

THE STANDARD

Bearer

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MEDITATION

HIS OWN RECEIVED HIM NOT

"But Peter followed Him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end.

Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee. But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest.

And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth.

And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the Man. And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee.

Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the Man. And immediately the cock crew.

And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny Me thrice. And he went out and wept bitterly."

MATT. 26:58, 69-75

"... and the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter."

LUKE 22:61a

This was a very black night for the Lamb of God!

The events follow quickly the one after the other.

There is the unspeakable anguish in the garden across the brook Cedron. The sleeping disciples: there is to be no human sympathy with Jesus. Then there is the betrayal of Judas; the binding of Jesus, and, in the palaces of Annas and Caiaphas, the mockery, the beatings, the spitting on the Holy Face!

The godless have their hour: they set Him at nought! And the Cross casts its shadow before.

But first the Lord is to drink one of the bitterest draughts out of the cup of the wrath of God: one of His dearly beloved disciples is to deny Him!

And it shall again be fulfilled: His own received Him not!

* * * *

Let us look at this denial on the part of the Rock: Peter. There are three stages.

John and Peter follow the sad procession as Jesus is brought first to Annas. And since John was known to the

High Priest, he may enter the court of the palace. And through his good offices, Peter may also enter.

But the damsel which had the charge of the gate looks at Peter and recognizes him. (John 18:17)

There are four versions; when Peter is connected with Jesus and His own:

"I know not what thou sayest!"

"I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest."

"I know Him not."

"I am not!"

And then? The cock crew for the first time: a fair warning is given to Peter. It should have recalled to him the word of Jesus: "Before the cock crow twice thou shalt deny Me thrice."

A little while later another maid recognizes him, and speaks to those that were seated around the fire. But here are Peter's answers:

"I do not know the Man."

"Denied it again."

"Man, I am not!"

"He denied it, and said, I am not."

This second denial is accompanied with an oath, which should not surprise us. When once you set your foot on the path of falsehood and sin, you must needs grow in wickedness. The first time you steal a nickel, and suffer. But the second time you steal a quarter, and the pain is not as severe.

Here is also a difficulty of which the Higher Criticism has made mountains. Matthew records that the second denial was occasioned by a maid. But the second answer in Luke is: "Man, I am not!"

Still, the answer is easy. The maid indeed introduced the statement that Peter was one of Jesus' disciples, but she did not speak to him personally. She addressed those that stood around. How natural that one of them took the damsel's charge and say: Correct, he is one of them! And Peter then addressed that man, and said: Man, I am not!

And the third time they recognize him there is abundant evidence: Thy speech shows plainly that thou art one of them: thou art a Galilean! And most of all: a kinsman of Malchus, whose ear Peter hewed off, is there, recognizes him, and affirms: Thou art one of this Man's disciples!

And Peter?

We shudder to continue the story: he began to curse and to swear, saying, I KNOW NOT THE MAN!

He began to curse and to swear. What does this mean?

To curse is that you call down God's damnation on yourself. By the way, that's the terrible way in which people curse in the Netherlands. Not here in America. Here they ask that God may damn the other fellow. But in Holland they pray that God may damn themselves. And that is what Peter did. He said in effect: I may be damned by Jehovah if I know this Man.

To swear is worse.

To swear is this: you call Jehovah down to earth alongside of you in order to substantiate the truth of what you are saying.

And so in effect Peter said: Jehovah knows that I do not know this Man.

The denial is thrice complete.

As far as Peter is concerned: nothing binds him anymore to either Jesus or the disciples of Jesus.

Who would not tremble, nay, shudder?

* * * *

Can you explain this strange behaviour of Peter?

A little while ago he took a sword and tried to kill Malchus. Personally, I think he meant it when he said that he would go to death or to prison with Jesus.

Here are a few damsels, and a few soldiers who were at ease, without authority: and he is afraid!

When no one knows the true name of Jesus, Peter calls Him: Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God! And now?

Let's try to explain it.

First, it had been a long and a weary night, full of disappointments. Christ acted like a slave in the foot-washing; He had prophesied that one would betray Him, another would deny Him, and all would be offended in Him; He assured the disciples that He would be bound, spit upon, scourged and killed!

Yes, it had been a very sad night. And in the garden they slept for sorrow, so we read.

And disappointing too. They had expected that Jesus would be more than David and Solomon combined. They expected Jesus to sit on the throne of David in an earthly kingdom, and that the hated Romans would be defeated.

But nothing remained of their dreams.

Yes, Peter did take the sword and, as always, began the fight against the soldiers of the hated Sanhedrin, but here is an important point: Jesus did not want to fight! He acted like a little lamb. And they were offended. If Jesus had said: Come on! Up and at them! They all would have fought to the death for Jesus. But that was not the style of God! His style is the meek lamb, dumb before those who sheared Him.

And they were offended.

Second, Peter stands there before those damsels and maids and soldiers in the weakness and sinfulness of human nature. And then you can expect anything. Watch how you act, and weep.

Yes, Christ called him the rock, but flesh and blood had not revealed the name of Jesus, but the Holy Spirit.

And finally, remember the devil, and Jesus' words. The devil was greatly desirous to especially sift Peter like wheat. Well, here you see Peter in the sieve of the devil.

* * * *

What are the reasons for this denial?

The Reformed child of God asks: Why did God will that this denial should take place? Where is the wisdom of this terrible chapter?

Here are the reasons: they are five.

First, Simon must go through a process where he may bear the name Peter.

He was altogether too self-confident. You all know his boasting: I shall never be offended even though all these are. I will go to prison and to death for Thee! I shall never deny Thee!

Do you remember how he also wanted to tread upon the water? Suppose he had. Suppose the Lord would have allowed him to walk on the water *toward* Jesus, and with Him, *back* to the ship. I ask you: upon whom would the eyes of the disciples have rested in admiration, on Peter or on Jesus? You know the answer. He was too proud and too self-centered. He was glorious in *his* strength. Peter has to learn that apart from Christ he can do nothing.

Second, the devil must have his hour. Jesus must suffer death in all its forms. Death is also separation of that which belongs together. And so the devil shall do his part to tear Peter away from Jesus. He tore all 12 away, and the foremost will deny Christ with swearing and curses. That's the devil's part too.

Third, all of the church, to the end of time, must have a good warning. O, I am glad that the story of Peter's denial is there. I would plead with you: do not look down on Peter. Peter is you! His denial is there that you may learn that you must rest on the Rock of ages.

Fourth, God must show His love and lovingkindness. Go, and look at one of the texts above this little meditation: "And Jesus turned and looked upon Peter!" Those words ought to be written in gold; they should be engraved on pure diamonds. Do you see that look? I assure you that I can see that look. I assure you that I have experienced that loving look of Jesus.

Again, God must be able to give us a wonderful example of the kind of LOVE He has for all His children dear. Some say that Jesus looked His stern disapproval. Perish the thought! Oh no, but that look was wounded love. The denial of Peter must serve to give you and me this look of Jesus. It is heavenly in quality. That look of Jesus from a face, bloody

and weary, with eternal death written upon it, is expressive of God's own heart for you, my brother.

Fifth, and this is the most important reason: God must be proven to be the Rock of all the ages. When all is said and done, and the judgment day come, out of all the ages and out of all the eternities shall arise the granite Rock, and the Rock is God, Triune!

Peter?

He is forgiven. First, in a very personal interview with the Risen Lord.

Second, in a public interview. The whole world may read.

Did Jesus scold Peter?

No, my dearly beloved in the Lord, He did not scold him. He merely said three times: Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?
G.V.

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*

IN MEMORIAM

It pleased the Lord to take unto Himself our beloved husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather on January 17, 1959,

WILLIAM KOOIENGA

at the age of 82 years and 10 months.

That God was his portion is our great consolation.

Mrs. Katherine Kooienga
Mr. and Mrs. Jake Kooienga
Mr. and Mrs. Henry Kooienga
Mr. and Mrs. Dick Kooienga
Mr. and Mrs. Ed Kooienga
Mr. and Mrs. Arie Ponstein
Mr. and Mrs. Martin Wustman
Mr. and Mrs. John Lanning
Mr. and Mrs. Wilbur Kooienga
Mr. and Mrs. Walter Walters
30 grandchildren
41 great-grandchildren

Grand Rapids, Mich.

IN MEMORIAM

The Mary Martha Circle of the Southeast Protestant Reformed Church wishes to express its sincere sympathy to one of its members, Mrs. W. Kooienga, in the recent death of her husband,

MR. WILLIAM KOOIENGA

"Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory." John 17:24.

Miss D. Vander Vennen, President
Mrs. F. Ondersma, Secretary

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EDITORIALS

About The Three Points

The interest in the question of "common grace" appears to be awakening in the Christian Reformed Church. This is evident from the article by Dr. Klooster which we are discussing at present, but now again from an article in the *Federation Messenger* by Prof. John Weidenaar.

The latter article we cannot discuss at present. We promise Weidenaar that we will do so in the future, D.V.

But there is one paragraph in this article which I wish to quote now because it fits into the context of my present discussion. Writes he:

"It appears then that Common Grace is not based merely on some remnants or leftovers concerning which the Canons of Dordt speak. That the Canons do not deal in detail with Common Grace is evident and follows from the known fact that our fathers at that time were not facing the specific problem of Common Grace in the sense in which Calvin and those who followed him have developed this doctrine. The Canons do specifically reject the doctrine of Arminian notion of Common Grace which is miles removed from what the Reformed thinkers and the Christian Reformed Church meant by Common Grace in 1924."

On this I wish to make two remarks.

First of all, Weidenaar writes that the Canons "do not deal in detail with Common Grace." I maintain that they never mention common grace at all except to condemn the very term. Let me quote just one instance. In Canons III, IV. Rejection of Errors, 5, the fathers condemn the errors of those "Who teach: That the corrupt and natural man can so well use the common grace (by which they understand the light of nature), or the gifts still left him after the fall, that he can gradually gain by their good use a greater, viz., the evangelical or saving grace itself." This is clear is it not? It is the Arminians that call the light of nature or the gifts still left to man after the fall "common grace." The fathers never do.

Secondly, it is not true that the "Three Points" of 1924 are miles removed from the Arminian notion of "common grace." As I said before, and as I further will prove, the Synod of 1924, exactly by trying to prove that the "Three Points" are based on the Reformed Confessions, fell into Arminian error.

But all this is in parentheses. We will now continue our discussion.

The last time we quoted the Five Arminian articles that were formulated in 1610. And it is in opposition to these that the well-known Canons were composed by the Synod of Dordrecht in 1618-19.

Although these Canons are based entirely on the doctrine of predestination and sovereign grace, yet the Synod of 1924 attempted to adduce quotations from these articles in support of the "Three Points." It quoted first of all, Canons II, 5:

"Moreover the promise of the gospel is, that whosoever believeth in Christ crucified, shall not perish but have everlasting life. This promise, together with the command to repent and believe, ought to be declared and published to all nations, and to all persons promiscuously and without distinction, to whom God out of his good pleasure sends the gospel."

How the Synod of 1924 could possibly find the theory of common grace in this article of the Canons is a mystery to me. What it evidently tried to deduce from this article is that the preaching of the promise of the gospel is grace for all that hear. But, in the first place, this has nothing to do with what is commonly known as the theory of common grace, for this deals with the affairs of this present life, rain and sunshine, etc., and not with the preaching of the gospel or the matter of salvation. And, secondly, the fact that, nevertheless, the Synod quotes this article of the Canons in support of the First Point, proves that they were not even thinking of "common grace" but of saving grace, for that alone is declared by the promise of the gospel. Hence the Synod made saving grace common or general. And this is not Reformed but Arminian.

How could the Synod of Dordrecht possibly teach that the preaching of the promise of the gospel is common grace, that is, grace for all that hear, while in the negative part of the same chapter of the Canons it rejects the errors of those who "use the difference between meriting and appropriating, to the end that they may instill into the minds of the imprudent and inexperienced that God, as far as he is concerned, has been minded of applying to all equally the benefits gained by the death of Christ; but that while some obtain the pardon of sin and eternal life and others do not, this difference depends on their own free will, which joins itself to the grace that is offered without exception, and that it is not dependent on the special grace of mercy, which God powerfully works in them, that they rather than others should appropriate unto themselves this grace. For these, while they feign that they present this distinction in a sound sense, seek to instill into the people the destructive poison of the Pelagian errors." II, B, 6.

From this it is very plain that the Canons in II, 5 do not mean to teach that the promise of the gospel is grace for all that hear the preaching of the gospel, but that it is grace only for those in whom God powerfully instills the gift of special mercy.

To be sure the Canons, in the article mentioned, teach that all that believe in Christ crucified shall have eternal life and are partakers of the promise of the gospel. But this surely is no "common grace" but very particular. For in the same chapter of the Canons, art. 8, they teach:

"For this was the sovereign counsel, and most gracious will and purpose of God the Father, that the quickening and saving efficacy of the death of his Son should extend to all the elect, for bestowing upon them alone the gift of justifying faith, thereby to bring them infallibly to salvation: that is, it was the will of God, that Christ by the blood of the cross,

whereby he confirmed the new covenant, should effectually redeem out of every people, tribe, nation, and language, all those, and those only, who were from eternity chosen unto salvation, and given to him by the Father; that he should confer upon them faith, which together with all the other saving gifts of the Holy Spirit, he purchased for them by his death; should purge them from all sin, both original and actual, whether committed before or after believing; and having faithfully preserved them even to the end, should at last bring them free from every spot and blemish to the enjoyment of glory in his own presence forever."

In the light of all this, it ought to be very evident that the Canons in II, 5, although they surely teach that the preaching of the promise is promiscuous, do not intend to teach that the preaching is common grace.

H.H.

Evolution, Long Periods, or Days

On the third day God created the dry land and the plants.

Of this we read in Gen. 1:9-13: "And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good. And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself upon the earth: and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were the third day."

First of all, then, God formed the dry land. We must remember that it was Elohim, the triune God, that created all things. And He did so by His Spirit and Word. For from the beginning the Spirit brooded upon the face of the waters thus quickening and giving light and life to all things. But this was done through the Word. For thus we read in John 1:1-3: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him: and without him was not anything made that was made." Moreover, according to Scripture, this Logos or Word was not merely the second Person of the trinity, although He was too, but He was the Christ. For this is also clear from Scripture. Thus, for instance, we read in Eph. 3:14, 15: "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of Whom the whole family in heaven and earth are named." All things in heaven and earth are called and, therefore, receive their names or being through the Word and that Word is Christ. This we must remember when we read again and again in Gen. 1 that "God said" or that "He called." As it is in the work of salvation, thus it is also in creation.

This means, too, that when God speaks it is there. When God said: "let the waters under the heaven be gathered together," it did not take millions or even billions of years for the waters to be gathered into one place, but they obeyed the Word of God through Christ and in the Spirit immediately. And the same is true of the appearance of the dry land. When God said: "let the dry land appear" it was formed at once. Otherwise we must imagine that God spoke the same words for billions of years and that is nonsense. Just as in the work of salvation we are regenerated by the Spirit and through the efficacious calling by the living and abiding Word of God, and just as it does not take a long period of time to be thus regenerated but we are born of God immediately when God speaks, thus it is also in creation. When God called the waters under heaven were gathered together and the dry land appeared at once. Hence, we also read repeatedly in the text: "and it was so." God spoke and it was so.

As to what was created on this first part of the third day, we can be brief since we are chiefly interested in the question of periods or days. It is plain that, before the third day, the earth was still a sphere surrounded by water. Part of the bottom of this shoreless ocean was lifted up so that millions of tons of water were thrown in their own place. How much dry land was formed on that third day cannot be determined, but we have the impression that only a comparatively small continent was then created: the Lord gathered the waters into one place. Besides, in II Pe. 3:4-7 we read of the scoffers that deny the second coming of the Lord and say: "Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." But the apostle contradicts these scoffers and writes: "For this they are willingly ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." Also from this passage, therefore, we receive the impression that the original dry land, created on the third day, was a comparatively small continent and that the rest of the continents were formed at the time of the flood.

But we still have to call your attention briefly to the creation of the plants which also took place on the third day. Concerning this we note the following:

1. That also the whole world of vegetation was brought forth by the creative Word of God: "God said, Let the earth bring forth." The plants, therefore, did not come into existence through a long process of evolution nor in a long period of years, but immediately by the creative Word of God.

2. That God created them out of the earth to which they belong, for God said, Let the earth bring forth. Also this has nothing to do with the theory of evolution. According to the latter, somehow the earth contained the germ of every

living creature. By a concurrence of natural causes these germs developed into the lowest forms of the plant and from these lowest forms the world of vegetation as we know it today came into existence under the influence of natural causes from within and from without. Those who teach long periods instead of days make of these natural causes the providence of God, which is not creation but only a camouflaged form of the theory of evolution. But we rather believe the Word of God which informs us that by the Word of God the earth brought forth the various kinds of plants and that, too, immediately.

3. That by the Word of God, not the seed, but the plants were created first and these brought forth their seed after their kind. This also is impossible, either on the basis of the theory of evolution or on the basis of long periods instead of days.

4. That the creation narrative mentions only three large species and emphasizes that they all bring forth seed after their kind: the species are closed, there is no evolution from one species into another. Writes Keil:

"It indicates that the herbs and trees sprang out of the earth according to their kinds, and received, together with power to bear seed and fruit, the capacity to propagate and multiply their own kind . . . Moreover, we must not picture the work of creation as consisting of the production of the first tender germs which were gradually developed into herbs, shrubs, and trees; on the contrary, we must regard it as one element in the miracle of creation itself, that at the word of God not only tender grasses, but herbs, shrubs, and trees, sprang out of the earth, each ripe for the formation of blossom and the bearing of seed and fruit, without the necessity of waiting for years before the vegetation created was ready to blossom and bear fruit. Even as the earth was employed as a medium in the creation of the plants, since it was God who caused it to bring them forth, they were not the product of the powers of nature, *generatio aequivoca* in the ordinary sense of the word, but a work of divine omnipotence, by which the trees came into existence before their seed, and their fruit was produced in full development, without expanding gradually under the influence of sunshine and rain."

With this all, who believe that Gen. 1 is the Word of God, must agree.

H.H.

OBITUARY

The Men's Society of Holland, Michigan, expresses, in behalf of its membership, their heartfelt sympathy to a brother member, Mr. Albert Klomprens, in the recent home-going of his dear brother,

MR. HENRY KLOMPRENS

May our brother be comforted by the deep and sweet words of the Lord, when He said: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." John 6:47.

The Men's Society
Holland, Mich.

OUR DOCTRINE

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

PART TWO

CHAPTER VI

An Interlude

Revelation 10:1-7

And now note how comforting for such conditions is the revelation of the powerful Lord in this passage. It assures us once more that the Lord is possessor and that He is the only Lord of all, and that in reality all things are subjected unto Him. When it should seem different, nevertheless it is true that He only rules over all. He has His feet upon the earth and upon the sea, and all things are in subjection. Nothing happens against His will. And Satan and hell and the wicked world cannot stir if He does not will them to move. In the second place, it tells us that He rules as Judge, and that all these things are directly realized through Him. If it would seem to us that the kingdom is remoter than ever and that iniquity and trouble, yea, that the forces of hell prevail, never you fear, but fasten your eyes upon that mighty Lord with pillars of fire. And then you may know that war and famine and pestilence and tribulation come from Him alone. It tells you by the rainbow that in the midst of mighty judgments He will not forget His covenant, but through it all realize it. And finally, in the midst of these judgments and tribulation your hearts go out with longing for the end of it all. And then you know that the hour is near. Fasten your eye upon that mighty figure of the Judge with His feet upon all the world and with His right hand lifted to heaven, swearing by Him that liveth forever and ever that there shall be no more delay. "Behold, I come, and come quickly." That above all is the message that comes to us from this revelation of the powerful Lord in the midst of judgments and tribulations. And therefore this vision ought, in the first place, to dispel all the fears and doubts and anxieties of the people of God, no matter how things may develop. But, in the second place, it ought to strike terror in the hearts of those that still love iniquity and with the world indulge in their sin. It may seem as if His coming is far off. Long may seem the delay. Nevertheless He comes quickly. And the times in which we live declare more than ever that He sware by Him that liveth forever that there shall be no more delay.

Revelation 10:8-11

8. And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth.

9. And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey.

10. And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter.

11. And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.

After all that was said in connection with the previous passage, this portion ought not to be difficult to understand in its purpose and significance. You will remember that in this entire chapter we have an interlude, a portion that has no immediate connection with the seven trumpets but that has been thrown in for a certain definite purpose. The first part of this chapter answered many of the questions that might arise in the hearts of the people of God in the midst of the judgments and tribulations that have already been revealed in the first part of the book and that are still to be shown as the seventh angel shall blow his trumpet. In that passage we are assured that Christ holds the reins, and that although many tribulations may come upon the people of God, He shall nevertheless come, and come quickly, and establish His everlasting kingdom forever. And therefore, that first part of the chapter was full of comfort for God's people.

One part of that portion connects itself immediately with the passage we are now called to discuss. I refer, of course, to the little book that is in the hand of the angel that standeth upon the earth and upon the sea. That little book we have as yet not discussed. All that we have said about it is the unique occurrence of the voice of the seven thunders, which told us that in that form John might not receive the revelation of the mystery of the kingdom of God. But our present passage informs us in what form he may receive it, and how he must be a prophet in the midst of the world of the things that are still to be revealed. If the first part of the chapter was for the comfort of the people of God and fixed their eyes upon the mighty King of kings, this part is for their instruction and warns them beforehand what they must do with the revelation which John receives of the future. For in the hand of the angel there is a little book. That little book must not merely be read and copied by the true prophet, but it must be eaten. And only after it has thus been appropriated do we read that John is prepared to be a prophet and to prophesy again to many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.

Again I must call your attention to the fact which I have mentioned more than once, namely, that the book of Revelation itself determines rather plainly whether anything is to be understood in the symbolical or in the literal sense of the word. Disregard of this truth has led many interpreters of the book into paths of error. And therefore we must maintain it and point to it whenever we have the opportunity.

We cannot draw one line and say that all that is revealed in the book must be taken in the symbolical sense, for then we become guilty of allegorizing and spiritualizing in the wrong sense of the word. Nor can we say that all that is revealed in this book must be taken in the literal sense, for then we arrive at absurdities and impossibilities. But we must let the book itself decide whether anything is meant symbolically or literally. And that is also the case with our present passage. It is more than evident that this entire scene is not meant in the literal sense of the word. Then, if that were the case, we would have to assume that there was actually a book in the hand of the angel, printed in heaven, and that John actually, not in the vision, approached the angel, took that little book out of his hand, and swallowed it. Of course, that is both an impossibility and an absurdity. An impossibility it is, for John could not swallow a book. And if it is maintained that this is a miraculous swallowing of the book and that with God all things are possible, we add that it is also an absurdity. For books are not to be swallowed, but to be read. And one does not derive any benefit from swallowing a book, but from appropriating its contents by reading it. Hence, it needs no special indication to make us draw the conclusion immediately that here we have symbolism, and not reality, that John swallows the book in the vision, not apart from the vision. And the question before us is: what is the meaning of this symbolic scene?

To determine this we must first of all answer the question: what is the meaning of the little book itself? What is this little book in the hand of the angel, which is swallowed by John? And then we wish to say at the outset that we do not agree with those interpreters who maintain that this book is the same as the one mentioned in chapter five, verse one, namely, as the book with its seven seals. In support of this contention we mention, in the first place, that this is a *little* book. The book with its seven seals was simply a book. In the second place, we must remember that the book with its seven seals was closed and sealed. This book, as it is expressly mentioned, was open. In the third place, as we have stated, that book was not merely a copy of the decree of God with a view to the bringing of the kingdom, but it was the symbol of the decree itself. When that book is opened, and seal after seal is loosed, the decree of God is realized. It cannot be maintained that this book is given to John in order that he should swallow it. And finally, the book of the seven seals is the property and can be the possession only of the Lamb that was slain. As we noticed in that connection, there was not one that was worthy to open the book and to receive it out of the hand of Him that sitteth upon the throne. Only the Lamb could take it and break the seals. And therefore, it is simply out of the question that this could be the same book. For here it is offered to John, and he thoroughly appropriates the same.

But although this is true, it must also be maintained that this little book stands closely related to that book of the seven seals. In the first place, this might be surmised because

also this book is found in the hand of the mighty angel, Who, as we have explained, is no one else than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, the Lamb that was slain. And in the second place, we notice that when John eats this little book, the effect of it is that he must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings. That other book decided the fate of the peoples and nations and tongues and kings. It was the decree itself regarding them, and that with a view to the bringing of the kingdom of God. This little book makes John a prophet with regard to many peoples and nations and tongues and kings. The conclusion is that this little book reveals to John something from the book with its seven seals. It is a copy, a partial copy, of that book, — a copy in human form, so that John and the church can understand it. And it is a partial copy, in the first place, because the full decree of God is infinite and cannot be completely revealed. Many things that are in the book of the seven seals naturally must remain a mystery to us. But partial it is also, in the second place, because much that is contained in the book of the seven seals has already been revealed to John at this stage. And therefore we would say that this little book, open in the hand of the angel, is the symbol of all that John still has to prophesy. He did prophesy already in the preceding portion. All that he has prophesied thus far has been revealed and has already been discussed by us. But according to verse eleven, he must prophesy again. Still more is to be revealed to John and to the church. Of still more John is to be witness in the midst of the world. And this entire book is the symbol of all that John still must witness in regard to the future of the kingdom of God. And the scene that is pictured to us in the words of our passage shows how John must become prepared to be a prophet to the utmost: a prophet who not merely reveals things, who not merely informs the church and the world of some things with regard to the future, but who himself can be a living witness in the midst of a wicked world.

That this special preparation on the part of John was necessary at this stage will become evident if we consider briefly what this book contains. What is its message? What are the tidings it brings to the church and concerning the world? As we shall understand, this little book contains the message of the seventh trumpet. Six seals had already been opened, and six trumpets had already been blown before it is deemed necessary that John receives this special preparation. All these six seals and six trumpets revealed the process of history with a view to the completion of the kingdom of God. They revealed that the kingdom would come and be completely realized, on the one hand, by the preaching of the gospel to all nations, but on the other hand, also by means of the judgments of war and famine and pestilence and various visitations upon the world and upon the physical universe. One more trumpet is to be blown. And then, as the mighty angel has sworn, the mystery of God shall have been fulfilled. What is to be revealed to John in the future, therefore, is the process of things with a view to their consummation. How

shall the kingdom come, and what will be the course of history that will destroy the power and the kingdom of darkness and establish the glorious kingdom of God and His Christ? Shall it be a gradual victory of the power of the gospel? Shall the influence of the gospel gradually spread, so that at the end, at the time of the close of history, all nations shall have embraced the Christ at His coming? How shall these things be? It is to those questions that in the succeeding chapters John receives the answer. It is of these truths that he must prophesy also in the future in the midst of the world. And it is for the prophesying of these things that a special preparation is required and symbolically pictured in the words of our passage.

H.H.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On February 6, 1959, our dear parents,

MR. AND MRS. BEN BLEYENBERG

celebrated their 35th wedding anniversary. We are thankful to our covenant God for all the blessings He has bestowed on them and on us; and we pray that if it be His good pleasure that they may be graciously spared for one another and for us for many years to come.

Their grateful children,

Mr. and Mrs. Tunis Jansma
Mr. and Mrs. John Haverhals, Jr.
Mr. and Mrs. Peter Rynders, Jr.
Mr. and Mrs. John Hoksbergen
Alvin D. Bleyenbergh
5 grandchildren

IN MEMORIAM

The Consistory of the Protestant Reformed Church of Pella, Iowa, wishes to express its sincere sympathy to two of its members Elder A. A. Van Weelden in the loss of his wife and Gysbert Van Weelden in the loss of his mother. May the Lord strengthen them in their sorrow, knowing that all things work together for good to them that love God.

Cecil Van Der Molen, Vice President

IN MEMORIAM

The Ladies' Society of the Hull Protestant Reformed Church herewith expresses its sympathy to a fellow member and her family, Mrs. Wm. Kooiker, in the loss of her father

JOE MULDER

May the Lord comfort in His grace in the knowledge that "the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him," Psalm 103:17a.

Rev. John A. Heys, President
Mrs. Harold Van Maanen, Asst. Sec'y

IN MEMORIAM

The Men's Society of the Kalamazoo Protestant Reformed Church herewith wish to express their sincere sympathy to one of their fellow members, Mr. J. Meninga, in the loss of his brother,

MR. H. MENINGA

May our covenant God comfort and sustain him in his sorrow.

Rev. A. Mulder, President
Mr. J. Van Dyke, Secretary

A CLOUD OF WITNESSES

Twin Brothers In Conflict

"And the boys grew: and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field: and Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents.

And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob." — GEN. 25:27, 28

Election and reprobation were implicit in the prophecy which God gave to Rebekah before the birth of her twin sons. This cannot be questioned because it is clearly stated by Paul in Romans 9. The question nonetheless does arise whether this implication of the prophecy was recognized by Isaac and by his family.

Insofar as the prophecy related to the two sons personally, it stated, "and the elder shall serve the younger." Directly stated in this prophecy are two thoughts. The first is that there would be a natural distinction between the two sons which were to be born. The one would be naturally the greater because he would be not only the elder but also the stronger and more mighty. The younger son in turn would be naturally the lesser, weaker, and comparatively less powerful. The second teaching of this prophecy is that, in spite of the natural superiority of the eldest, he would be subjected in service to the younger. To the minds of Isaac and Rebekah this could mean nothing other than that the right of inheritance which would ordinarily go to the oldest son was in this case to be given by God to the youngest. One of the principal tenets of the birthright blessing in that day was that the son who received it would become the successor of his father as head and ruler of the family. Thus in effect what God revealed to Rebekah was that by His divine appointment the birthright blessing which ordinarily would fall to the eldest son was in this case given to the youngest. Thus it was that He caused that at birth the youngest son should grasp the heel of the eldest. He was the heel-holder, Jacob, the one who by divine appointment would supplant his eldest brother and receive the birthright blessing. That birthright was assigned by God. It was not Isaac's to give according to his discretion; it was not Esau's to sell; it was even before birth given to Jacob by God.

But for some reason this revelation was unacceptable to Isaac. Undoubtedly Rebekah had told him of it as well as Esau and Jacob when they became older. It seems rather disappointing that the faith of Isaac should falter at this juncture, especially, after he had showed himself to be as strong as he had been at previous occasions. One wonders what reason he gave for dismissing this clear revelation of God. Did he question the accuracy of the report that Rebekah gave? Did he feel that God should have given a revelation such as that to him as head of the family and covenant father? Whatever his reasoning, Isaac evidently felt that it was yet his right to make the final determination as to which of his sons should receive the birthright blessing.

He realized, of course, the importance of the decision which he felt himself called to make. The bestowal of the birthright within his family was much more important than it was in other families. With him and with his seed was the covenant of God established. From him and from his heir was the salvation of God to be brought forth. This was much more important than mere earthly possessions and temporal dominion. It was spiritual and eternal. The question of which son should receive this promise could not be a matter of indifference. The birthright had to be given to the one best qualified to maintain it. Nonetheless, Isaac felt himself qualified and able to choose between his sons and to make the proper bestowal.

Having, therefore, rejected the final determinative value of the revelation made to Rebekah, Isaac from the time of birth observed his sons very closely with a view to the choice which he felt himself called to make. Very soon the distinction between the two sons became apparent. They were by no means identical twins, but as different as two brothers could be. As a baby and a child Esau always was ruddy, healthy, and active. In contrast to him Jacob appeared frail, weak, and reticent.

Moreover, as the children grew older and approached adulthood, the contrast increased and took on more important aspects. Esau always stood on the fore. He was forward. He was brave. He was imaginative. In popular psychological terms, we would say that Esau was an extrovert. Always in the background was Jacob, quiet, timid, bungling, the introvert. He tried to match and to surpass his brother. He was not beyond resorting to trickery and subterfuge, but it only succeeded in putting Esau in a more favorable light. In result Jacob appeared a covetous, envious, untrustworthy person. This difference in personality resulted in the distinction of occupations which the brothers pursued. Esau took up the challenge of the field. He became a hunter. It was an occupation adapted to his strength, bravery, and cunning. It satisfied his craving for action, thrill, challenge and conquest. But Jacob remained quietly at home. It would have been futile and dangerous for him to attempt to match the bravado of his brother. He didn't have what it took. And furthermore, he had no interest in that sort of thing. He preferred the quiet and peace of his parents' home. He was content to follow in the occupation of his father, to watch over the sheep, to spend his time meditating within the peaceful solitude of the pasture.

Finally, there was the relationship which the sons held toward their father. We read that Isaac ate of Esau's venison. There might hardly seem to be anything very remarkable about this; yet it implies a great deal. Esau in his roaming hunts took a great many different kinds of delicate and delicious meats. These he did not keep to himself, but after preparing them he shared them with his father. One can well imagine that those were enjoyable hours for Isaac. Coming from his distant wanderings, Esau would show to his father the trophies of the hunt. As together they feasted

on the venison, Esau would recount the tales of the woods describing the thrill and excitement of the chase and of the conquest. We need not be surprised that such meals were occasions of great pleasure for Isaac and resulted in a deep affection toward Esau. In comparison Jacob was rather dull company. The meats that he could offer were no different than what Isaac could himself easily procure. He had no adventures to recount which could even begin to compare with Esau's. There just was nothing different or exciting about him.

So we read, "And Isaac loved Esau." This preference of Isaac for Esau we have seen to be quite natural. The grievous part was, however, that because of his natural love Isaac began to reason that Esau ought to receive the birthright blessing. The mind of man very easily becomes a means by which he finds excuses to fulfill his natural desires. Such excuses were very readily available to Isaac. The covenant seed of God are called to walk in hard and difficult ways; the strength of Esau was quite evident. The covenant seed of God have many and strong enemies; the bravery of Esau was known to all. Esau had all of the desirable characteristics: courage, boldness, confidence, and cleverness. To all appearances he was the one best capable of establishing a nation that would be truly great. Year by year the conviction grew that Esau should receive the birthright.

In coming to this conclusion, however, there were a few things that Isaac had to ignore. The first, conclusive in itself, was the revelation of God to Rebekah. That in the mind of Isaac had in some way to be declared irrelevant. The second was the superficiality of Esau. With all of Esau's seemingly admirable characteristics, one thing was lacking, the spirituality of a renewed heart. His words and actions were pleasing, but they studiously avoided all reference to God. Esau lacked the love of God and faith, and "whatsoever is not of faith is sin." Sufficient was that to invalidate all of his reasoning.

Furthermore, what Isaac failed to consider was the one great superiority which Jacob had over Esau. We read, "And Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents." The translation might better read, "And Jacob was an upright man." Jacob was upright because he had a renewed heart filled with the love of God and love for the covenant of grace. Not that Jacob was without sin. We know from his later life that he often walked in a way that was deceitful and wicked. It is not at all impossible that insofar as appearance was concerned Jacob may often have appeared less upright than Esau. He loved the covenant and its promises. His thoughts during his quiet pastoral meditations were oft times on God and His revelations of grace. The spiritual truth that Esau studiously avoided, he studiously applied himself to learn. In spite of all his weaknesses he did excel. He believed God: he hoped for the promised seed; he loved the birthright assigned to him by God.

That this was true became evident in the matter of the pottage. When it became evident to Jacob that his father

Isaac was intending to give to Esau the birthright that had been before assigned to him by God, he was overwhelmed with a feeling of concern and despair. It had always been an occasion of joy for him to hear his mother speak of the revelation which had been given to her. When his father then evidently ignored that Word of God, showing definite preference for Esau, it caused within him a sorrow close to desperation. He had little influence with his father and saw little hope of prevailing upon him to change his intention. Thus when Esau came in from the field one day tired and hungry from a fruitless day of hunting to beg for food from Jacob, Jacob thought suddenly that the opportunity had come to right the intended wrong. He could not influence his father, but Esau he might. He offered to buy the birthright from Esau for bread and for the pottage he had brewed. To Esau the birthright had never seemed important anyway. He was only too willing to sell just to satisfy his ravenous hunger.

It was a rather foolish little event, but nevertheless it reflected two very important things. It revealed the heart of Esau as being utterly disdainful of the birthright and the covenant promise which it involved. It was foolish for Jacob to perpetrate such an event. He might better have trusted in God. Yet it revealed the deep set love and desire which he had to receive the promise assigned to him of God. Isaac heard of this event we know. He should have learned from it.

It was Rebekah who was more discerning in this matter. We read, "But Rebekah loved Jacob." It is perhaps unlikely that this love of Rebekah was completely free from natural influences. Just as Isaac was attracted by the ambitious nature of Esau, so Rebekah was partial to the quieter nature of Jacob. Nevertheless, we can not believe that this was the only, or even the principal, cause of her love. She had received the revelation of God concerning the two children and believed it with all her heart. From the very beginning she understood that the birthright blessing belonged to Jacob by assignment from God. Believing this Word of God she was able very early in the life of her children to distinguish the spirituality of Jacob in contrast to the carnality of Esau. Soon she understood that the rejection of Esau as the heir to the covenant promise was based on a much deeper rejection of Esau personally. Although it had not been stated in that many words, she discerned the implication of God's Word to be, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." Thus her love for Jacob was based in a true spiritual love for the revealed will of God.

B.W.

IN MEMORIAM

The Ladies' Society Eunice of the Southwest Prot. Ref. Church expresses herewith its sympathy to one of its members, Mrs. Albert Talsma, and her family, in the sudden death of a son-in-law.

"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." Ps. 91:1.

Rev. M. Schipper, President
Mrs. B. Hafer, Secretary

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of Matthew 24 and 25

XIII

(Matthew 25:14-30)

b.

We shall notice the following in this Parable of the talents as to its several elements:

First of all we should carefully notice the *setting* of the Parable. We refer particularly to the setting wherein Jesus shows us the *relationship* of the servants (bond-men) to their lord (master!). It is all in the control of the "lord" in the Parable. It is all his plan and his good-pleasure. He will go on a journey abroad. This will necessitate his absence for a short while, or longer. The exact time of his absence is known only to him. Still, his interest in his affairs goes on, and that, too, on the *status quo* of the servants being *his* servants, accountable to him! Always the slave is *owned* by the master. He is not his own but belongs to this master, his time, his energies, his all!

Secondly, we should not overlook the fact that the "lord" in the Parable gives to these servants *his substance*. He gives his substance to his *very own servants!* (tous *idious* doulous — in the Greek). In a very special sense they are his own. And each of these servants has his own peculiar ability. The "lord" knows these abilities and reckons with them when he gives to these his "talents"! This shows the wisdom and also the righteousness of the "lord's" disposition in the giving of the talents to each. He *is* indeed a wise, just and understanding man! He does not expect more from each servant than what his potential is. He gives each according to his ability. And—he expects also of each according to his ability in return!

Such a man is this "lord" in the Parable!

We now stand before the question as to what must be understood concretely with the "talent." We know that a talent is a certain sum of money represented by a certain coin. Such was also a "pound." It will afford us little or no positive value to inquire minutely into the exact amount of the value of a talent in our American money, nor into the exact value of a pound. It will not give us any data for the proper understanding of the mystery of the Kingdom set forth in this Parable of the Talents!

Hence, we will pass on to the question at hand: what is the meaning of the "talent" in terms of the Kingdom of heaven?

And we wish to state here that we do not believe that the "talent" here represents the "natural ability" of man in relationship to God. Often these are identified and equated by those who would see in the "talents" the natural gifts, both bodily and intellectual endowments from our creator.

We cannot see how on good exegetical considerations such can be the meaning and intent of Jesus in this Parable. For in the Parable a distinction is made between the "talents" and the "ability" of the servants. The "talents" as given to each "according to the ability of each"! (hekastoi kata teen idian dunamin). The term translated "ability" really is the word in Greek from which our term *dynamite* is derived. It refers not so much to might and strength as it does to innate ability! Here we are reminded that the "justice of God requires that the same human nature, which hath sinned, should likewise make satisfaction for sin"! (Question 16 of the Heidelberg Catechism.) But Jesus goes a step farther here. The justice of God is such that he requires of each individual only according to his ability in distinction from another (human) individual!

And each receives a talent or talents according to this own ability. These talents, we believe, refer therefore to the *scope of the calling of each man*. Each man is placed as servant in the "lord's" domain to use his "talents," his opportunities for the advancement of the master's interest. And each has a certain amount wherewith to labor (te woekeren). The opportunities are commensurate to each man's ability. There is a certain justice and wisdom of God manifested here.

And, let it be well understood, each man here labors with these *talents* as a *servant*. "Servant" does not mean a hired servant, an employee, but refers to a slave, a bond-servant. Hence, it refers to one who belongs with soul and body to his lord. Nothing is his own. All is the lord's. Thus we read in the text: "delivered unto them his substance" and "And coming I could have *claimed back* (ekomisameen) mine own (the mine) with usury. The talents never became the possession of the bond-servants. Each moment they were laboring with their lord's substance!

Now we further notice in this Parable that there are not ten servants who each receive an equal share of goods as in the Parable of the "pounds" (See Luke 19:11-27). There are but three servants that receive talents. And there is a distinction. The first receives five talents, the second two talents and the last only one talent!

What each does with this talent reveals and demonstrates his deepest and profoundest spiritual attitude toward his master. This is either one of love, of "entering into the joy of his lord," or of one who is irked by the very thought of him! The good servant would make his master happy. He thinks of him alone. The evil servant thinks only about himself in aversion to his lord! He really hates and despises him! The one sings "With joy and gladness in my soul, I hear the call to prayer . . ." and the other says "In His ways and precepts I have no delight"! The good servants seek the "things above" while the evil servant seeks the "things below"!

Let us follow the Parable just a bit.

The servant who had received *five talents* went straightway and gained other five talents. Thus also the servant who

had received the *two talents*. But the servant who received one talent went and digged in the ground and "hid the talent"!

Then comes the day of reckoning.

What is here portrayed is in reality what will happen in the Day of Judgment when the Son of Man shall return in His Parousia! It represents the dominion of the Lord of lords in that day. All men will then be revealed in their deepest attitude. It will then be manifested whether they are good or evil servants.

When the servant who had received the five talents comes in that day he says "Lord, thou deliverest unto me five talents, lo, I have gained other five talents"! This is a hundredfold! This is the full measure. It was not much that this servant had received. It was only *five* talents! But it was enough to prove the worth of this servant. And it brought out his approved character. He is *faithful*! It is not the greatness of his *success* that is mentioned. It was the one element, the *conditio sine quo non*, which must be found in a servant! It is faithfulness! He was really a servant. He truly sought the interests of his lord. And to him it is said: Well! This servant is *beautiful* in grace! He is good (agathe) and faithful. In his deepest and inmost heart he is such.

The same is true of the servant who had received two talents!

To these it is said: Since thou art faithful over little, I will place thee over much. Such is the act of the man in the Parable. But such will surely be the act of the Son of Man, and God in Him, in the day of Judgment. The question will be: are we good and faithful servants?! These two qualities go hand in hand; they belong together as root and fruit. Only when one is good can one be faithful! A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, nor can a bad tree bring forth good fruits. By their fruits shall they be known! (Matthew 7:15-20.) In that day there will be a *distinction* made between those who received more talents according to their ability and those who received less. (The servants with five, two and one talents.) But there shall be a *separation* made between the evil servant and the good servants! Both are the *righteous* judgment of God!

The good and faithful servants *shall enter into the joy of their lord*! On earth they already entered into this joy by faith and hope. They had the first-fruits of the Spirit in their hearts. The parable does not teach the doctrine of total depravity and irresistible grace. It presupposes it. Here is the reward of grace. It is not out of merit. We are *servants*. When we have done all, we are still *unprofitable* servants. And as such by grace we here entered into the joy of the Lord in that day in hope of his return, and shall be found faithful and therefore, *watchful*! Thus we are as faithful in our office and calling as the angels of God are in theirs! And presently our "office and calling" will be pleasant and not irksome "entering into the joy of our Lord" in heaven! To our mind this means the first entrance by conversion and

the continual entrance in conversion now, and presently in heaven the eternal rejoicing in the joy of Christ; His joy our joy, his interest ours forever! That joy shall not be a *static* joy but it will be the joy of servants, *existentially* in the good sense of the term! Shall we not reign over the angels and sit in judgment!

This joy we now experience in our hearts as a "beginning of eternal joy, which eye hath not seen and ear hath not heard and which hath never entered into the heart of man"! And that joy will be more than the *beatic vision* of Roman Catholic theology; it will be rejoicing in God in the face of Jesus Christ, yet always meeting him as the Son of God in our nature. He is and remains our Lord! And we remain servants!

A distinction and separation is made.

It is a righteous judgment!

The evil servant is depicted as very bad. He does what no sane person will do with a talent. A talent is money, and money is a medium of exchange! He puts it in the ground and hides it. He does this intentionally. The Lord's talent must not be unto the Lord's joy! He cannot see anything that is unto the increase of his Lord's. He hates God and his neighbor.

He really casts the talent back to his Lord in indignation. He says: here is your talent! Just what I received! Besides, he makes some terrible accusations to his lord! He says: thou art a hard, severe man. I know *thee*! I have this as an *experiential* knowledge. And he uses the proverb, "Thou reapest where thou didst not sow and gatherest where thou didst not scatter!"

He ascribes injustice and hardness to his lord, yea, the impossible!

Now that is exactly what man, natural man does with God in this life! And our flesh in which there dwells no good, we "by nature"? (Rom. 7:7-29.) Well, may we daily crucify our old nature and walk in a new and holy life. It is not said for nought that Job in his affliction did not ascribe evil against God. Do we not read literally, "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged foolishly," Job 1:22. This too is written for our admonition. (See former article.)

And this servant is judged by concession. Granted for the sake of argument that it is true, then yet another course should have been followed. This man *knew* the way. In the original we have the pluperfect tense. Thou wast in a state of knowledge concerning me in the past up to a given moment! (heideis) It will be according to what a man knew. He that knows the way and walks it not shall be beaten with many stripes!

He is cast into hell. It is the opposite of the joy of the Lord, and entering into it. It means: to forever be judged as having been evil overagainst a righteous lord. No payment is made in hell. The Lord takes his own in justice!

Thus shall the kingdom of heaven be in that day!

G.L.

IN HIS FEAR

Provoking One Another

Among other things Webster says that to provoke is to "incite to anger; to incense." He says much more than that about provoking; but because of this part of the meaning of the word, it always tends to leave a bad taste in our mouths. Therefore the above title, "Provoking One Another" also may provoke some of our readers before they continue and give the matter more thought.

That the word can be used in a more favourable sense is indicated by the other things that Webster says about the word provoke. He says that it means "to call forth, to summon." It means "to excite (one) as to doing or feeling." It means "to stir up."

Now in Scripture we come across this word many, many times and with different shades of meaning. There are several words, both in the Old Testament and in the New that are translated in our Bibles as provoke. There is, first of all, a word that means to make angry. We find it in Deuteronomy 4:25 and 9:18. We quote: "When thou shalt beget children and children's children, and ye shall have remained long in the land, and shall corrupt yourselves, and make a graven image, or the likeness of anything, and shall do evil in the sight of the Lord thy God, to provoke Him to anger." And again, "And I fell down before the Lord, as at the first, forty days and forty nights: I did neither eat bread, or drink water, because of all your sins which ye sinned in doing wickedly in the sight of the Lord, to provoke Him to anger."

We find another word in Psalm 78:40 where we read, "How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness, and grieve Him in the desert!" Here the word means to make bitter and is used as Webster presented it, as meaning to stir one up or excite to a feeling of displeasure, here called bitterness. In Isaiah 1:4 we find the word in this statement, "Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquities, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they have gone away backward." The word here used means to despise, to contemn. But in I Chronicles 21:1 we find a word that means provoke in its root meaning of persuading or moving when we read, "And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel."

All these passages speak of provoking in the sense of doing something sinful. And they all except the last refer to the sin of provoking God. It is, however, also used in regard to man, and both in the sense of exciting or moving to anger and to love. As an example of the former we find in Ephesians 6:4 the admonition to fathers, "And ye fathers provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." As an example of the latter we find in Romans 10:19 and 11:11 these words,

"But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation will I anger you." And "I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles for to provoke them to jealousy."

But what we have in mind in the theme above is presented to us in the Scriptures as our calling. We *must* provoke one another; and we must not despise or run away from that provoking but appreciate it and be thankful for it. Paul writes to the Galatians in chapter 5:26, "Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another." Here a provoking is spoken of that must be condemned. But there is a calling which we have to provoke one another presented to us in Hebrews 10:24. We quote, "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works." That is the thing concerning which we would now pen down a few lines.

A literal translation of the noun derived from the word we find here in Hebrews 10:24 would be the strong word, paroxysm. We say, "the strong word," because Webster defines a paroxysm as "2. Any sudden, violent action or emotion; a convulsion or fit." And he points out the difference between a paroxysm, spasm and convulsion thus, "A paroxysm is a sudden and uncontrollable seizure or emotion or activity and often suggests a recurrence; a spasm is a short-lived and abnormal fit of activity or emotion; convulsion suggests violent and often far-reaching agitation." It might also be well to point out that the Greek word comes from the verb which means to make sharp or to sharpen.

You will note, however, that even when we consider the word in this very strong sense of a paroxysm, we do not rule out the fact that it may refer to a very good activity. We can speak, and often we do, of a paroxysm of joy; and then we mean that one has suddenly been overcome with the emotion of joy and in that joy may even weep uncontrollably. The mother, who stands in anguish watching the tongues of fire dancing triumphantly in and out of the billowing smoke of her burning home wherein her child is trapped, will suddenly and uncontrollably weep, gripped by a paroxysm of joy when her child is delivered safely to her by the strong and brave hand of a fireman who has dashed in and snatched the child away from a certain death. It is a paroxysm of joy. Well, that is the word which the author of the epistle to the Hebrews uses in this verse when he admonishes us to "consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works." That is quite different from the way we use the word when we say, "You provoke me." We mean you irritate me. You trouble me and excite in me an emotion of displeasure. And we may well bear in mind that even in the admonition to provoke unto love and to good works there will be, of necessity, also an emotion of displeasure when we provoke to love and to good works. We say, of necessity, because man can never be neutral. And when he is provoked unto love and to good works, he will also hate all evil works. And he will be

irritated and often filled with great anger when you set out to provoke him unto love and to good works. We will say something about that presently. But that mother, who is suddenly seized with the paroxysm of joy when her child is safely clasped in her arms, does have this paroxysm exactly because she hated and dreaded so intensely that destructive power of the fire and the terrible cruelty and robbery of death.

But in the admonition that we provoke unto love and to good works, it is evident that the action and emotion which we seek to stir up, unto which we must seek to incite and excite one another is good works and love. The flesh will be irritated and often may say to the one who is seeking to incite the spirit to this love and to these good works, "You provoke me," but that is no reason why we ought to cease or why the practice ought to be frowned upon as being evil. Let us take note of the fact that the admonition is not simply to provoke unto love and to good works. The author exhorts us to "consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works." Very readily we will say to a brother or sister in Christ, "Leave me alone. It is none of your business what I do. You have enough watching your own life for love to God and good works; and this is between me and my God. I know what I am doing. You just watch your own life and that of your family. I will take care of myself and my family." Or we are inclined to borrow from the wicked and bold speech of Cain and ask, "Am I my brother's keeper? Let him do his own self examination. Let him take heed to his own walk. What business is that of mine? Am I his keeper? Since when?"

It stands to reason that when we are admonished to consider *one another* to provoke unto love and to good works that those whom we must consider to provoke are fellow Christians, brothers and sisters in the Lord. No one else can be provoked unto love and to good works. The implication is in the text that these are elect, regenerated children of God. The author is speaking to a very specific audience. He writes to the Christian Hebrews. These are not simply the Hebrews according to the flesh but those who have embraced the truth as it is in Jesus Christ the only begotten Son of God. They were, according to chapter 6, enlightened, tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost. They tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come. And the author continues that he is persuaded that he writes to those who have experienced all this not simply in an intellectual sense but spiritually in their hearts by the power of the Spirit of Christ, and that God will not forget their work and labour of love which they showed toward His name in that they ministered to the saints and do minister.

To be sure there was a problem amongst these Hebrew Christians. There was a serious error that was making itself manifest in their midst; and this epistle must needs be written to warn them. Although they believed in Christ and in His cross, they had great difficulty in breaking away completely from all the Old Testament types and shadows. And

the author of this epistle in several ways and from various viewpoints reminds these children of God of the superiority of Christ's kingdom, His sacrifice, His priesthood, the covenant promises in Him, and the new and living way which we have through His blood into the very presence of God behind the veil. Plainly he writes to believers, and then, not to new converts who must still learn much of the truth of the word of God, but those who did know and at one time saw very clearly the truth as it is in Christ. These we can consider to provoke unto love and to good works. All others will be provoked unto wrath and hot displeasure when you speak the truth to them and mention even their calling to walk in love and to do good works. The word of God is a savour of death unto death as well as a savour of life unto life. Consider how often it was that those who heard Jesus' preaching were provoked unto wrath. The disciples at one time felt the need of telling Jesus that the Pharisees were provoked, Matt. 15:12. Indeed, they say that the Pharisees were offended, but the idea is the same. They were moved, excited, stirred up to wrath and to wicked works by these words of Jesus. Jesus declares that Himself when He tells the disciples that as blind leaders of the blind they both shall fall into the ditch.

With the Church of God in mind, therefore, we write a few lines concerning this calling that each and every one of us has to consider to provoke one another unto love and to good works. This is not simply the work of the office bearers in the Church, although it surely is their calling. It is not simply the duty of the one who is called to minister the word of God to the flock, although he may not be remiss in this work—and often is wrongly despised and hated for doing his work faithfully before God. Ezekiel 33:1-9 is a solemn warning to him. But in Hebrews 10:24 we have pointed out the calling of all the members of the Church to consider to provoke unto love and to good works. And, the Lord willing, we like to say somewhat more about this next time.

J.A.H.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On March 13, 1959, the Lord willing, our beloved Parents and Grandparents,

MR. AND MRS. JAKE VAN DEN TOP

will celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary.

We thank our Heavenly Father with them, for having kept and sustained them together through the years. Our prayer is that the Lord may grant them His peace all the remaining days of their pilgrimage.

Their grateful children

Mr. and Mrs. Gerrit J. Van Den Top
Mr. and Mrs. William Van Den Top
Mr. and Mrs. Albert Van Den Top
Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Van Den Top
Mr. and Mrs. Minard Van Den Top
Mr. and Mrs. Pete Van Den Top
Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Van Ginkel
Mr. and Mrs. John Van Den Top
Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Van Den Top
and 27 grandchildren

Doon, Iowa.

THE INNER MAN IN SCRIPTURE AS IN EPHESIANS 3:16

The passage which is referred to in the title of this article reads as follows: "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth are named, That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." Ephesians 3:14-19. This same idea is referred to in several other passages of Scripture. In Romans 7:22 we read, "For, I delight in the law of God after the inward man": and in the following verse the apostle continues, "But I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." In II Corinthians 4:16 there is found a distinction between the outward man and the inward man: "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." In the Old Testament there are similar references, although the inward man is not directly mentioned. We find, e.g., in Psalm 51:6, "Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom."

Man was originally created with a person and a nature. To that nature with which man was created belongs his body and soul, for God created him out of the dust of the earth and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. In this man which the Lord God created, man's soul was the seat of all his inward life — the life of his thinking, of his willing, of his emotions. He was created as a man that could know the Lord his God with a mind and intellect capable of comprehending spiritual truths and seeing the revelation of God in the things that were made. He was a man that was capable of willing the good and desiring it when he sought fellowship with the Lord God at the foot of the tree of life. He was a man who rejoiced in this blessed and rich covenant fellowship, emotionally aroused to praise and glorify his Maker through his knowledge of Him because God's glory was displayed on every hand. Yet this inward life of the soul — this life of the mind and the will — was not all the life of Adam, and could not possibly be. He had also a body. He was created with a body in which were found eyes and ears, nose and mouth, fingers and arms, in fact every part of his body with which he lived in the midst of the garden. This body was the means and instrument of his life since he was called to live it in the world. Through the doors of his body, i.e., through senses, there passed into his soul the knowledge of God as he contemplated the things that were made. But this same body was for Adam also the instrument whereby he could give expression to his inward

life — the life of the soul. His thoughts and desires, as well as the emotions that arose within him could come to outward expression in his use of the body as he busily went about his work to glorify his God. He could speak and sing God's praises as he was aroused to adoration. He could fight against evil as it also attacked the garden. He could eat of the Tree of Life and turn his back to the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. And through his body the inward life of his soul thus came to expression.

In this nature and through this nature including both body and soul was Adam's person. The subject of all his deeds, his thinking and willing, his doing and acting was his person. No animal nor any other creature in all God's creation was a person. Only man, created body and soul, rational and moral could be a person. And this person was the conscious subject of all that he did.

Besides this, Adam possessed a heart. This was the very center of his life as he lived his earthly life in relation to God. The condition of Adam's heart determined that nature of the relationship which he sustained toward his Maker. His heart was perfect. And because his heart was at the very center and pith of all his existence, all that he did was perfect and righteous in the sight of God. The person of Adam functioning through the heart and then and thus through the soul and body of this highest of all God's creatures did only that which was right and good with the full approval of God.

Now this essential creation of man is not altered by sin. What does happen is that the heart of man is become thoroughly corrupt and depraved. The heart is become polluted and desecrated, a wilderness spiritually, a barren and dry land ethically. It is separated from God Who is the fountain of all life and blessing. It is under the heavy hand of the curse and God's wrath. It is dead and unable to function in any way pleasing to God. It is pointed in the direction of hell and seeks only those things which arise out of hell in the mind and heart of the devil and his hosts of evil spirits. But this depraved heart casts its long shadows on the whole nature of man and corrupts it all. For this reason, man's mind becomes dark and black capable only of thinking the lie and standing only in contact with all that is of sin and corruption. Nothing good or true, nothing holy or heavenly, no light of God can penetrate the dark labyrinths of this wicked and depraved mind of man. He cannot even see the things of the kingdom of heaven, and stands altogether apart from and in opposition to all that is holy and just and good.

Besides this, the will of man becomes totally perverse and obstinate in all that it does under the influence of this corrupted heart. So depraved is the will that it cannot seek God, nor even have the faintest desire to seek God or the things of God. Such a will delights only in all kinds of unrighteousness and iniquity, having its pleasure in moral corruption and depravity, blaspheming God and mocking Him as it goes its own carnal way.

The body therefore also becomes the slave to sin and the

servant of a depraved soul. It is the instrument of unrighteousness. All the filth and corruption that lives within man's heart and fills his mind and will pours out in a vile torrent in all that he does and speaks. In continual and complete opposition to God, man dances merrily the way to eternal damnation cursing God and his fellow man.

But now the question is, What is the inward man? Some commentators insist that the inward man is the life which goes on in the soul of man in distinction from the life of the body. They maintain that the inward man is present in every man be he elect or reprobate, converted or unconverted. Usually also they maintain that this inward man is not yet so bad. There is an element of good in him which is somewhat suppressed by the evils of the body, but which will come to expression with sufficient effort and concentration. It may perhaps need a little help and even divine assistance, but it will certainly be successful if only it is exercised often enough. This is obviously all wrong and is but an attempt to resurrect the ancient and oft condemned theory of Pelagius. And yet it is the view that is readily and generally adopted today.

The inward man is described in Scripture as being that in us which is once again restored in such a way that it does that which is pleasing in God's sight. It is that in us which delights in the law of God. It is that which is renewed day by day while the outward man perishes and decays. It is that which has true spiritual wisdom and is strengthened with might by the Spirit of God in order that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith, and that we may know the love of Christ and be filled with all the fulness of God.

The inward man is first of all the regenerated heart. God regenerates the hearts of his own elect people. He gives them a new heart and creates within them a clean and holy heart in which can no longer be found any of the defilement and corruption of sin. This very center and pith of man is recreated and reformed by the almighty hand of God through the Spirit of Jesus Christ so that instead of it being dead, it is filled with the life of Christ; instead of it being twisted and distorted by sin, it is made holy and pure; instead of it being the fountain of corruption and defilement, it is the source of all that is holy and good and sweet. Thus the inward man is the principle of regeneration planted in the heart of the elect by the sovereign might of God through the power of the cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. God creates the inward man, and He alone without even the will and knowledge of the elect sinner. This inward man is therefore completely freed from the power of sin and renewed so entirely that it is impossible for it to sin any longer. Of this perfect and holy inward man living in covenant fellowship of life with God the apostle John speaks when he says, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." I John 3:10.

Yet there is more to it than this. It is important to remember that as long as we live on this earth, only the inward heart of man is regenerated and made alive and new. The

nature of man is not regenerated. This must wait until the final return of our Savior upon the clouds of the heavens. Certainly the soul is not made alive and new, nor is the body made perfect. It is only the heart that is restored by this altogether amazing wonder of grace which is comparable to creation in power and efficacy. But nevertheless the soul does come under the influence of this regenerated heart. The light and life that is implanted within us sends its rays of strength throughout the soul of man. It influences his mind and will and emotions to a certain extent. It is for this reason that Paul can speak of the transforming and renewing of our minds in Romans 12:1, and of the mind which serves the law of God in Romans 7:25. This whole idea is very beautifully expressed in the Canons of Dordrecht, III and IV, 11: "But when God accomplishes his good pleasure in the elect, or works in them true conversion, he not only causes the gospel to be externally preached to them, and powerfully illuminates their minds by his Holy Spirit, that they may rightly understand and discern the things of the Spirit of God; but by the efficacy of the same regenerating Spirit, pervades the inmost recesses of the man; he opens the closed, and softens the hardened heart, and circumcises that which was uncircumcised, infuses new qualities into the will, which though heretofore dead, he quickens; from being evil, disobedient, and refractory, he renders it good, obedient, and pliable; actuates and strengthens it, that like a good tree, it may bring forth the fruits of good actions."

Yet even this power in the heart of man comes to expression through the body of man as he begins at least to walk in the way of God's commandments and do that which is pleasing in God's sight. Even the body comes under the influence and dominion of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. So also Paul admonishes the church, "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." Romans 6:13.

But nevertheless, this old nature including both the soul and the body is still depraved and corrupt. And it is this depraved and corrupt nature which is called in Scripture the outward man, or the old man of sin, or the flesh. The nature is not regenerated either in the mind and will or the body. The ruts and grooves of sin are still present and deeply worn through generations of sinning in the human race. And when the new principle of life tries to come to expression through the old corrupt nature, the lines of life and holiness as they proceed from the heart are still twisted and distorted by sin so that after all we have only a small beginning of the new obedience and even our best works are corrupted and polluted by sin.

But the person of man functions through both the old and the new man. It is the subject of all that is holy and good, but it is also the subject of all that is corrupt and bad.

(Continued on page 263)

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 7. For in the first place, in these falls he preserves in them the incorruptible seed of regeneration from perishing, or being totally lost; and again, by his Word and Spirit, certainly and effectually renews them to repentance, to a sincere and godly sorrow for their sins, that they may seek and obtain remission in the blood of the Mediator, may again experience the favor of a reconciled God, through faith adore his mercies, and henceforward more diligently work out their own salvation with fear and trembling.

The above translation is a bit too free, so that while it correctly gives the gist of the article, it does not accurately express the relationships between the various clauses. We call attention to the following corrections, most of which are in harmony also with the Dutch version: 1) The first clause is much more emphatic and also concise in the original, and should read: "For in the first place, in these falls he preserves in them this his own immortal seed, out of which they are regenerated, lest it should perish or be cast out." 2) The second main thought is accurately expressed in the above version, but it stands in a cause-and-effect relation to all the rest of the article. We could better render it as follows: "and again, through His Word and Spirit he certainly and effectually renews them to repentance, in order that they should sincerely sorrow after God over the sins committed, that they should through faith, with a contrite heart, desire and obtain forgiveness in the blood of the Mediator, that they should again feel God's favor, having been reconciled, that they should through faith adore his mercies, and that henceforth they should more diligently work out their own salvation with fear and trembling." 3) We call special attention to the expression found in both the Dutch and the English versions, "a reconciled God." This is rendered in the Dutch: ". . . God, die nu met hen verzoend is." As indicated under "2" we would refer this term "reconciled" not to God, but to God's people who are renewed unto repentance. This is, of course, a radically different translation. It means that we are reconciled to God, not God to us. It so happens that the question of translation in this case cannot be settled absolutely on the basis of the original Latin. The Latin would allow both translations. It reads: "*Deinde per verbum et Spiritum suum, eos certo et efficaciter renovat ad poenitentiam, ut . . . gratiam Dei reconciliati iterum sentiant.*" The term *reconciliati* can be taken as the masculine, genitive, singular, modifying *Dei*. The result then is the translation of the accepted English and Dutch versions. However, the same term can be taken as the masculine, nominative, plural of the perfect passive participle, modifying "they," the subject of this clause. The result then is: "that they, having been reconciled, should again feel God's favor." We prefer the last

translation. We do so not on the ground that the original Latin is decisive in this instance, for it is not; but we do so on the ground that our translation is the only one that is in harmony with Scripture. The Word of God never speaks of God being reconciled to us, but as often as it speaks of reconciliation speaks of us as being reconciled to God. This is an important difference. Even though rather commonly the matter is presented as though reconciliation is two-sided, accomplished by a third party, the Mediator, so that Christ reconciles God to us and us to God, we must insist that this is never the Scriptural presentation. God reconciles us unto Himself. Not God is reconciled, but we are reconciled. The interruption of the experience of God's favor is not caused by God, but by us, by our sin. Hence, there must be a change not on God's part but on our part. We must become reconciled to God. So much for the translation.

As far as the general thought of the article is concerned, we may notice that it is a continuation of the thought of Article 6 and a further delineation of the truth which the fathers there began to set forth. This is also indicated by the introductory word "for." We may probably connect this article directly with the very last part of Article 6, where we read that God does not allow His elect to proceed so far even in their grievous falls that "having been inwardly deserted by the Holy Spirit they plunge themselves into everlasting destruction." Upon this follow in Article 7 two reasons. The first is that God in these falls preserves in them the incorruptible seed out of which they are regenerated, so that it cannot perish or be cast out. The second is that God by His Word and Spirit renews them unto repentance surely and efficaciously. To these two reasons, therefore, we must give our attention.

First of all, then, there is the truth that God preserves in His people "this His own immortal seed, out of which they are regenerated." In this connection we may assume that the fathers had in mind especially two passages of Holy Writ which are directly quoted in the Rejection of Errors, Articles 3 and 8. The one passage, from which the language of this article is partially quoted, is I Peter 1:23, where we read: "Being born again, not of (out of) corruptible seed, but of (out of) incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." And the other passage is I John 3:9: "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." This idea stands, of course, in close connection with the fact mentioned in the preceding article, namely, that the saints are never totally and inwardly deserted by the Holy Spirit. As far as their conscious life and manifestation are concerned, they may be far gone indeed. Temporarily they may walk very stubbornly in their sin, refuse to confess it and to repent, so that if we were to judge from their manifestation at the time of that impenitence, we would come to the conclusion that they are no children of God at all. Nevertheless, God preserves His elect. No matter how far gone they may appear to be, in their inmost being they are not

deserted by the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of regeneration. The seed of God remaineth in them. That seed is the principle of regeneration that is implanted in the heart of every child of God out of God, through Christ, and in the Holy Spirit. That seed is the beginning of the new, spiritual life. And now if we distinguish between that seed, that very essential life-principle of regeneration, and its implanting, on the one hand, and regeneration in the wider sense, as the unfolding of that seed and the development of that seed in the consciousness of the believer, on the other hand, remembering that the latter is out of the former through the efficacious calling, through the living and abiding Word of God, that is also "preached unto you," then we may see what the article means. That seed itself, out of which the whole of the conscious life of regeneration develops, can never perish out of God's children; no matter what changes the child of God passes through in the "ups and downs" of sanctification, that seed, that inner principle of the new life, always remains. In the first place, that seed itself is incorruptible and, as the article itself has it, immortal. It cannot possibly be affected by the power of sin and death. The seed of our first birth is corrupt and corruptible. It has in it the very principle of death. But the seed of our second birth, of the new birth, the birth from heaven, is incorruptible. It is not subject to corruption, and therefore it is not subject to death. It is immortal. The reason is that it is the principle of the life of God in Christ. It is the seed, the sperm, of God in Christ. Christ is incorruptible and immortal. He died as the prince of life once. But death could not hold Him because He is the resurrection and the life. And the life of the risen and glorified Son of God in the flesh is the life of the children of God. The principle of their life is in the deepest sense of the word Christ, the Son of God incarnate. And therefore, the seed that is implanted in the children of God is itself incorruptible and can never die. Nor can they lose that seed. For, in the second place, that seed of God remaineth in them. Once having that seed of regeneration, the believer always continues to have that seed in his heart. It is not thus, that the seed of regeneration is occasionally in us and occasionally not in us. No, it continues in us without interruption, once it has been implanted. "In the first place, in these falls he preserves in them this his own immortal seed, out of which they are regenerated, lest it should perish or be cast out." Notice again that the article speaks of the work of God. This is a distinctly divine work, absolutely free and unconditional. This is the reason why the sins and falls of the children of God do not precipitate them into everlasting destruction. The work of God cannot be initiated by them or by the fulfillment of any conditions on their part. And by the same token the work of God cannot be ended and destroyed by them or by any action which they do or do not perform. That work of the implanting of the principle of the new life is absolutely independent of them. It is performed without their consciousness. In the work of regeneration they are passive. It is God's unaided work. They can do nothing to prevent it

initially, and they can do nothing that can possibly destroy it and remove it once it has been implanted. There is no sin that the children of God can and do perform that is so terrible that it can ever affect that seed of God that is in them. God preserves His people!

But there is much more to this wonder of preservation. After all, the question still remains, even granting that this inner principle, this seed, of the new life abides in the elect: what causes them to come up out of their deep falls? How is it that a child of God can live in some sin for a while, stubbornly refuse to repent and to confess his sin, and that then, all of a sudden, he sees his sin, comes to repentance, is sorry, seeks forgiveness, and walks once more in the path of sanctification? Throughout that period of impenitence he remained principally a child of God. During that time God's seed remained in him. Yet at one time that seed appears to be slumbering, dormant, does not blossom out in the conscious life of regeneration. And then suddenly that seed no more is dormant. The answer is: God also certainly and efficaciously renews His people unto repentance. It is not up to the sinning child of God to see to it that the seed of regeneration blossoms out in his conscious life. Nor is this conscious manifestation of the new life simply the effect of the preaching of the Word. This would be impossible. For such a child of God who walks temporarily in sin may be constantly under the preaching of the Word and its admonitions, but only at long last does he repent. No, also the conscious life and activity of that seed of regeneration is initiated strictly by God Himself. God does not only call His children once out of darkness into His marvelous light. He continually speaks the mighty Word of His calling. And He never forsakes the work of His own hands. It would be utterly inconceivable that God would regenerate a man and preserve in him the seed of regeneration, and then not efficaciously call him to repentance. He *surely* and *effectually* renews unto repentance. The result of that effectual renewal unto repentance is that the child of God actively repents and walks in sanctification. This result is stated in the article, and is five-fold. We need not go into detail in this connection, for the language of the article speaks for itself. Besides, these elements are mentioned in another connection later in the chapter. For the present we want to emphasize two things: 1) The order of this five-fold result as stated in the article must be maintained, and that too, strictly. Thus, for example, there is no desiring and obtaining of forgiveness in the blood of the Mediator until there is first a sincere sorrow after God over the sins committed. 2) This result is *one*, with a five-fold aspect. Wherever through His Spirit and Word God effectually renews unto repentance, all five of these aspects will result: a) sorrow over the sins committed; b) the desire for and obtaining of forgiveness in the blood of Christ; c) the renewed experience of God's favor when we are reconciled to Him; d) the adoring of His mercies; e) a renewed diligence to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling.

H.C.H.

DECENCY and ORDER

The Conclusion of the Report

B. If the majority of the consistory becomes worthy of discipline, no consistory remains to call a neighboring consistory and with that neighboring consistory to exercise discipline upon those that have made themselves worthy of it.

One can then expect no action from such a consistory and also the congregation cannot take ecclesiastical action because she lacks ecclesiastical power.

Also a neighboring church cannot by herself interfere in the internal affairs of another local church. This is explicitly forbidden in Article 84, D.K.O.

Naturally only the Classis, under which such an unfaithful consistory resorts, as the nearest broader ecclesiastical gathering, can administer the necessary discipline. If not all of the consistory members go along in the evil way, those remaining can make the case pending with the Classis or if all the consistory members go along, the members of the congregation, by virtue of the office of believers, can do this. In case also the members do not do this, the Classis itself is called to instigate action.

By the Classis this case must finally be treated. For those who make themselves unworthy of the office must be deposed from the office and only through the office can one be put out of the office; barring a few rare exceptions.

C. Where it is alleged that a Classis may not depose a consistory because this interferes with the rights of the local church and that this is *the point* of concern here, these objections must be kept in view:

1. The saying that the congregation as such must proceed to act whenever a consistory as a whole becomes worthy of discipline proceeds from the supposition that *the office of believers* is institutional in character and that it functions institutionally as soon as under normal circumstances a consistory is negligent in the execution of its office.

2. This view is rooted principally in the thought that the ecclesiastical power of Christ is deposited in the congregation as such and is transferred by the congregation to the office bearers. However against this arise objections of a serious nature:

- a) If indeed Christ has transferred His official power to the congregation, then it follows from this that the congregation itself, principally speaking, without office bearers can and may exercise this power. For then she chooses office bearers who exercise *her* power. Fact is, however, that the ecclesiastical power the office bearers exercise is given by Christ directly to the office bearers and not through the medium of the congregation. The congregation indeed calls

the office bearers, namely, through an election under the supervision of the office but from this it follows in the very least that the congregation loans the ecclesiastical power on those called.

- b) And in the event the office bearers would receive their ecclesiastical power from the congregation, then it would also follow from this that she would be responsibly indebted to the congregation. The Holy Scriptures, however, will know nothing of it that the office bearers in this sense are to be ministers (servants) of the congregation.

- c) Besides, the fact that consistory members are installed in their office by an office bearer, that is, placed in their office (D.K.O. Arts. 4, 22, 24) indicates that this power does not come from the congregation. Or does the congregation first give this power to the one who installs and he then to the installed consistory member? How much more acceptable is the presentation that Christ through His ecclesiastical organ (the minister of the Word) lays His power on the elected office bearer in the way of installation in the office, that is, makes him his bearer of power (*machtsorgaan*).

- d) Finally, the whole presentation of the proceeding, holding the ecclesiastical power in the congregation as such, lies wholly in the line of the popular doctrine of the people's sovereignty. This doctrine is in conflict with:

1. The Divine rule here on earth as this again in its turn is grounded in the sovereignty of the Almighty. God and also Christ as God can indeed administer their power by means of men but cannot deposit or transfer their power to men who then possess it without having to function as a medium. The way of ecclesiastical congregational sovereignty is dangerous and it is an imperative necessity to protest against this spirit of the times.

2. The revelation of Scripture according to which Christ received His power from the Father, which He directed upon the apostles, which apostles in turn clothed the office bearers in the local churches with power.

3. Those who answer our question negatively mean that the only just method to treat a consistory that becomes rebellious in the last instance is that the congregation simply withdraws from such a consistory and that the classis in conformity therewith must simply break off the fellowship with such an unworthy consistory.

- (a) This procedure appears to be simple but proceeds from the principles that are unacceptable and further, from our Church Order, Art. 72, serious objections arise against it.

- (1) The idea of the resigning of obedience and breaking off of ecclesiastical fellowship rests on the supposition that if the service of the office is no more acknowledged, the office itself ceases to exist in the sphere it once served because it no longer wishes to acknowledge its further functioning. This position, however, cannot be maintained.

(2) The correct view on this point is that *men must be clothed with the office through the office* (what is commonly called installation) and even so also where it appears that men become unworthy of the office, *must be deposed from the office through the office*. It is difficult to see why men through an official, that is, action according to Church Order, must be placed in the office (and that is proper is evident from D.K.O. Arts. 4, 22, 24) and with unworthiness to serve any longer must not likewise through an official, that is, an action according to Church Order, be deposed from the office. (Art. 79, D.K.O. also mentions this principle.) If it already speaks for itself that anyone's office ceases when it is simply no longer acknowledged by the people, it would even more speak for itself that anyone would hold the office as soon as it is acknowledged by the people (without installation). Yet of this our Church Order knows nothing and it is first then also a logically unwarrantable position.

(3) If men acknowledge that the office remains even if its functioning is no more acknowledged in the sphere where it formerly was exercised, one comes to the strange position that one becomes wholly unworthy of his office, his official functions he sees no longer acknowledged by those who have chosen and installed him in office, but nevertheless he remains in this office and, therefore, takes it with him when breaking off the ecclesiastical fellowship.

(b) Also on this viewpoint men become inconsistent and unfaithful to the Church Order. Article 79 demands discipline and deposition of elders, deacons and ministers of the Word whenever they go astray and prescribes how this must be done. But now it is strange that when the *majority* of consistory members become worthy of deposition and Article 79 cannot be brought to apply, this majority must be disciplined and deposed not as an eventual minority but it can simply be ignored. Must the office be taken from a *minority* through a deliberate and church orderly act but not even so from a *majority*?

4. Finally, we give yet an answer to the thought *that our Church Order does not stipulate* that a Classis has the competency to depose a consistory.

(a) Against this we note that it *is an exceptional case* whenever a consistory in its majority or in all its members makes itself worthy of deposition. And the explicit letter of a Church Order can, in its very nature, not cover every conceivable and possible case but only the most common.

(b) Also it must not be forgotten that *our Church Order is no set of rules worked out in every detail* but a composition of general and guiding principles of ecclesiastical order that must be applied in concrete cases according to circumstances as soon as such cases exist which, with so many words, are not indicated in the Church Order.

Your committee advises the Synod:

A. To receive the report of the committee (agendum pp. 125-162) for information and to thank the committee for the much work done, of which the report is witness.

B. To declare the following:

The Synod, having taken in study the report of the committee of pre-advice as well as the report of the committee appointed by the Synod of 1924, declares:

That, in agreement with the principles of Church Order (Kerkrechtelijk) that form the basis of our Church Order, a Classis has the competency to depose from office a consistory that makes itself unworthy.

This expression is based on the following considerations:

1. Christ is the King of His church. He administers that kingship, also in the disciplinarian sense, through office bearers. Also these office bearers, when apostatizing, stand under the disciplinary power of Christ. And thus whenever the majority of a consistory apostatize or become rebellious, Christ does not observe this passively and stand helpless overagainst it but demands that discipline be administered in His Name; in such a case suspension and if need be deposition.

2. Since the believers, in the quality (capacity) of believers, have no competency by the Church Order to administer ecclesiastical discipline and cannot call a neighboring consistory under Art. 79 D.K.O. into action when the majority of a consistory become worthy of discipline, there is the demand that the Classis under which such an apostate consistory resorts proceeds to act, if necessary, to the extent of deposition.

3. Article 30 D.K.O. points in that direction. The deposition of a consistory cannot be finished in a minor gathering. Therefore, then the ecclesiastical federation must take action and a Classis or Synod must take disciplinary action. These *can do* this because they possess consistorial power; they *must do* so for Christ's sake.

4. Our Church Order, Arts. 4, 22, 24 deal with installation in office. This installation takes place through the office. And this installing in the office through the office brings with it the setting out of office through the office also whenever the majority of a consistory becomes unfaithful.

5. Article 31 D.K.O. holds firmly that the decisions of a broader gathering must be considered settled and binding. The "*Unless . . .*" of this article cannot mean that one is not bound to so observe these decisions whenever he cannot see or acknowledge the Scripturalness of them. Such then would lead to unrestrained arbitrariness that would then yet be sanctioned by our Church Order. Articles 30 and 31 prescribe that the decisions of the foregoing matters that are brought to the broader gatherings shall be considered settled and binding and there shall be *finished!* These articles then give a Classis the right to depose an unfaithful Consistory.

6. Article 36 maintains the legal competency of the broader gatherings when it speaks of the "*jurisdiction*," that is, authority (gezag, autoriteit) of these gatherings. Because they have received this authority from Christ and this au-

(Continued on page 263)

ALL AROUND US

Literary Cavalcade — The Green Pastures.

"Reverend, my daughter came home from school the other day with a magazine she asked me to read, especially one article in it. She has to use this paper in her class in English literature in the Grand Rapids Christian High School where she attends. She herself was deeply shocked with its contents. And I confess I never read anything more sacrilegious than that article to which she referred. If I can get the magazine long enough for you to read, I wish you would."

With approximately these words a dear brother approached me. Moreover, he saw to it that I did have opportunity to peruse the magazine *Literary Cavalcade*. I skimmed through the entire contents of the February 1959 issue of this paper, and with more carefulness read the article referred to, namely, "The Green Pastures." 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 their Christian education.

"The Green Pastures" is a drama written by Marc Connelly in 1929. *Literary Cavalcade* presents the television version of it as it appeared in 1957 in "a slightly modified television version" by Hallmark Hall of Fame. And we are told that it "was so enthusiastically received it is being repeated on March 23 over NBC, at 9:30 p. m. E.S.T."

The drama "The Green Pastures," according to the author himself, "is an attempt to present certain aspects of a living religion in the terms of its believers. The religion is that of thousands of Negroes in the deep South. With terrific spiritual hunger and great humility, many of them who could not even read adapted the contents of the Bible to the consistencies of their everyday lives."

"Unburdened by the differences of more educated theologians they accepted the Old Testament as a chronicle of wonders which happened to people like themselves in vague but actual places, and rules of conduct, the true acceptance of which will lead them to a tangible, three-dimensional Heaven. In this Heaven, if one has been born in a district where fish fries are popular, the angels do have magnificent fish fries through an eternity somewhat resembling a series of earthly holidays . . . The Lord may look like the Reverend Mr. Dubois, as our Sunday School teacher speculates in the play, or he may resemble another believer's own grandfather. In any event, his face will be familiar to the one who has come for his reward . . ."

The article goes on to say, "For more about heavenly fish fries, after enjoying LC's excerpt, students are urged to see the Hallmark Hall of Fame production next month, or obtain Marc Connelly's original in the library."

The article presents ten different scenes in Act I. The first scene is in the Sunday School where Mrs. Deshee reads from the Book of Genesis and the children in her class raise questions related and some unrelated to the passage read. We pass over this without further comment.

Scene 2 is a fish fry. It is supposed to take place in heaven. An attendant opens the pearly gates to admit a happy choir of angels on their way to the fish fry. They sing and march, they, of course, being negroes. The following conversation ensues:

"Cook: Hurry up, Cajey. This here fat's crying for more fish."

Cajey: (enters with fish. Camera follows him up to group): We coming fast as we can. They got to be caught. Can't say 'C'mon, little fish. C'mon and get fried,' can we?

(Camera pans with the Stout Angel as she crosses and looks up. We see cherub on a cloud.)

Stout Angel: Now you heard me before, Leonetta. You fly down here. You want to be put down in the sin book? (To the Slender Angel who is passing by.) That baby must got imp blood in her she so vexing. (Back top to the child.) You want me to fly up there and slap you down? Now go on and play with your cousins. (The cherub flies off. Back to Slender Angel.) I ain't seen you lately, Lily. How you been?

Slender Angel: I'm fine. I been visiting my Grandma. She's waiting on the welcome table over by the throne of grace.

Stout Angel: She always was pretty holy.

Slender Angel: Yes, ma'am. I guess the Lord's took quite a fancy to her.

Stout Angel: Well, that's natural. I declare your Grandma's one of the finest lady angels I know.

Slender Angel: She claim you the best one she know.

Stout Angel: Well, when you come right down to it, I reckon we is all pretty near perfect.

Slender Angel: Why is that, Miss Jenny?

Stout Angel: I suppose it's cause the Lord He don't allow us associating with the devil no more so that they can't be no more sinning. Nowadays if a lady wants a little constitutional she can fly till she wing-weary, without getting insulted. (An Archangel enters.) Good morning, Archangel. (Others say good morning.)

Archangel: Good morning, folks. I wonder can I interrupt the fish fry and give out the Sunday School cards. (Cries of 'Certainly!' 'My goodness, yes,' etc. The marching choir stops.) You can keep singing if you want to. Why don't you sing 'When the Saints Go Marching In'? I ain't heard that lately (The choir begins 'When the Saints Go Marching In,' rather softly, but does not resume marching. The Archangel looks off left.) All right, bring them here.

(A prim-looking woman teacher angel enters, shepherding boy and girl cherubs. The teacher carries beribboned diplomas, which she gives to the Archangel. They line up in front of the Archangel and receive the attention of the rest of the company. The choir sings through the ceremony.)

Archangel: Now then, cherubs, why is you here?

Children: Because we so good.

Archangel: That's right. Now who the big boss?

Children: Our dear Lord.

Archangel: That's right. When you all grow up what you gonna be?

Children: Holy Angels at the throne of grace.

Archangel: That's right. Now, you passed your examinations and it gives me great pleasure to hand out the cards for the whole class.

(Cherubs go to him and get diplomas. The choir sings loudly. The Angel Gabriel enters at top cloud. The choir stops.)

Stout Angel: (To Slender Angel): It's Gabriel!

(In a moment the heavenly company is all attention.)

Gabriel (lifting his hand): Gang way! Gang way for the Lord God Jehovah! (There is a reverent hush and God enters. He looks at the assemblage. He speaks in a rich bass voice.)

God: Have you been baptized?

Others (chanting): Certainly, Lord.

God: Have you been baptized?

Others: Certainly, Lord.

God (with the beginning of musical notation): Have you been baptized?

Others (now half singing): Certainly, Lord. Certainly, certainly, certainly, Lord.

(They sing last two verses with equivalent part division.)

God (singing): Do you bow mighty low?

Others (singing): Certainly, Lord.

God: Do you bow mighty low?

Others: Certainly, Lord. Certainly, certainly, certainly, Lord.

(As the last response ends, all heads are bowed. God looks at them for a moment, then lifts his hand.)

God: Let the fish fry proceed.

(The Angels relax and resume their inaudible conversations. The activity around the tables is resumed. Some of the choir members cross to the table and get sandwiches and cups of boiling custard. Three or four of the children group themselves about God as he speaks with the Archangel. He pets their heads, they hang to his coat tails, etc.)

Archangel: Good morning, Lord.

God: Good morning, Deacon. You looking pretty spry.

Archangel: I can't complain. We just been giving our cards to the children.

God: That's good.

(A small cherub, his feet braced against one of God's shoes, is using God's coat tail as a trapeze.)

Cook: You leave go the Lord's coat, Herman. You hear me?

God: That's all right, sister. He just playing.

Cook: He playing too rough.

(God picks up the cherub and spansks him good naturedly.

The cherub squeals with delight and runs to his mother. God then speaks to the choir.)

God: How you shouters getting on?

Choir Leader: We been marching and singing all morning.

God: I heard you. You getting better all the time. You getting as good as the one at the throne. Why don't you give us one of the old time jump-ups?

Choir Leader: Anything you say, Lord. (To the choir.) 'So High.' (The choir begins to sing 'So High You Can't Get Over It.' They sing softly but do not march. Gabriel brings God a cup of custard. God sips. After the second sip, a look of displeasure comes on his face.)

Gabriel: What's the matter, Lord?

God (sipping again): I ain't just sure yet. There's something about this custard. (Takes another sip.)

Cajey: Ain't it all right, Lord?

God: It don't seem seasoned just right. You make it?

Cajey: Yes, Lord. I put everything in it like I always do. It's supposed to be perfect.

God: Yeah, I can taste the eggs and the cream and the sugar. (Suddenly.) I know what it is. It needs just a little bit more firmament.

Cajey: They's firmament in it, Lord.

God: Maybe, but it ain't enough.

Cajey: It's all we had, Lord. They ain't a drop left in the jug.

God: That's all right. I'll just rear back and pass a miracle. (Choir stops singing.) Let there be some firmament! And when I say let there be some firmament, I don't want just a little bitty dab of firmament 'cause I'm sick and tired of running out of it when we need it! Let there be a whole mess of firmament!"

So far the article and Scene 2. Scenes 7-10 are in my judgment worse yet. That such a magazine would be used in the public school which has no fixed principle of religious conviction and piety, is quite understandable. But how a Christian School teacher will compel the student to read this kind of stuff is more than I can figure out. To me, it was as revolting as it was to the young lady whose copy I perused.

We are not primarily interested in the drama of Marc Connelly. No doubt, he has given a rather vivid portrayal of the mind of the illiterate southern negro which is just as pagan as the idolatrous mind of the heathen who has never heard of the Bible. We are primarily critical of our Christian institutions of learning that will resort to this type of literature as a means of instruction, 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. With this I cannot at all agree. If this condition persists, it begins to look like our Protestant Reformed children will soon have to have a Christian High School of their own.

M.S.

THE INNER MAN IN SCRIPTURE AS IN EPHESIANS 3:16

(Continued from page 256)

It is the subject of the good deeds that arise in the heart, but it is also the subject of the evil thoughts and desires which are still present within us. Nor do we dare to say that we do not sin, but that our nature sins. It will not do to hold out our natures at arm's length when we sin and say, "It is no more I that sin, but only this wicked flesh which I must carry about with me. I am perfect!"

To sum it all up therefore, the new man is the person of the elect child of God functioning through the regenerated heart as this heart influences the mind and will and even the body to do that which is good. The old man is that same person functioning through his depraved nature, his darkened mind and will and his body which is still the instrument to perform all kinds of evil.

It is exactly this strange and yet very real phenomenon which makes the life of the believer such a bitter struggle in all his earthly sojourn. This is why Paul says in Romans 7:15-23, "For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh), dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members."

Thus our whole being while on this earth becomes the battlefield of the fiercest struggle imaginable. The spirit wars against the flesh, and the flesh against the spirit, for they are contrary to each other. And the fierce and bitter battle does not come to its end until we lay down our lives in death. For although indeed it is true that I do that which is pleasing in God's sight according to the inner man, it is still true I that sin also and that I must confess with David, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." Or, again, "I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech thee, O Lord, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly."

And so the battle wages on growing hotter and hotter as our weary life progresses. And in the agony of it all, as the struggle taxes our strength and all but makes us faint, we cry out in bitter agony, "O, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

Yet just because the new man, the inner man, is the creation of our God, there is the victory principally even

now over all the sin which I still commit; for, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

It is this inner man that is finally delivered when our old man decaying day by day is laid way in the grave and the new man in Christ is snatched away by the angels to be carried into Abraham's bosom to rest eternally with God. It must indeed wait for a time until also the outward man is regenerated from the dust of death, for final perfection, but then indeed the distinction will be no more between inner and outer man, for in body and soul we shall be perfect forever more.

H. Hanko

DECENCY AND ORDER

(Continued from page 260)

thority, because it is consistorial, is also disciplinarian, so may and must Classes and Synods demand obedience and proceed to discipline rebellion.

7. On the ground of Article 79 of the Church Order it is established that unfaithful Consistory members should be deposed from their office. If the minority of the consistory must be deposed, the consistory itself can then do this with a neighboring consistory. If the majority of a consistory become unfaithful, discipline must be administered just as much. And since Article 79 then cannot be invoked but the principle of that Article must be maintained, only a Classis or Synod can then take disciplinary action.

8. The formula of subscription, "*under the penalty in case of refusal to be, by that very fact, suspended from our office*" prescribes disciplinary action whenever one becomes rebellious. And if the Formula of Subscription is effective for every subscriber, then it holds that not alone for the minority of a consistory, being unfaithful, but also for the majority. An ecclesiastical discipline, carried to the end, over the majority of a consistory, is actually the deposition of such a consistory.

Our whole Church Order, therefore, proceeds from the principle that a Classis has the competency to depose a consistory that is unfaithful from its office.

Respectfully submitted,

Your Committee,

D. R. Drukker
M. M. Schans
J. M. Ghysels
H. J. De Vries
H. Moes
G. Dekker
A. J. Wibalda
H. De Vries
B. H. Lindeman
P. VandenBerg

G.V.D.B.

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

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

February 20, 1959

The Radio Committee rendered a program Feb. 12 which was a "Progress Report of 1959." The Committee president, Mr. George Yonker Sr. led in opening prayer, and then introduced the master of ceremonies, Mr. Charles Kregel, who introduced the various participants in the order of the program. Rev. R. Veldman, chairman of the Mission Committee told of the cooperation between his committee and that of the Radio; and of the new station in the Virgin Islands, the latest venture of the Mission Committee. Miss Lubbertha Bykerk, the corresponding secretary, read some letters sent in by people, not members of our churches, and Mr. Ken Bylsma gave the financial report. The rest of the program consisted of numbers given by the various musicians who furnish the music on our radio broadcasts, including a male octette from Hope which is a newcomer to our staff of musicians. Solos, duos, and group singing utilized this opportunity to render songs of praise worship. After the program the audience was invited to inspect the new \$5,000.00 equipment, and to have refreshments in the church parlors. The weather and the bad driving was no deterrent to the good crowd gathered there, and we predict that next year the committee will draw a still bigger audience.

The news from Edgerton: Serviceman John Brands returned home after two years of army service, one year of which was spent in Germany. Jan. 20 the Men's Society met in combined meeting with that of Doon studying the first chapter of Revelation, and after recess the program was furnished by the visitors. Jan. 16 the "old" and the "new" consistory members and their wives were entertained in the parsonage. The congregation was happy to see their senior elder (he is 82) back in the elder's pew after recovering from two operations in the last three months.

Rev. Ophoff is grateful for continued improvement and also for the experience of God's unfailing grace. First's congregation was happy to learn that Rev. Hanko declined the call to Redlands. Rev. Hoeksema and Rev. Hanko are preaching a series of Lenten sermons under the general theme, "Christ on Trial." Yesterday, Mrs. Rottschafer, the second oldest member of First Church, celebrated the 93rd anniversary of her birthday — indeed, there are still "giants" in these days!

Sunday, Feb. 8, the Holland Y. P. Soc'y was host to that of Hudsonville. Rev. McCollam led the Bible discussion from Acts 22, and the Hudsonville society furnished the after recess program. — The Hope P.T.A. was privileged to view pictures taken by Miss Borduin on her world cruise.

Hull's Men's Society travelled to Doon to meet with the society there. All of the men, though not members, were invited to meet with them.

Feb. 16 the Holland Men's Society were guests at South West. Mr. B. Windemuller of Holland gave an essay on "Jehovah's Witnesses" on the after recess program.

We note, with approval, that, among others, Hope's and Oak Lawn's bulletins announce that the offering received at the time of Communion is a "Thank offering," and announce the purpose for which it is offered. We hear that some people think the offering is taken to defray communion expenses, but when everyone knows that it is designed to be a "thank offering" it ought to bring such response that it should be the largest offering of the month.

Kalamazoo's Y. P. Society had planned a toboggan party to which the society of First Church was invited, but they were disappointed because they were unable to come.

Rev. Harbach's bulletin warns his people that Station W.P.U.G. (which carries our radio program) is considering the possibility of curtailing all the religious programs during the week. Fear rises that such curtailment would lead to the barring of Sunday religious programs in the future, so Lynden's church members are asked to join other Christians in the County to write the station telling it of their preference for religious programs at all times.

Oak Lawn cancelled the Y. P. Society meeting of Feb. 8 to join South Holland in a Singspiration. The proceeds were put into the "1959 Convention Fund" purse. A meeting was called Feb. 12th in the parsonage to complete the plans for the convention. On the evening of the 13th the '58 and '59 consistory members and their wives were entertained in the parsonage, and the subject, "The Signs of the Times" was discussed.

After spending three Sundays in Redlands, Rev. and Mrs. Van Baren left for home Feb. 9. Back to his own congregation in Doon who, during his absence, conducted one reading service and one led by Rev. Heys each Sunday.

Redlands has nominated the following trio from which to call a minister: Revs. G. Van Baren, G. Vanden Berg, and H. Veldman.

Rev. and Mrs. R. Veldman were hosts to each of the societies as they came to inspect the new parsonage at 1543 Cambridge. And on Wednesday, Feb. 3, all those who had not previously had the opportunity were invited to pay them a visit; thus all the members of the congregation might see the parsonage for which they had so generously given.

South East and Creston's Y. P. Societies met in combined meeting Sunday afternoon, Feb. 15. The portion of Scripture under discussion was, "When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish; and the hope of the unjust man perisheth." Prov. 11:7.

From Edgerton we learn that the new clerk is William Buys, and the new treasurer is Henry Hendricks. The address of both is, Edgerton, Minn.

Doon's new clerk is H. J. Blankespoor, George, Iowa; and new treasurer is Peter Vanden Top, Rock Rapids, Iowa.

. . . . see you in church.

J.M.F.