others in a louder, tone. She has likewise employed ceremonies, such as mystic benedictions, lights, incense, vestments, and many other things of this kind, derived from an apostolical discipline and tradition, whereby both the majesty of so great a sacrifice might be recommended, and the minds of the faithful be excited, by those visible signs of religion and piety, to the contemplation of those most sublime things which are hidden in this sacrifice.

CHAPTER VI

On Mass Wherein The Priest Alone Communicates.

The sacred and holy Synod would fain indeed that, at each mass, the faithful who are present should communicate, not only in spiritual desire, but also by the sacramental participation of the Eucharist, that thereby a more abundant fruit might be derived to them from this most holy sacrifice: but not therefore, if this be not always done, does it condemn, as private and unlawful, but approves of and therefore commends, those masses in which the priest alone communicates sacramentally; since those masses also ought to be considered as truly common; partly because the people communicate

spiritually thereat; partly also because they are celebrated by a public minister of the Church, not for himself only, but for all the faithful, who belong to the body of Christ.

CHAPTER VII

On the Water that is to be Mixed with the Wine to be Offered in the Chalice.

The holy Synod notices, in the next place, that it has been enjoined by the Church on priests, to mix water with the wine that is to be offered in the chalice; as well because it is believed that Christ the Lord did this, as also because from *his side there came out blood and water*; the memory of which mystery is renewed by this commixture; and, whereas in the apocalypse of blessed John *the peoples* are called *waters*, the union of that faithful people with Christ their head is thereby represented.

CHAPTER VIII

On Not Celebrating the Mass Everywhere in the Vulgar Tongue; the Mysteries of the Mass to be Explained to the People.

Although the mass contains great instruction for the faithful people, nevertheless, it has not seemed expedient to the Fathers that it should be everywhere celebrated in the vulgar tongue. Wherefore, the ancient usage of each Church, and the rite approved of by the holy Roman Church, the mother and mistress of all churches, being in each place retained; and, that the sheep of Christ may not suffer hunger, *nor the little ones ask for bread, and there be none to break it unto them*, the holy Synod charges pastors, and all who have the care of souls, that they frequently, during the celebration of mass, expound either by themselves, or others, some portion of those things which are read at Mass, and that, amongst the rest, they explain some mystery of this most holy sacrifice, especially on the Lord's days and festivals.

CHAPTER IX

Preliminary Remark on the Following Canons.

And because that many errors are at this time disseminated and many things are taught and maintained by divers persons, in opposition to this ancient faith, which is based on the sacred Gospel, the traditions of the Apostles, and the doctrine of the Apostles, and the doctrine of the holy Fathers; the sacred and holy Synod, after many and grave deliberations maturely had touching these matters, has resolved, with the unanimous consent of all the Fathers, to condemn, and to eliminate from holy Church by means of the canons subjoined, whatsoever is opposed to this most pure faith and sacred doctrine. (We will continue with these Canons in our next article.)

H.V.

IN MEMORIAM

The Priscilla Society of the First Protestant Reformed Church expresses herewith its sympathy to its secretary, Miss Ruth Bylsma, in the sudden death of her father,

MR. SYDNEY BYLSMA

May our Covenant God comfort and sustain her in her sorrow.

Mrs. B. Woudenberg, President
Mrs. Chas. Pastoor, Vice Secretary

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 8 (continued)

Thus far we have called attention to the negative aspects of this article, namely, the truth that the perseverance of the saints is as far as the saints themselves are concerned absolutely impossible and that this perseverance is not in consequence of the saints' own merits and powers. And we have found that this must be taken in the most stringent sense of the word. It means that there is not even the very faintest sigh for forgiveness, not even the slightest twinge of sorrow over sin, not the least breath of a prayer for deliverance from sin at any stage in the life of the saints that precedes the work of God in them. It means that if it were left to the saints themselves, they would not only fall but would totally fall from faith and from the state of grace, they would completely fall out of their union with Christ, would sink back into the spiritual death from which they were once rescued. And we must understand that this is true really not only of those occasions when the saints fall very deeply and probably continue in a certain sin for a time. It is in a most real sense true of every sin that we commit. All our sins constitute unfaithfulness to the spiritual marriage relation between the saints and the God of their salvation in Christ. All our sins are principally so many instances of spiritual adultery, also those sins of which we immediately repent and for which we immediately seek forgiveness. All our sins are backslidings. Now suppose that either in regard to those deep falls and continued sins or in regard to any of our sins God would let us go completely, would not at all interfere with the activities of "these remains of indwelling sin," would put us spiritually "on our own," what would happen? Only and always one thing: we would continue along the course of that sin steadily and plunge into everlasting destruction. Even granting the presence of the new life in our hearts, conceding that there is in us a small beginning of the new obedience, the power of those remains of indwelling sin is far too great for the small beginning of the new obedience. The little principle of the new life would never have the strength and the stamina to stem the rushing attack of the power of sin. If there were any attempt and inclination of that principle of the new life to break our fall, to interfere with our sin, to turn the soul to sorrow, to cry out for forgiveness, it would be utterly stifled. We are so weak in ourselves, even as saints, that we cannot stand a moment! We cannot even realize our sin, cannot even be sorry for it, cannot even pray for forgiveness, cannot even seek the strength to fight against and overcome it. We cannot stand for a moment!

Nor are these things merely a matter of some objective doctrine for the child of God. This is the living, practical truth of the gospel. This truth ought to be, and principally it is, very real in the experience of every child of God. And the child of God who is not as aware of the reality of this truth as he ought to be, who imagines that there is in some small degree some strength to stand in himself, is in for some bitter spiritual experiences somewhere along the path of his life. He will probably be made to experience the hopelessness of utter despair and darkness in order that he may be made to realize that there is no strength at all in himself. Yes, but you say: "We must pray that God preserve and strengthen us. We must depend by faith upon God's preserving power. We must consciously trust in Christ's intercession for us. We must willingly have our hand in His." And indeed we must. But I ask you: what happens when you do not do that? What is there then to interrupt you in your mad plunge toward destruction? What will become of you when you do not believe and trust and when you do not willingly place your hand in Christ's? And those moments come! Make no mistake about that. Must we then return to the way of trust and faith and dependence and prayer of ourselves? Is our trust and faith and prayer the condition — and I am speaking of saints — of God's interrupting our course of unbelief, of distrust, of self-confidence, of failure to watch and to pray? In other words, do you — and I speak especially of those times of our deep falls and backslidings — do you and must you pray in the consciousness that your prayer precedes any action on the part of God, yea, that God is impotent to take any action to rescue you before you cry to Him? Then the situation is utterly hopeless not only objectively, but an unutterably hopeless feeling of blank despair must needs creep over the soul of the child of God. Nay, but the very prayer for forgiveness, the very cry of sorrow, the very plea for rescue is, in the first place, itself the fruit of God's preserving power and strength interrupting your headlong plunge into destruction. And, in the second place, it is not the conscious fulfilling of and acknowledgement of a condition that we as saints must fulfill, but the *acknowledging* of our own helplessness and of God's almighty power to keep us and to rescue us — an acknowledgement that must spontaneously rise from the heart of the saint that is touched by His preserving grace! Hence, let us make no mistake about this: both as far as the objective relationship between God and His saints is concerned and as far as their subjective consciousness is concerned, the saints initiate nothing at all in the process of perseverance. God's is and must be the first move always. That move must originate with and be initiated by God Himself only. And any activity of perseverance on the part of the saints — and there is such activity — is not in consequence of their own merits and powers.

But it is in consequence of *God's free mercy*, thus the article teaches us.

God's mercy is His love revealed to His people in their

misery. It is that virtue of the Most High according to which He wills to deliver them from the misery of their sin and imperfection and death and to make them partakers of the highest blessedness with Himself. It is therefore peculiarly a manifestation of His mercy that God prevents His people from totally falling from faith and from the state of grace, and that He does not allow them to continue in their backslidings and to perish. His people are still in their misery. True, they have been redeemed and principally delivered, and they are in principle partakers of all the blessings of salvation and life eternal. But their deliverance from their misery is not complete. It has not been finished. They are still in a position, as far as they are concerned, to become the slaves of sin once more, to renounce their Savior and their very salvation. And therefore God's mercy is revealed not only in their first and principal deliverance out of the power of darkness, but it is continually revealed. His mercy does not reach its goal until His saints have been finally and perfectly delivered, are free from all sin and death, and are received into the everlasting kingdom of righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ. The saints must be continually rescued and preserved. And that God repeatedly rescues His people out of sin and temptation and keeps them from totally falling and brings them back out of their deep falls is a repeated and continued manifestation of divine mercy.

But the article emphasizes that this mercy is free, gratuitous. This stands directly in contrast with the Arminian idea that our perseverance is in consequence of our own merits and powers. Negatively, therefore, that God's mercy is free means that it is absolutely undeserved and unmerited, in the first place. There is nothing that the saints must do in order to obtain the right to that mercy. They do not and cannot and need not pay for it and earn it. But, in the second place, the gratuitous character of God's mercy means that it is also freely *bestowed*. Otherwise it is not free in the full sense of the word. A store of mercy for which we do not have to pay, which we need not earn, but which is ours merely for the asking and accepting is not free. And it is certainly not free when one considers that the one who must ask and accept in such a case is just exactly unable to do so. No, it must also be freely bestowed upon us and wrought in us without our aid. This is exactly the beauty and the comfort of God's free mercy. It is just exactly at the moment when His people show by their sins that they do not at all deserve to be called His people and that they do not deserve to be kept unto the incorruptible inheritance, in the first place, that God demonstrates His mercy toward them. And in the second place, it is exactly at the time when His saints on their part abandon that mercy, fail to trust in it, seek the ways of sin and lust, that God bestows His mercy, keeps them from totally and finally falling away, and brings them back from their sin. It stands to reason, therefore, that not only is this mercy free in the sense of being gratuitous, but it is also free in the sense that it is sovereign. It proceeds in the fullest sense of the word from God alone. It has its

origin in Him. It has its reason in His good pleasure. It has its revelation in His only begotten Son. It has its realization through His Holy Spirit.

Thus the article, finally, maintains that the falling away of the saints is with respect to God utterly impossible, and it does so on solid grounds. Notice that the article finds the reason for this impossibility entirely in God.

In the first place, God's counsel cannot be changed. This is the root of the matter. The truth of eternal and unchangeable predestination necessarily implies the perseverance of the saints. Because His counsel is unchangeable, God's promise cannot fail. According to His counsel God promises His people, that is, swears with an oath, to give them eternal life and glory in Christ Jesus through faith. That promise is the Word of the unchangeable Jehovah Himself. It is emphatically *His* promise. It is not an offer. It is not even to be compared to a human promise. It is absolutely unconditional, dependent for its fulfillment on God alone, Whose counsel is unchangeable. And because His promise can never fail, His calling cannot be recalled. One called is always called. Once a child of God is always a child of God. Once drawn out of darkness into God's marvellous light is to remain a child of light forever and never to sink back into the oblivion of the darkness.

In the second place, this essential and root ground of perseverance is revealed in our Lord Jesus Christ. There is, first of all, the merit of Christ. He has obtained for us eternal righteousness. That righteousness was obtained through the payment of the debt of our guilt. And that righteousness is our right to eternal life. That can never be rendered ineffectual. The most heinous sin into which the saint falls after his initial conversion cannot make the merit of Christ ineffectual. Why not? Because also that sin was atoned for by the blood of Christ long before it was ever committed. Secondly, therefore, Christ's intercession can not be made ineffectual. We may fail to watch and to pray. But Christ makes continual intercession for us on the basis of His own perfect work. And His prayer, founded upon the perfect righteousness of the cross, is: "Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me may be with me where I am." That prayer is surely heard. And in response to that prayer God commits all His elect to the custody of Christ, to be kept by Him until the final day. That keeping cannot be frustrated. No one can pluck the saints out of the hand of Christ, to Whom has been given all power in heaven and on earth.

And finally, the reason for our sure perseverance is to be found in the realization of God's unchangeable counsel and unfailing promise and irrevocable call by the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Christ. The Spirit seals us. He marks the people of God as His own property and as genuine by the power of His grace. That seal, that divine mark of ownership and genuineness cannot be obliterated, blotted out so that we lose our adoption and our sonship. Nor can it be

(Continued on page 309)

DECENCY and ORDER

Classical Jurisdiction

The question of the nature and extent of the jurisdiction of a Classis over a Consistory is of fundamental importance!

The exercise of this jurisdiction, either properly or improperly, has an important effect upon the ecclesiastical life of the churches and certainly has affected the history of our Protestant Reformed Churches from the very time of their origin until the present day.

With the principle of this matter, as expressed in the question from *"The Church Order Commentary"* that appeared in the last issue of *The Standard Bearer*, we are agreed. We single out the following statements from that quotation as being especially pertinent:

"No major assembly . . . has the right to depose a minor assembly."

"Without the concurring advice of these delegates (Synodical) no Classis may decide that a certain minister should be deposed."

"The Classis has a full right to appoint a committee to help the Consistory in the execution of its task (i.e. to depose office bearers)."

"If any Consistory member thus deposed refuses to acknowledge his deposition, . . . he makes himself liable to discipline as an individual member."

"If one or more deposed consistory members . . . Classis should declare these members to be schismatic group, outside the denomination . . ."

Now everyone that has knowledge of the events that transpired in the Christian Reformed Church in 1924 also knows how grievously these principles of Church Order were trampled under foot. This was not done in ignorance but by a Classis, imbued with a spirit of hierarchy, that wilfully sacrificed all right in order to achieve its determined end. Out of this evil sprang up the Protestant Reformed Churches that today not only give witness of the truth of the Reformed Confessions overagainst the false theory of common grace and its many implications, but also represent the truth in the church political sense of the word. Neither is it then strange that those who in 1953 departed from the truth maintained in the Protestant Reformed Churches and likewise desecrated these fundamental principles of Church Order, today seek affiliation with and re-admittance into these churches which share with them a common error. If it is possible to speak of any virtue among those addicted to heresy, it would in this case be that some of them begin to reveal a measure of consistency. We will refrain from judging what motivates this course because, in the first place, God is Judge Who rewards every man according to his

deeds, and, in the second place, because such motivation is lacking of all virtue, and, therefore, an evaluation of it is better left unsaid. We are concerned only with the actions of the church in relation to the principles of good ecclesiastical order and when these conflict we aim to point it out as a warning to all, lest by being carried along the wrong course, they bring themselves and their generations to ruin.

We may ask what then were the specific evils of 1924 and again of 1953? History seems to have a way of covering up these things and time induces us mortals to forget the unpleasant past or at least refrain from telling it to our children. This must never be and so we will recapitulate a little bit of the story even though it is most unpleasant to write about injustices, perversions and committed sins. It is much more enjoyable to relate the story of the truth. However, the latter can scarcely be done without the former since it has pleased God to unfold and develop his Truth through the struggle of sin and grace. In relating this story, there is one thing to be remembered. It is not our purpose to present a history, and, therefore, our details will be kept to a bare minimum. Anyone interested in a factual account of the history can obtain a copy of the book, *The History Of The Protestant Reformed Churches In America* by the Rev. H. Hoeksema, and therein read the entire story prior to the events of 1953. Our rubric is devoted to church polity and, in the present connection, we are concerned primarily with the matter of rightful Classical jurisdiction.

We begin then with 1924!

On December 12, 1924 Classis Grand Rapids East met in special session and adopted the following as advised by its committee of pre-advice:

With respect to the Rev. H. Hoeksema, then pastor of the Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church, Classis declared:

"1. That the Reverend H. Hoeksema, in his answer to the question placed before him by the classis, had evaded the issue;

"2. That in the afternoon session of the classis on December 11 he had refused to answer the classical questions with an unequivocal 'Yes' or 'No';

"3. That he had definitely declared that he would not submit himself to the synodical decisions in re the 'Three Points';

"4. That he had refused to promise not openly to teach, in preaching or in writing, anything repugnant to the 'Three Points';

"5. That, therefore, he was guilty of insubordination to the proper ecclesiastical authorities;

"6. That, therefore, he was, by his own act, suspended from his office as minister of the Word of God, for the time being;

"7. That for the time being and until final determination

in the case were made by the Synod, he should be denied all the rights and privileges connected with the office of a minister in the Christian Reformed Church."

Thus was Rev. Hoeksema suspended from the office of the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church by the *Classis*! We will further evaluate this action presently.

With respect to the consistory of the Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church, *Classis* declared:

"1. That the consistory of the Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church had refused to carry out the decision of the classis with respect to the censure of the three members that had accused the pastor of public sins;

"2. That the consistory had refused to maintain the decrees of the synod of 1924;

"3. That it had refused to submit to the decisions of the classis with respect to the questions the classis demanded of the consistory to ask its pastor —;

"4. That, therefore, the consistory was guilty of insubordination to the proper ecclesiastical authorities;

"5. That, therefore, by this act the consistory, for the time being severed its connection with the Christian Reformed Church;

"6. That, for the time being and until final determination in the case was made by the synod, the consistory be denied all rights and privileges connected with the ecclesiastical connection of a consistory with the Christian Reformed Church."

Thus was a minor assembly (consistory) deposed from its office by a major assembly (classis). Also this must be further explained in order that we may see that not only was the general principle of Classical jurisdiction flagrantly violated, but many more church political evils were perpetrated in this proceeding.

So numerous were these evils that it is somewhat difficult to know which of them to mention first. We might begin by pointing to the fact that this session of the *Classis* was itself really illegal. It had been convened by the Classical Committee upon the request of the dissenting members of the Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church in spite of the fact that the Consistory of said church had informed the committee that the internal condition of the congregation did not demand a special session of the *Classis*. But the consistory was completely ignored and the request of a relatively small group of dissatisfied members was granted. The *classis* was called into special session. Obviously such a meeting, illegally called, could produce nothing constructively good. This also proved to be the case.

Next, we may note that this special session of *Classis* began in November, 1924. In this first session there were many irregularities which we will refrain from mentioning here in order that we may come to the main evil which shows clearly how the principle of classical jurisdiction was

violated. There were several documents on the table of the *classis*. Most of these were there illegally since they were protests against a body that had never received copies of them. Nevertheless the *classis* proceeded to treat them in spite of strong objections by that body which was the consistory of the Eastern Avenue Church. Through a committee of pre-advice the *classis* was advised among other things to: (1) demand of the consistory of Eastern Avenue that they ask their pastor whether or not he would abide by the three points of doctrine as adopted by the Synod of Kalamazoo, 1924; (2) ask of the consistory to have their answer ready by the following morning at nine o'clock; (3) in case the answer of the consistory would prove satisfactory to *classis*, to appoint a committee to treat the entire case in conjunction with the consistory. This advice was then adopted and the consistory responded the next morning with a well grounded answer in which they pointed out the main error, that a minor assembly, like a *classis*, cannot violate the decisions of a major assembly, like the synod. This is just what the *classis* was doing. They assumed jurisdiction over the synod. They were going beyond the decision of the Synod in attempting to bind upon the consistory and the pastor what the Synod never intended and had even refused to do. All this was clearly shown from the recorded decisions of the Synod of 1924. Nevertheless, *classis* insisted on proceeding in this evil way. It was clearly a case of classical hierarchy carried through to the very end of its sessions.

We must remark here yet that it is sometimes alleged that our own *Classis* East in 1953 did the same thing and is guilty of the same offence in connection with that recent history of schism in our churches. This, however, is an unproven and thoroughly false allegation that is made either in ignorance of the facts or by those who wilfully distort facts. This we will show in later writings in connection with the matter of classical jurisdiction and the history of 1953 but it must be known that there is no parallel between the actions of *Classis* East 1953 and those of *Classis* East Grand Rapids 1924.

There is, however, much more in connection with the proceedings of the last mentioned *Classis*. This must wait until the next time. Let it suffice to conclude the present article by saying that whenever a *Classis* assumes authority and prerogatives which, under the Church Order, it does not possess, it can only do evil. The case of 1924 is a most glaring example indeed!

G.V.D.B.

THE VOICE OF OUR FATHERS

(Continued from page 307)

frustrated. No one can successfully claim that we are not God's peculiar possession — not the devil, not we ourselves. His grace is efficacious, and it effectually changes us from children of darkness to sons of the living God.

We are safely kept! Glory to His sovereign and free mercy alone!

H.C.H.

ALL AROUND US

Reply to Objectors of Article on Literary Cavalcade.

In the March 15th issue of *The Standard Bearer* two Contributions appeared which were directed against the undersigned and reflected on the article we wrote, which appeared in the March 1st issue under the heading "Literary Cavalcade—The Green Pastures." We trust that the following reply will satisfactorily answer both of them.

Both of my opponents charge me with serious faults. The one accuses me of degrading the quality of *The Standard Bearer*, of misrepresenting motives, of transgressing journalistic ethics; the other, of maligning a good name, of transgressing the rule of brotherly love enjoined by Scripture. Both of the Contributions are so nearly alike that we should have no difficulty in answering both in one reply. Since my article was directed against Grand Rapids Christian High School, I will reply to the objections raised by the English Staff of that institution and trust that Miss A. Lubbers will be satisfied to take this as my answer to her also.

In the first place, the English Staff tells us that the magazine *Literary Cavalcade* has been used for many years with profit, and the Staff has faith in its high-caliber offerings. At the same time the Staff admits that the magazine does have objectionable material in it, and the Staff even admits that the article "The Green Pastures" is objectionable. Other magazines, such as, *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *Reader's Digest*, so we are told by the Staff, are also used, and these too have objectionable material in them. And so the conclusion must be according to the Staff, that through a magazine contains objectionable material it may and should be used anyway.

Now I will admit that almost all secular magazines contain objectionable material. I will also admit that *Literary Cavalcade* may be 99 9/10% of the time quite usable for literary purposes. But does that mean that a teacher should give this objectionable material as an assignment for reading, and that, too, without warning the students concerning that material? I say not! I believe it lies exactly in the calling of a Christian School and Christian School teacher to choose other literature which does not contain objectionable material of which there is plenty. And if a magazine must be used that contains objectionable material, it is the duty of the teacher to give sound warning against the reading of that material. It is just because I was told that this was not done that moved me to write as critically as I did.

This leads me to say, in the second place, that the Staff and the informing student do not agree in their testimony. The Staff claims that I have been misinformed, and that this is not surprising because I received my information secondhand. The Staff maintains that "the teacher involved deliberately avoided this selection 'The Green Pastures' and even cautioned at least one of his classes concerning its use."

Now I have checked again with the student involved,

not secondhand, and am told that the teacher involved told the class of the student involved not only to read the entire issue of the magazine, but that the class would be held responsible to give account to its contents. Nor, according to the student, was there any warning given concerning that article.

Again, the Staff says "no assignment was given at any time to have the students read *The Green Pastures*." The student involved says that the class the student was in did receive the assignment to be responsible for the entire contents of that issue of L. C.

It is, of course, quite possible that the teacher cautioned one of his classes concerning the reading of the article in question, and that to the remaining two classes, in one of which the student involved resided, he did not give this warning. And if this is so, it follows that what the teacher did right in one class does not make right what he did in the other two. But when the Staff says that no assignment was given at any time to have the students read the article in question, and the student says that the class in which the student resided did receive the assignment to be responsible for the entire contents of the magazine, we have a flat contradiction in testimony.

Regardless, however, of who is right, what we said above we still maintain. The material found in the article *The Green Pastures* has no place in our Christian institutions of learning; and where this objectionable material nevertheless creeps in, there should be a strong antithetical note sounded by the teaching staff that will set straight the covenant child who is being taught. That is the whole point of my criticism. If this is not done, our Christian Schools are no better than the public schools which know nothing of the antithesis.

In the third place, my opponents found it also objectionable that I wrote about this matter in *The Standard Bearer*. The assertion is made by the Staff that "in deference to the spirit of brotherly love enjoined upon us by Scripture and out of concern for the good name of our Christian Schools, those taking exception to any report or rumor concerning the educational program of our school should consult us directly. It is at this level, rather than in our church papers, that remedial action can best be taken if and whenever it is needed." Also Miss A. Lubbers reminds us of Matthew 18. Writes she, "I am convinced that a writer may never rush into print unless he has first consulted the party in question and in this case I am sure Rev. Schipper never did. If he did he should tell us. I do not believe that such journalistic ethics may be left unchallenged nor should they be tolerated. Matthew 18 always applies, it seems to me, whether we are dealing with one personal or a communal organization."

I will grant my worthy opponents that I could have done as they suggested. In fact, when I first heard of this matter I was of a mind to do exactly that, but on second thought I did not feel that this was necessary. Though the matter under

discussion is perhaps not generally known, it is nevertheless not a secret. We received the impression from their writings that they wished it had remained a secret. We are quite sure too that if we had written in generalities and had not mentioned the school by name there never would have been any rebuttal in *The Standard Bearer*. The Staff probably feels like some of those people must feel whose names appear in the long list of traffic violators the local newspaper publishes about every two weeks. Ordinarily they may abide by all the rules, but on an off day they become careless and violate one of them, are apprehended and fined. I imagine they don't like the publicity, but there is not much they can do about it. Nor does the reporter go to the judge to ask if there are any special names he wishes suppressed.

May I remind my opponents of two things: 1. The purpose of the department of *The Standard Bearer* for which I write. 2. How I sought to realize this purpose in the article they have criticized.

The name of this department used to be "Periscope." In 1953 this was changed to "All Around Us." This the editorial staff did in order to bring the name of this department in line with the English names of the other departments. But the idea of the Greek title "Periscope," which means: *viewing around*, the staff wished to retain. Since that time we have filled this rubric and have always tried to realize that purpose. We all know that the periscope is not only an instrument to view the surrounding landscape or seascape to ascertain its beauty, but also it is used to detect dangers and threatening evils, with the purpose then to sound a warning against these evils and dangers. This time, that is, March 1, the periscope sights fell on the Literary Department of G. R. C. H. S., and particularly the magazine used there which contained the corrupt article under discussion. That it was my sole purpose to point up the danger and corruption is evident from what I wrote: "What I read moved me to pen these comments that others of our readers, especially those Protestant Reformed, may be stirred up to inquire of their children just what materials are being used by the schools to which they commit their children for Christian education."

It is our conviction that our Christian institutions of learning should not do things that make it necessary for the finger of criticism to point at them, i.e., things they cannot defend. And I have seen no defense of the article in L. C. to which I referred. Nor do I feel that it is necessary for me to consult with every one I write about before "I rush into print" as one of my opponents thinks I should do. Nor should my opponents conclude that I hate G. R. C. H. S. and am seeking its destruction. That I send my children there is proof to the contrary. My conception of love is negatively, that it never rejoices in corruption; and positively, that it seeks to correct and encourage perfection. It is also the response of true love that where corruption has been pointed out, it will not seek to defend it, but forsake it and strive by the grace of God to walk in amendment of life. This I will seek to prove to you in what now follows.

Finally, there is one statement in my article to which my opponents most seriously object, and which I now feel, after my attention has been called to it, it were better that it had not been written. The statement reads: "And the teacher who most likely believes that due to the common grace of God we have here a work of art which our covenant children should appreciate." I am sorry for that statement, and sincerely apologize for making it. I trust that all those who were offended, and especially the teacher, will forgive.

The statement was made on the basis of the fact that the doctrine of common grace encourages the appreciation of worldly art. And my general observations have been and still are that there are teachers and board members in the Christian Schools, which are predominantly controlled by members of the Christian Reformed Church, who have fallen into the extreme against which even the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church which adopted the Three Points of Common Grace warned. We observed this first hand when we served for two years on the board of one of these schools. Those we have in mind appeared to have and even showed by their actions that they have no sense whatever of the antithesis. Athens and Jerusalem are alike to them. For two long years we tangled with board members and teachers who boldly sought to introduce into the school program, curricularly and extra-curricularly, if I may use these terms, things which we believe clearly militated against sound Reformed principles. And all this, we were told in no uncertain terms, on the basis of the theory of common grace. I said they were "two long years," and so they actually seemed because of our continual debate which proved at last to be useless. For as soon as those who opposed us became a majority, they got their way; or, as was the case especially with one teacher with whom I had more than one meeting to discuss our differences, the teacher told me that I could keep my opinion and the teacher would keep his.

It was with this experience and with these observations in mind that I wrote that objectionable statement. I realize now that on the basis of these general observations I had no right to judge the teacher involved whom I do not even know. It may be that the teacher involved does not fit the judgment I made at all, and if it is true that he also condemned the article under discussion as the Staff says he did, he is to be commended rather than condemned. I hope that this answer with this public apology will remove the offence and settle this dispute.

M.S.

IN MEMORIAM

In the sudden passing away of one of our faithful members, we, the Men's Society of the First Prot. Ref. Church of Grand Rapids, Mich., wish to express our sincere sympathy to the family of

MR. SYDNEY BYLSMA

"For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them which also sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." I Thess. 4:14.

Mr. M. Swart, President

Mr. S. Beiboer, Secretary

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

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

March 20, 1959

All of the main streets in the South Holland-Oak Lawn area led to our Oak Lawn church Tuesday evening, March 17. Rev. H. Hoeksema lectured that evening on, "The Virgin Birth, and the Natures of Christ" to a capacity crowd, including the delegates to Classis West, overflowing into an adjoining room. The speaker developed the truth that our Mediator was in one Person both very God and real righteous man; that, the human and Divine natures were united in the Person of the Son of God, who, by the power of His Godhead sustained the human nature in order to bear the burden of the wrath of God that He might obtain for us righteousness and life.

Rev. Vanden Berg has received and is considering the call extended to him by the congregation of Redlands.

Adams St. School rendered their Easter program March 19 at First Church. The theme, "From Death To Life" was carried out by, narration, poems and music. By following the life of Israel from Egypt to Canaan the audience travelled with God's Church to its Eternal Rest.

Two pairs of longevous celebrants: Mr. and Mrs. A. Bleyenbergh from Edgerton—their 61st wedding anniversary, Feb. 18; and Mr. and Mrs. E. Bylsma from First Church—their 62nd wedding anniversary, March 4.

The March Beacon Lights' Hymnsing was held at the Southwest Church despite the "worst blizzard of the year" which raged over the countryside. The weather surely kept many of the out-of-towners away, but those attending enjoyed singing the Easter music from Psalter and song sheets.

Holland's Men's Society met in joint meeting at First Church, March 15. The after recess program consisted of a paper on "Christian Giving" by J. H. Kortering. He very ably developed the theme that Christian giving is the outward manifestation of an inner reality: Love toward God, as prefigured in the O.T. sacrifices and offerings, and in the N.T. Church under the injunction, "give as the Lord has prospered us." A warm discussion followed, including the "pros" and "cons" of the modern budget envelope method of giving.

Kalamazoo's bulletin announces that a baby was born to Rev. and Mrs. Mulder March 2nd—their third boy.

Holland's Pastor, Rev. McCollam exchanged pulpits with Rev. Lanting, March 1, and with Rev. Mulder, March

8. Their Ladies' Aid Society enjoyed an essay by Mrs. McCollam, March 3, on "Character Building in the Home."

Oaklawn welcomed serviceman Robert Haak back to their congregational life, having been separated from this form of the communion of saints for the past two years. Rev. Vanden Berg calls the attention of his people to a significant fact of current church history as it is developing in the Passaic Classis of the Reformed Church in America. He offers a brochure written by the consistory of the Sixth Ref. Church of Paterson, N.J., regarding the licensure of a certain candidate for the ministry who holds to heretical doctrines. Oak Lawn was host to South Holland's Men's Society, March 2, and the Rev. H. C. Hoeksema gave a talk on "Science and Scripture on the Age of the World."

South Holland granted a transfer of the membership of Eileen Van Baren to First Church, Grand Rapids. Further, the second Tuesday evening catechism class assignment for March 17 was a report on the lecture mentioned in our first paragraph. And, new ushering arrangements have been completed; several young men will take turns ushering, the first two being Henry and Adrian Lenting.

Mr. and Mrs. Society of Southwest discussed the meaning of the word, "gamesters" found in the Communion Form in one of their meetings; and, the Ladies' Society discussed the meaning of "presumptuous sins" of Psalm 19:13 in the same week in February.

Southeast Mr. and Mrs. Society is very busy building up their "Organ Fund" with rummage sales and the sale of sacred records. Further, membership papers were received from the Cascade Chr. Ref. Church of Mrs. James Veldman, nee Gracia Schreur.

Hope received a baptized member from the Netherlands Reformed Church of Rock Valley, Iowa.

Do you agree with E. E. Opdyke that,

Gossip is the most deadly germ.
It has neither legs nor wings.
It is composed entirely of tales
And most of them have stings.

The author evidently experienced in his life the stark truth of Proverbs 18:8, "The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly."

Correction: The piano Oak Lawn is purchasing is for society use and not for church services, as reported last time. The congregational singing has been accompanied by an Electronic Wurlitzer organ for the past six years.

. . . see you in church.

J.M.F.

REPORT OF CLASSIS WEST, MARCH 18, 1959

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches convened in South Holland, Illinois, on Wednesday, March 18, 1959. Weather conditions were not ideal for traveling. However, only one congregation failed to send any representation. We met until Wednesday evening, 11 p. m. The Rev. H. C. Hoeksema was the chairman of the meeting, and it was also because of his able leadership that we were able to finish the business of the classis in one day.

There is not much we can publish of this meeting in an article of this nature. The matter of subsidies took considerable time. Some time was also spent on the matter of furnishing vacant churches with classical appointments. And it is also at the March meeting of our classis that synodical delegates are chosen to represent our classis, the Lord willing, at our synod which convened the first week in June. In addition to this, the classis was also confronted with the task of discussing a few protests which were directed against the synodical meetings of 1957 and 1958.

Pella received the following classical appointments: April 5 — H. Veldman; May 10 — G. Vanden Berg; May 31 — H. H. Kuiper; July 5, Aug. 2, and Sept. 6 — G. Vanden Berg.

The following classical appointments were given to Redlands: April 19, 26, May 3 — E. Emanuel; May 24, 31, June 7 — R. C. Harbach; June 21, 28, July 5 — J. A. Heys; July 12, 19, 26 — H. Veldman; August 2, 9, 16 — G. Van Baren; August 23, 30, Sept. 6 — H. C. Hoeksema.

Synodical delegates were chosen as follows:

Minister		Alternates
Primi		
J. A. Heys	E. Emanuel	
H. C. Hoeksema	R. C. Harbach	
H. H. Kuiper	G. Van Baren	
H. Veldman	G. Vanden Berg	

Elder		Alternates
Primi		
W. Buis	G. Gunnink	
M. Gaastra	G. Huber	
L. Lanting	N. Kooiker	
R. Regnerus	W. Terpstra	

The synodical delegates should remember the rule adopted by the classis that the primi delegates call on their respective alternates if necessary and if their alternates cannot attend Synod, the secundi delegates be summoned alphabetically.

A spirit of harmony and cooperation characterized the meeting throughout. Rev. G. Vanden Berg closed the meeting with prayer after the singing of the doxology.

REV. H. VELDMAN,
Stated Clerk.