

THE STANDARD

Bearer

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MEDITATION

THE VICTORY OF FAITH

"And they rose early in the morning, and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa: and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe His prophets, so shall ye prosper.

And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the Lord, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the Lord; for His mercy endureth forever.

And when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten."

II CHRON. 20:20-22

This was a family quarrel.

And yet, it was more than that.

It was, really, part of the battle of all the ages.

Throughout all the ages the Church is called to fight the fight of faith.

That fight was begun in Paradise when God said: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel." Gen. 3:15.

From that moment on there has been war between the church and the devil, and his seed.

That war grew hotter through the ages, and the climax came at the Cross of Golgotha.

That war shall continue till the end of time, and the end shall come with the second coming of Christ.

However, this war is not as other wars. Because the Church of Jesus Christ always has the victory. And we have not merely the victory, but we are more than conquerors through Jesus Christ and God who loved us.

How can we be more than victors? That's simple: the enemy must and does help us to the victory always.

And the reason for all this is God.

The war is of the Lord: He is our Captain. And so the war is never in doubt. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh"! That's a terrible text.

No one ever availeth against the God of the heavens and the earth. "He will have them in derision."

* * * *

We are reminded of that very forcibly in the above text and history.

Ammon, Moab and Mt. Seir had come to remove Judah and Benjamin out of their possession. And to install themselves in the heritage of the Lord God. See verse 11.

Who are they?

I said above that this was, in a sense, a family quarrel.

Well, Moab and Ammon are brothers and cousins of one another. They are the offspring of a vile incestuous relationship between the two daughters of Lot and their father. So they are brothers and cousins. They are at once the sons and the grandsons of Lot. And since Lot was the nephew of Abraham, these boys were the nephews of Jacob, twice or three times removed.

Mt. Seir is more serious. That is their brother. Their twin-brother. Double shame! Dumah, Edom, and Mt. Seir are the same thing as Esau, the twin of Jacob.

I think that Esau did not recognize his children anymore. Neither would Abraham recognize his nephews. These people had corrupted themselves to such an extent, that we cannot publish in public all their abominations.

Their gods were Chimosh, Milcom, Molech and Astoreth. And all of them worshipped the Baalim.

They were a corrupt lot.

And they prove it that day.

Israel did not pass through their territories when they marched from Egypt to Canaan. They asked for this free passage but were refused. And so they made a detour.

And now see how they rewarded their kin!

They came to kick them out of the Lord's heritage, given to Jacob.

* * * *

And now look at the other side. There is Judah and Benjamin. The beloved of the Lord.

You can tell that by the King they received: God-fearing Jehoshaphat.

What a King!

Personally, he sought the Lord. He lifted up his heart to seek Jehovah.

And the Lord was found of him. Read II Chron. 17:3, 4. "And the Lord was with Jehoshaphat because he walked in the first ways of his father David, and sought not unto the Baalim. But sought the Lord God of his father and walked in His commandments and not after the doings of Israel."

And so "God established the kingdom in his hand and all Judah brought him presents and he had riches and honor in abundance."

His moral life was clean: he destroyed all the sodomites in the land.

He sent committees of priests and Levites throughout the land to teach the people the true religion of Jehovah. Under their arm they carried the book of the law of his God.

He appointed judges in all the land, and you ought to read the charge he gave them! II Chron. 19:4-11. Here is a sample: "Let the fear of the Lord God be upon you! for you judge not for man but for the Lord, for the Lord is *with you in judgment!*" Here is the criterion: There is no iniquity with God. He is no Respector of persons. He taketh no gifts (bribes).

What a wonderful king!

And the people with him?

Jehoshaphat brought them back to the Lord God of their fathers. All the people came together to seek the Lord. And they brought their wives and little ones with them. Pathetic, but also very beautiful.

* * * *

We are not told how many of these godless came to overthrow Judah and Benjamin, but from the prayer of Jehoshaphat we learn that it was a great company. And the king told Jehovah that they had no might to oppose them.

But the King did the right thing, the only wise thing in such a predicament: he prayed to God, and poured out his heart to Jehovah. Read that prayer, it is beautiful.

You find it in our chapter, the verses 5-12.

Note how God immediately answers. The king had scarcely finished his supplication, and the Spirit came upon Jahaziel, and he addressed God's people with words of encouragement. This is the gist of his message: "Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's!"

And here is the marvel of the war of Jehovah: "Ye shall not need to fight in his battle; set yourselves, *stand ye still*, and see the salvation of the Lord with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them: for the Lord will be with you."

Can anything be more comfortable than this speech?

Stand still!

Fear not!

God is with you!

* * * *

Did Jehoshaphat, Judah and Benjamin believe this speech of the Holy Ghost?

Watch them!

Jehoshaphat leads in worship: he bowed his head with his face to the ground. And Judah and Benjamin "fell before the Lord, worshipping the Lord!"

Now they are ready to meet the enemy.

And as they begin their march, the king stands in the gates of the city and addresses the hosts of God's people: "Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem!" The king will give an echo of the speech of God.

And here it is: "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe His prophets, so shall ye prosper!"

And now, please, note the humility, meekness and wisdom of the king: "he consulted with the people"!

O, I can imagine who those people were: they were no doubt the true spiritual princes of Judah; they were the men who were known for their piety and fear of God.

And here is the result of that consultation: the king appointed singers and praisers. The first would sing unto the Lord, and the second would praise the beauty of holiness. In the original you find that they would praise "the Holy Majesty."

And here is the ever recurring theme of their song and praise: "Praise the Lord; for His mercy endureth forever."

This theme is as true as it is heavenly.

The mercy of the Lord!

It is that virtue of God where He suffers all the agony of His people, and the strong determination to lift them out of all their distresses.

Oh yes, we shall sing of that unto all eternity.

For it is Jesus!

* * * *

And they begin to sing.

What a strange way to fight a war!

How the worldly strategists must laugh at such behaviour.

Do not sing now; but sing when you have the victory!

But that is exactly it: God and His people always have the victory.

Jehoshaphat, Judah and Benjamin knew that, and so they sang.

And then note: "*when they began to sing and to praise*, The Lord set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten." Do you note that "when they began to sing and to praise" God gave them the victory? Here you have an example where faith overcometh the world! They put their faith in practice, and they experienced the salvation of the Lord.

About those ambushments of the Lord?

I do not know. Some of the best Hebrew scholars say of these *Mearbim* that they are angels of God, sent by God to overthrow this army. Well, I can well believe it.

First Moab and Ammon turn against Mount Seir, and destroy the descendants of Esau. And then Moab says to Ammon: neither do I like you! And they destroy each other.

But somehow, all this is produced by these mysterious *Mear-bim*, the powers of Jehovah.

* * *

Did you learn your lesson?

Believe the Lord and His prophets!

And His Chief Prophet is Jesus Christ.

Your enemies are legion, the New Testament counterpart of Ammon, Moab and Mt. Seir. But rely on Jesus, believe God and His prophets and you will learn the difficult, but wonderful lesson: Salvation is of the Lord!

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*

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On January 21, 1959, our dear parents,

MR. AND MRS. GERBEN DE JONG, nee Van Maanen

commemorated their 45th wedding anniversary. We are deeply grateful to our covenant God for all the blessings He has bestowed on them and us. Our sincere prayer is that the Lord may continue to bless them in their remaining years.

Their Children,

Mr. and Mrs. Wm. R. Hulstein
Mr. and Mrs. Thomas De Jong
Mr. and Mrs. Albertus De Jong
Mr. and Mrs. Arnold De Jong
14 grandchildren

Hull, Iowa.

IN MEMORIAM

The Consistory of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, hereby expresses its sincere sympathy to a fellow member, Elder John Lanning, in the loss of his father-in-law,

MR. WILLIAM KOOIENGA

May our God, who is gracious, comfort those who mourn.

Rev. H. Hanko, President
J. Kalsbeek, Clerk

IN MEMORIAM

The Ladies' Aid Society, Ruth, of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church, extends its sincere sympathy to Mrs. John Lanning, in the loss of her Father, and to Mrs. Dick Kooienga in the loss of her Father-in-law

MR. WILLIAM KOOIENGA

May our Covenant God comfort the bereaved in their sorrow.

Rev. H. Hanko, President
Mrs. J. G. Moelker, Secretary

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EDITORIALS

The Three Points

We said in our last editorial on the subject of "The Three Points" that the Synod of 1924, in its anxiety to prove the theory of so-called common grace from Scripture and the Confessions, lapsed into the error general grace in the Arminian sense of the word. We also stated what is the Biblical and Reformed position on this point. The Reformed position is, of course expressed in the Confessions of the Reformed Churches. To these we must now refer.

First of all, then, I refer to some passages from the Heidelberg Catechism. In Question 20 we read: "Are all men, then, as they perished in Adam, saved by Christ?" And the answer is as follows: "No; only those who are ingrafted into him, and receive all his benefits, by a true faith." This is the truth of sovereign grace in regard to salvation. No Arminian would ever express himself thus. Notice, first, that this is an answer to the question whether or not all men are saved. Notice, secondly, that the answer is not simply "no; only those that believe in Christ," which would in itself be true, but: "only those that are ingrafted into him." This means that God is the subject of this ingrafting into Christ and that the one so ingrafted into Christ is wholly passive. Who, then, are thus ingrafted into Christ? Those that are determined by God unto this purpose. Who are they? The elect. And notice, thirdly, that this is also indicated by the word "receive." Those that are ingrafted into Christ do not merely "accept" but "receive all his benefits by a true faith." This is Reformed.

Is then, God gracious, in the preaching of the gospel also to those whom "the Holy Ghost by the gospel" does not ingraft into Christ? Is, in other words, the preaching of the gospel "common grace"? Such is the doctrine of the "First Point." And this is not Reformed but principally Arminian.

If you will carefully read what is taught of Christ and all his benefits in questions 21-52, you will find the same language throughout. No one can preach from the Catechism and, at the same time, preach the general grace of the "First Point," without corrupting it.

I will make one more quotation from the Catechism, this time from the question and answer concerning the Church: "Question 54. What believest thou concerning the 'holy catholic church' of Christ? Answer. That the Son of God from the beginning to the end of the world, gathers, defends, and preserves to himself by his Spirit and word, out of the whole human race, a church chosen to everlasting life, agreeing in true faith; and that I am and forever shall remain a living member thereof." It is not our purpose, of course, even to give a brief explanation of this question and answer. Our sole purpose is to show that the general grace of the "First Point" is surely in flat contradiction to this part of the Catechism, and that the Reformed truth is as I have presented it

in my former editorial. Notice, first, that it is the Son of God that gathers His Church. Notice, secondly, that He does so by His Spirit and word: it is all of God, there is nothing of man in it. Notice, that the Church is chosen to everlasting life and that the elect are gathered out of the whole human race. Question: what grace of God is there for those that are not so gathered even though they hear the preaching of the gospel? The answer of the Arminian is: God is gracious to all that hear the gospel for, as far as He is concerned He will save them all. This is also the answer of the "First Point." The Reformed answer is: "God is gracious only to the elect that are gathered by the Son of God into His Church by His Spirit and Word." There is no grace for the reprobate and emphatically not in the preaching of the gospel.

The same language is found in the Netherland Confession.

I will refer in this connection only to Art. XVI which speaks of eternal election and which reads as follows:

"We believe that all the posterity of Adam being thus fallen into perdition and ruin, by the sin of our first parents, God then did manifest himself such as he is; that is to say, merciful and just: Merciful since he delivers and preserves from this perdition all, whom he in his eternal and unchangeable counsel of mere goodness, hath elected in Christ Jesus our Lord, without any respect to their works: Just, in leaving others in the fall and perdition wherein they have involved themselves."

My purpose is to call your attention particularly to the last sentence of this article where it is said that God reveals his justice in the fact that He leaves others in their perdition. We understand, of course, that in this article the infralapsarian position is presented, but this does not make any difference with regard to the subject about which we are writing at present: the "First Point." The doctrine of the First Point is that God is gracious in the preaching of the gospel also to the reprobate, to those whom God determined to leave in their fall and perdition. But this is not in harmony with this article of our Confession: God is merciful to the elect, just to the reprobate. Hence, even in the preaching of the gospel He is not merciful to the latter but only just. How, then, can the "First Point" appeal to the preaching of the gospel as a proof for so-called common or general grace?

It is a well-known fact that the truth of predestination and of sovereign grace has always met with opposition in the churches and that, too, in the Reformed Churches. Again and again the church was called upon to defend this fundamental truth over against all kinds of heresies. In the latter part of the sixteenth century and the first part of the seventeenth this doctrine was attacked by the well-known James Arminius. He died before this controversy was settled, namely in 1609. But his followers and adherents of which there were many in the old country at the time continued it and in 1610 formulated five articles in which they set forth their views. The articles are known as the "Remonstrantie"

or the Five Arminian Articles. They so formulated that many in the Reformed Churches of Holland could, at first, detect nothing wrong with them. Yet, they deny the truth of predestination.

Briefly expressed they teach:

1. Predestination on the basis of foreseen faith and perseverance, although they emphasize that is by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

2. Universal atonement: Christ died for all men, though only the believer receives the benefits of that death.

3. Saving grace is only the gift of God. This third article, taken all by itself, appears to be quite Reformed, but in the context of the rest of the articles it cannot possibly be. For the question arises whether this grace is sovereign and irresistible.

4. Grace is all of God and even the regenerate man can do nothing apart from this grace. But as concerns the mode of the operation of this grace, the article states that it is not irresistible. Virtually, this is also the doctrine of the "First Point" in as far as it maintains that the preaching of the gospel is grace for all that hear, which grace is, of course, resistible.

5. The perseverance of the saints through the grace of the Holy Spirit, provided the believers themselves are ready for the conflict and desire the help of Christ. But whether they can never fall away is a question which the Remonstrants cannot answer in the affirmative. Hence, they really deny the perseverance of the saints.

These articles of the Remonstrants were elaborately treated in the Canons of Dordrecht from which also the Synod of 1924 quoted in support of the "First Point."

But about this next time, D.V.

H.H.

Evolution, Long Periods, or Days

It stands to reason that, when I combat the idea of long periods instead of six days of twenty-four hours of the creation week, that I do so only on the basis of Scripture. No argument derived from science that apparently would contradict the clear testimony of the Word of God in this respect can have any weight with me and should have no weight with anyone that believes that the Bible is the infallible Word of God and is verbally inspired.

This also implies that, within the Reformed Churches, I have no argument with those that deny the infallibility of Holy Writ. For the Reformed Churches stand on the basis of the Three Forms of Unity. And these maintain, without a doubt, that the Scriptures are infallible. Even about this we cannot argue, as is now being done in the Christian Reformed Church. This whole argument is, within the limits of the Reformed Churches, fundamentally dishonest. One that disagrees with the infallibility of the Bible, ought either to file a gravamen or objection against the Confessions or leave the Church, but he should not write publicly against the plain

language of the Confessions as does M. Hoogland in *Stromata*. Nor should the Church permit him to write thus and oppose his writing by counter arguments in the papers but demand of him that he retract or be censured. For that the Confessions teach very plainly that Scripture is infallible in spite of what Hoogland alleges ought to be sufficiently evident from just one quotation from the Netherland Confession, Art. VII, which speaks of "The sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures, to be the only rule of faith." The article reads as follows:

"We believe that those Holy Scriptures fully contain the will of God, and that whatsoever man ought to believe, unto salvation, is sufficiently taught therein. For, since the whole manner of worship, which God requires of us is written in them at large, it is unlawful for any one, though an apostle, to teach otherwise than we are now taught in the Holy Scriptures: nay, though it were an angel from heaven as the apostle Paul saith. For since it is forbidden to add unto or take away anything from the Word of God, it doth thereby evidently appear, that the doctrine thereof is most perfect and complete in all respects. Neither do we consider of equal value any writing of men, however holy these men may have been, with those divine Scriptures, nor ought we to consider custom, nor the great multitude, or antiquity, or succession of times and persons, or councils, decrees or statutes, as of equal value with the truth of God, for the truth is above all; for all men are of themselves liars, and more vain than vanity itself. Therefore, we reject with all our hearts, whatsoever doth not agree with this *infallible* (I underscore) rule, which the apostles have taught us, saying, Try the spirits whether they are of God. Likewise, if there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house."

I could quote much more. But let this be sufficient.

You will understand, however, why I refuse to argue, as far as the days of the creation week are concerned, in the Reformed Churches, with anyone that denies the infallibility of Scripture. A fallible Scripture implies that there are errors in the Bible and when once this is admitted, who will determine what is truth and what is error? Ultimately, only the subjective opinion of the interpreter. Then the account of creation in Gen. 1 may be nothing but a beautiful myth and you can make of the creation-days, limited by evening and morning, billions of years.

In this connection, I also wish to refer to an item of trouble that has arisen in the Reformed Church in America, particularly in Classis Passaic.

The history of this case is briefly as follows.

A candidate for the ministry was examined by Classis Passaic in May-June, 1958. At the time this candidate was refused a Certificate of Licensure on the ground that he denied the historicity of the early chapters of Genesis, particularly the real existence of Adam. It was decided to give the candidate a second opportunity for examination. For this purpose Classis Passaic met on Sept. 16, 1958. And

now I quote from a pamphlet issued by the Consistory of the Sixth Reformed Church of Paterson, N.J.:

"A motion then prevailed to re-examine the candidate as stated in the call for the meeting, and the candidate indicated his willingness to be re-examined. This examination revealed that the candidate not only denied the historicity of Adam, as expressed in his first examination, but he also denied that Abraham was a flesh and blood individual. John 8:52-59 was read to him with the comment that the Jews thought Abraham historical and, more significantly, our Lord spoke of Abraham as historical. But this was not conclusive for the candidate. The connection between Adam and the doctrine of imputation, and between Abraham and the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace were mentioned, but these important implications did not seem to impress him either. It was then proposed that the candidate agree to consult with several brethren of the Classis for a period of about six months so that he might be instructed in the Biblical and Reformed faith on these matters. This he declined, saying that his Seminary training was adequate, that the case should be decided by General Synod, and that he was willing to be the symbol of the position which he had been taught at Seminary and which Classis refused to honor"

The case is not finished. It will be decided by a General Synod.

Do you not see the connection between this and what we have written before?

First it is taught, regardless of Scripture and on the basis of false so-called science, that the days of creation are long periods of billions of years.

Secondly, the infallibility of Gen. 1 and, of course, the infallibility of Scripture is denied.

Thirdly, the historicity of Adam is denied as well as related doctrines. And also the historical reality of Abraham and other historic persons is denied.

Thus, finally, we lose the whole of the Bible and have nothing left.

Let us beware, lest this corruption also invades our churches!

More about this next time, D.V.

H.H.

AS TO BOOKS

From J. H. Kok, Kampen, the Netherlands, I received a series of pocketbook editions of books that have been published before. On each of these I will make a few remarks. The price of each is f 1.50.

Herleefd Verleden (The Past Lived Over) by prof. Dr. A. Sizoo. This I read some time ago and I heartily recommend it to the reader that is able to read Dutch.

Institutie, Joh. Calvijn. This is an abbreviated edition of the well-known Institutes of Calvin. This needs no recommendation except the remark that the abbreviation by Dr. B. Wielenga is very well executed.

De Humor van de Bijbel, by Okke Jager. Although this book is very popular, witness the fact that this is the eighth edition, yet I personally have, to say the least, a mixed opinion of the book. I read it before and intentionally read it again and received the same impression. The author is an able and interesting writer. There are also good elements in the book. But unless he has a different idea of humor than I have, I find far less humor in the Bible than he does. For instance, his description of the wedding feast in the first chapter may be very humorous, but it is also very unreal and borders on the profane. But read the book for yourselves if you can read Dutch.

Het Raadsel van ons Leven (The Riddle of our Life) by Dr. J. H. Bavinck. This book has been translated so that you can have your preference of reading it in Dutch or English. Dr. Bavinck describes man as he has fallen into sin and death and points to Christ as the only solution of the riddle of life. The language is clear and simple. The English edition is published by Wm. B. Eerdmans.

De Apocrievie Boeken (The Apocryphal Books) 2 vols. It is interesting to read these books if only to ascertain that they are, indeed, quite different from the Canonical Books of Scripture. H.H.

Christelijke Encyclopedie (Christian Encyclopedia) published by J. H. Kok, Kampen, the Netherlands. Price per volume f 29.50.

The third volume of this work which I just received covers the material that is alphabetically arranged under the letters F-I. The first two volumes I received some time ago. The work is composed under the redaction of Prof. Dr. F. W. Grosheide and Prof. Dr. G. P. Van Itterzon though, of course, with many co-workers. The work contains a wealth of material and can easily be consulted by the general reader and not only by students and ministers. I read several articles in it and I find them scholarly and yet clearly written. The work also contains a wealth of illustrations and pictures. I most heartily recommend this work.

H.H.

IN MEMORIAM

The Ladies' Society of the Southwest Prot. Ref. Church herewith expresses its sympathy to three of its members who have suffered the loss of dear ones: Mrs. A. Talsma, in the death of her sister; and Mrs. H. Kuiper, Sr., and daughter Elsie in the death of a brother and uncle respectively.

May the Lord comfort the bereaved in their sorrow.

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

OUR DOCTRINE

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

PART TWO

CHAPTER VI

An Interlude

Revelation 10:1-7

In conclusion, therefore, we may say that the appearance of this angel reveals to us the Christ, reveals Him to us as the King-Judge, reveals to us that judgment is to come upon the world speedily, but reveals also at the same time that through these judgments the kingdom of our God shall be permanently established and perfected in all creation.

With this interpretation of the description of the angel is also in harmony the act He performs. We read of this mighty angel that He set His right foot upon the sea and His left foot upon the earth. We must not belittle the interpretation of this passage by saying, as some of the historical interpreters have it, that the earth is the Roman Empire and that the sea is the peoples of that time. For there is nothing that indicates anything of the kind in the words of our text. No, but the earth and the sea is here to be taken as symbolic of all the world and of all that it contains. It indicates the sea and all its creatures and powers, as well as the dry land and all its inhabitants and wealth. It is symbolic of the kingdom, as we have pictured it to you more than once, as God originally created it, the kingdom of the world, over which He placed man as His viceroy. That kingdom of the world, the earth and the sea and all their fulness, was surrendered into the power of the devil through the sin of man. But upon that kingdom the Lord, this mighty angel, now sets His feet as pillars of fire. This indicates, first of all, that this King has all things subjected under Him. The placing of one's feet upon anything is symbolic of subjection and possession. In Joshua 10:24 we read that Joshua calls the chiefs of his army together and bids them place their feet upon the necks of the five kings that have tried to escape in the cave, but which cave became their prison. And then we read that Joshua pledges that Jehovah shall thus do unto all their enemies, against whom they are fighting to conquer the land. In other words, Jehovah shall subdue their enemies and put them in complete subjection. Still more clearly, we have the direct statement in Ps. 110:1: "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." Again, the idea of absolute subjection is expressed here. Thus also we read in I Cor. 15:25: "For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet." And in Eph. 1:22 we read: "And he put all things in subjection under his feet." When this mighty angel, therefore, places his feet

upon the earth and upon the sea, upon all the world, he thereby expresses plainly that, in the first place, He is their Lord and possessor. To Him belongs the heaven and the earth, also in this present dispensation. He is their rightful Sovereign. But still more, He also expresses symbolically that all the world is actually subject unto Him. It may not seem so. It may seem as if the power of sin is lord and possessor in actual fact. The truth, nevertheless, is different. Christ has His feet upon the earth and upon the sea, and He has all things under His absolute control. With majestic calm He may descend out of heaven; and without any fear that He shall be opposed, He may indeed place His feet upon all things. For all things are subject unto Him even now.

But although this is true, fact is also that His dominion is still disputed and that the prince of this world still rises in rebellion against Him. And so it shall actually appear more and more. As the judgments of Christ shall come over this world, it shall appear more and more plainly as if the power of evil is actually reigning and ruling supreme. But when that fifth trumpet shall sound and the special army of Satan out of the abyss shall be let loose and men shall follow their sinful inclinations and ambitions to the full, it shall seem as if the power of sin actually reigns and as if hell has free play on the stage of human history. When that sixth trumpet shall blow and the four angels at the river Euphrates shall instigate the nations of Gog and Magog and thus cause a universal war, it shall again appear as if the devil does as he pleases and as if hell reigns sovereignly over all the world, especially since all the while men do not repent of their wickedness but continue to defy the blood of atonement. And yet this shall not actually be the case. And therefore we must notice, in the second place, that the Lord holds His feet of fire upon the wicked world, thereby indicating that not only does He possess and control all things, but that through it all He is also executing His judgments upon the world of rebellion against Him.

But He does more. The Lord does not come only to perform a symbolic act and thereby to assure His people that He is in control and that presently He shall come for judgment upon the wicked world. But He also gives a most solemn assurance. He makes an oath. Lifting His right hand to heaven, — for in the left hand He held the book, — He swears by the name of God, in order thereby to add to the certainty and the truth of the statement which He makes. He calls God "him that liveth for ever, who created the heavens, and the things that are therein, and the earth, and the things that are therein, and the sea, and the things that are therein." In the first place, therefore, He swears by the Eternal One, thereby assuring His people that as long as the name of God endures, — and this is, of course, for ever, — the truth of His statement shall also stand and shall certainly be fulfilled. In the second place, however, He also swears by the Creator of all, Who is at the same time the sovereign possessor of all things unto all eternity. He, the Almighty

Sovereign of the heavens and of the earth, stands for the truth and the certainty of this statement. And proper this oath certainly is. For the contents of this statement are closely related to its form. The main idea of it is that the mystery of God shall be realized. The mystery of God in this case is nothing less than the ultimate outcome of the entire plan of God as it was contained in the book with its seven seals. At this stage six seals had already been broken, and six trumpets are already blown. But the mystery of God has not yet been fulfilled. It still was waiting. Of that mystery His servants the prophets had already spoken: for they had repeatedly made mention of the great day of the Lord, of the dominion of the Lord God Almighty, of the new heavens and the new earth. But still the world is as before. Still the wicked world exists. Still the blood of the witnesses of Christ flows as ever. Still the world serves its idols and demons, and commits the most terrible sins. But now the time is near. For the Lord says, "There shall be no more time." This does not mean that presently eternity shall set in, although this is true in itself, but that there shall be no more delay. For this "no more time" must evidently be taken in direct contrast with what follows. There shall be no more time, but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, shall the mystery of God be finished. The meaning is: presently the seventh trumpet shall sound, and there shall be no more delay at that time. The time for delay is drawing to a close. They have been chastized, and they repented not. They have trampled under foot the blood of atonement. The measure of their iniquity is full. There shall be no more delay. And when that seventh trumpet shall sound, then shall the entire plan of God be finished. The world of sin shall have been judged. The enemy of God shall have been destroyed. The kingdom shall have been established in glory. And the people of God shall have entered into their eternal inheritance, beautiful and fair, where they shall glorify their God forevermore.

A moment we must call your attention to the strange event that accompanies this outcry of the Lion of Judah's tribe. As this mighty angel cries with a voice as of a roaring lion, which makes us think of the voice of many waters and of the Lion that stood as the Lamb that was slain, John hears at the same time the voice of seven thunders. Three things we may notice in regard to these seven thunders. In the first place, we must remember that the thunder in the Word of God, and especially also in the book of Revelation, is indicative of judgment, of the judgment of God. In Ps. 18:13, in the midst of that wonderful description of Jehovah's coming against the enemies of His servant David to destroy them, we read: "Jehovah also thundered in the heavens, and the Most High uttered His voice." As you will recall in connection with the prayers of the saints that are offered upon the altar of gold before the throne, we read that the answer to these prayers came in the form of thunders and voices and an earthquake. Whether John refers to these same thunders, so that we must think here of the specific

judgments that shall come in answer to the prayers of the saints, or whether he has in mind other seven thunders, we know not. Certain it is that he speaks of a definite, well-known number of thunders. For he does not say "seven thunders" but uses the definite article, "*The* seven thunders uttered their voices." They are therefore symbols of judgments upon the wicked world. And as such they well fit in with this entire passage. The mighty angel, the Lord Jesus Christ, in this portion sets His feet as pillars of fire upon the entire dominion to express that He is about to subdue and destroy all His enemies. And at the same time He swears that there shall be no more delay, but that presently the mystery of God shall be fulfilled. And therefore, even as the entire scene speaks of a speedy judgment, so also these thunders are symbols of the same thing. In the second place, we may notice their number, which also is in harmony with this scene, as well as with the form of the entire book. In harmony with this portion it is, for it tells us of a finished mystery of God; and that is exactly indicated by the number *seven*. Seven is the number of the completed kingdom, as we have had occasion to remark before. And therefore the inference is perfectly legitimate, that these seven thunders are the symbols of judgments that must come for the completion and for the final perfection of the kingdom of God. And in harmony with the entire book this number *seven* is, for it is based on this number throughout. There are seven churches, seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven vials. And when all of these seven are realized, the kingdom has come. In the third place, we may also notice that these thunders speak, that they utter their voices. And they speak in plain human language, — so plain that John is immediately ready to write down what they speak. And the inference is again that they revealed in plain and direct language just what judgments would come upon the world till the completion of the kingdom.

Many are the conjectures as to the contents of the speech of these seven thunders. And the question has often been asked, and answered in many different ways: what did these thunders say, and what did they reveal of the mystery of God? There are those that assure us that here the devil appeared as an angel of light and that he imitated the Lord, that he tried to deceive John and have him write down as belonging to the mystery of the kingdom what was nothing but a lie of Satan. And hence, John, when he is about to write down what they said, receives the command to seal up their revelation and to write them not. There are others who assure us that the seven thunders contained the oracles of all the prophets that had spoken of the coming of the kingdom. Still others have it that they revealed the blessed mystery of the kingdom in its completion and spoke of the glory of the new world. Others have it that they revealed merely the sad contents of the little book without the sweet element which John tasted when he swallowed it. There are even interpreters that have been bold enough to find in them the symbols of the seven crusades for the Holy Land. All

these, and other conjectures, have been made. But all of them, and as many as there still may be made in the future, are absolutely wrong, for the simple reason that Scripture does not tell us anything about the contents of the speech of these thunders. It tells us that they were thunders, and therefore symbols of judgment. It tells us too that there were seven thunders, and therefore symbols of the judgment that must come for the completion of the kingdom. It tells us that they spoke in plain human language, so that John could just write down what was dictated to him. But for the rest, it is simply presumptuous to ask what exactly they spoke, for the simple reason that the command came to John not to write, but to seal up what he heard. And therefore the only answer possible is that it was not the Lord's will that the voices of these seven thunders should be revealed.

But then we come to another question: has then this portion no significance at all? If the contents of these seven thunders might not be revealed, why then did they speak at all, and why is it revealed to us that they did speak? Why did not John simply proceed with that which we may know, instead of first telling us that something was revealed to him which must remain sealed to us forever? And then I find the answer in this, that the seven thunders spoke directly and in plain language of the judgments to come, perhaps so plainly that we could all follow them in the history of the world and know exactly what was happening and how far we had proceeded on the way of that history, so that not only the church, enlightened by the Spirit, but even the world, without faith, could feel that these things were clearly being realized. But that is not the purpose of the book of Revelation. In this book the history of the world is not outlined before us, so that we can plainly recognize period after period that God's program is being realized. But according to the first chapter, the things revealed are "signified." That means that they come to us in symbolic garb. And because of this symbolic garb it is possible that the church, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, can recognize the coming Christ, while the world, that tramples under foot the blood of Christ, is blind for this truth. Just as Jesus spoke in parables with the avowed purpose that His people might understand but that the blind and deaf might not see nor hear and understand, so it is also in the book of Revelation. The mystery of God must surely be revealed, but only in such a way that the church may receive the proper comfort at the proper time, while its contents remain hidden for the world of sin. Hence, as we shall see next time, it is not in this form that John may receive the revelation of the mystery of God, but in a far different form. The contents of the seven thunders, therefore, as such must forever remain hidden. And he that would understand the mystery of God must labor with its revelation under the guiding influence of the Holy Spirit.

And now the final question: what is the purpose of this part of the interlude? In general, we may say that it aims at the peace and the comfort of the people of God in times of

persecution and tribulation. So it was with the episode in chapter seven. There we were told how, in the midst of the severest trials and tribulations, the people of Christ are sealed by the Spirit, so that they need not be afraid, while the glory that was pictured there before their eyes might incite them to be faithful even unto the end. So also here the passage is rich in comfort for the people of Christ Jesus,—a comfort which they surely need. Just imagine the condition. Already terrible things have been revealed. In the days of the fifth trumpet, when that infernal army of locusts shall be liberated to seduce men, there shall be an increase in sin and iniquity, and a wave of transgression shall sweep the sinful world that shall end in gloomiest pessimism. Do not think that this wave of iniquity shall touch only the avowedly wicked world. It shall sweep over the established church, and many in the church shall follow in the way of the world. That this is true you may behold in our own day. Thus also in the days of the sixth trumpet, when the four angels that are bound at the river Euphrates are let loose, there shall follow terrible days. All the world shall be at war and in misery, and it shall seem as if the coming of the kingdom were more remote than ever. It shall appear as if the forces of hell are reigning supreme. Iniquity as never before, the worship of devils and idolatry, murders, and thefts, and sorceries, and fornication shall abound. And the world shall not repent. They shall be days of extreme tribulation, days in which the faithful must stand strong and firm, in which many even out of the church shall fall away into the world.

And what do you imagine shall be the spiritual condition of the people of God in those days? Of course, they shall undoubtedly receive special strength and grace, for otherwise they would never be able to stand. Yet even so, I think that in those days the condition of the people of God shall often be that of gloom and doubt. Does it after all not seem, so they will think, that the cause of Christ in this world is a lost cause when iniquity abounds, judgment is not followed by repentance, and even many of the church shall fall away? It also shall be often a condition of fear and anxiety and small faith. Also they fear tribulation. Also against their nature it is to suffer and to be subjected to reproach and shame. Yet these shall come in those days, and are coming now more and more. And the result will be that they will sometimes lose sight of their King and His revelation, and experience moments of fear and doubt and anxiety. But it shall also be a condition of longing for the completion of all things and for the final coming of the Lord. When faith is strong and fears are dispelled, this faith shall in those days reveal itself especially as hope and longing for the final coming of the kingdom and the King in His glory. And the prayer of the Bride shall become more and more urgent in the midst of judgment and tribulation, "Come, Lord Jesus, yea, come quickly."

H.H.

A CLOUD OF WITNESSES

That Election Might Stand

"But when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;)

It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." Romans 9: 10-13

The apostle Peter wrote in his first epistle (2:8), "And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed." This is true of all the Scriptures; they are a stone of stumbling; they offend. It seems to be especially true of the text that heads this article. The text specifically says that the revelation which was given to Rebecca before the birth of her twin sons was given precisely for the reason that the purpose of God in election may stand, that is, that it may be revealed and known as truth. Yet, volumes have been written to show that it is not so, that election is not true, that the revelation of God to Rebekah means something else.

One such attempt to change the meaning of this text was heard on The Back to the Bible broadcast, a religious program heard daily in Grand Rapids. On that particular broadcast a question was asked as to the meaning of Romans 9:13, "As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." The answer was given that this text does not teach that God actually hated Esau, but only that he preferred to use Jacob for a particular service. To substantiate this interpretation of the word "hated" quotation was made of Luke 14:26, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Regardless of the proper interpretation of Luke 14:26 (it is hardly admissible to change the meaning of the word "hate" to "love less" or "not to prefer") this interpretation of Romans 9:13 can not be upheld. What it neglects or ignores is Malachi 1:2-4. That reads, "I have loved you, saith the Lord, Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord: Yet I loved Jacob, And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness. Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the Lord of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them The border of wickedness, and, The people against whom the Lord hath indignation for ever." There can be no doubt but that the word "hated" here must be taken with all of its full and severe implications.

The difficulty with which Arminianism has wrestled with this passage from its very beginning is rather clearly exempli-

fied by a quotation from *The Writings of Arminius*, Vol. III, pp. 535, 536, "Here we must repeat what was said before, as a general remark, that Esau and Jacob are to be considered, not in themselves, but as types, and so that which is attributed to them, is to be accommodated to the antitypes, or rather to the things signified. Hence, also, the antitypes are to be considered, before a conclusion, similar to the former, can be deduced from them, to the refutation of the sentiment of the Jews and to the confirmation of that of the apostle. But what those antitypes are, may be gathered from the end or design which the apostle has added, in these words: 'that the purpose of God, according to election, might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth.' That is, God, in those words, 'the elder shall serve the younger,' addressed to Rebecca, 'the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil,' designed to indicate nothing else than that He had formed, in His own mind, from eternity, a purpose to communicate righteousness and salvation, not one that would embrace all the posterity of Abraham universally, but which should be according to election, by which He would distinguish between these and those, not considered simply in their own nature, as pure or corrupt, but in respect to the condition, by which righteousness and salvation were to be applied, as the apostle shows in the following words — that this purpose according to election, might stand not of works, but of him who calleth, in which words is contained a description of the antitype, which had before been given in the phrases 'children of the flesh' and 'children of the promise.' Here it is more clear, for the children of the flesh and those of the promise are, each, by their own peculiarity, defined by the apostle, in this passage, since the former are 'of works,' the latter of faith, by which obedience is rendered unto God, who 'calleth.' Therefore, the apostle says that the purpose of God, which is according to election, has reference to those who have faith in God who calleth, and who trust in Christ, not to those who seek salvation by the works of the law."

At first glance this might seem to constitute a profound and learned statement. When, however, with very careful study, one manages to arrive at the actual meaning of Arminius, it proves to be somewhat shocking. Shaving away all the confusing and irrelevant phraseology, we find him to claim that this text is "designed to indicate nothing else than that He had formed, in His own mind, from eternity, a purpose to communicate righteousness and salvation . . . in respect to the condition, by which righteousness and salvation were to be applied . . . that the purpose of God, which is according to election, has reference to those who have faith in God who calleth, and who trust in Christ, not to those who seek salvation by the works of the law." James Arminius, the father of Arminianism, actually had the boldness to try to wrestle from the prophecy made to Rebekah, before her children were born and had done either good or evil, the teaching that God elects on the basis of good and evil. His attempt was to turn this text into its exact opposite.

Not all of the followers of Arminius, however, have been

able to approach this text with such audacity. Rather they have devised another explanation of this text by which they attempt to prove that it is completely unrelated to the doctrine of election. This they have done by appealing to the original statement of God to Rebekah as found in Genesis 25:23, "And the Lord said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels: and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger." The claim is that this prophecy of God had reference only to the two nations and not to Esau and Jacob personally. This is perhaps the most generally accepted interpretation of the text, at least among those who will not receive the doctrine of absolute predestination.

This view is propounded by Richard Watson, an outstanding Arminian theologian of the early nineteenth century, in his *Theological Institutes*, "1. The argument of the apostle, of which this instance is in continuence requires us to understand that he is still speaking of 'the seed' intended in the promise, which did not comprise all the descendants either of Abraham, or Isaac, or Jacob, for he brings instances of exclusion from each: but such as God elected to be his visible Church: he is not therefore speaking of the personal election or rejection of Isaac, or Ishmael, or Jacob, or Esau; but of their descendants in certain lines, as elected to be the acknowledged Church of God. 2. This is proved, also, from those passages of Moses, which furnish the facts on which the apostle reasons, and which he quotes briefly as being well known to the Jews, as it is written, 'The elder shall serve the younger.' Now this is written, 25:23, . . . So far, indeed, was this prophecy from being intended of Esau personally, that he himself did never serve his brother Jacob, although he wantonly surrendered to him his birthright . . . 3. If the apostle, in this instance of Jacob and Esau, speaks of the rejection or reprobation of *individuals*, he says nothing at all to his purpose, because he is discoursing of the rejection of the Jews, as A NATION, from being any longer the visible and acknowledged Church of God in the world; so that instances of individual reprobation would have been impertinent to his purpose." (Vol. II, pp. 313, 314).

To this Thomas N. Ralston, a disciple of Watson's, added yet another thought in his treatment of Romans 9 in his book *Elements of Divinity*. He wrote, "Now, even if it could be made to appear (which we have just seen to be contrary to Scripture) that Jacob and Esau are here personally referred to, Calvinism can derive no support, unless it be also shown that this election and reprobation, or this *loving of Jacob and hating of Esau*, referred to their eternal destiny. That it had no reference whatever to their eternal destiny, either as individuals or nations, but that it related entirely to temporal blessings, we might almost leave to the testimony of the most intelligent Calvinistic (?—B.W.) commentators themselves. The decision of Professor Stuart on this point we have already seen. His words are, 'The

whole refers to the bestowment of temporal blessings, and the withholding of them.'"

To these attempts to remove the truth of election from this text, we can very easily reply.

In the first place, even if it were true that Paul had reference to nations instead of individuals, personal election and reprobation would be immediately implied. Jacob and Esau were members of the nations that came forth from them; and, thus, the election and reprobation of their nations generally would also include them personally.

Secondly, Paul does not have reference to temporal blessings. In verse 4 he specifically states that he is speaking of adoption, glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises. These are deeply spiritual concepts, and by no means temporal.

Finally and basically the reference of Paul to Esau and Jacob is individual and personal. This is quite evident from the quotations which Paul makes from Genesis and from Malachi. In the original prophecy to Rebekah there was mention made of nations and peoples; but Paul quotes only that portion of the revelation which applied to Jacob and Esau personally, "the elder shall serve the younger." Paul is concerned in this passage only with individuals; if he had been concerned with nations his quotation would have been different. The same is true of the quotation from Malachi, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." There too there is reference made to nations; but Paul's quotation includes only that portion which applies personally.

This is true because Paul in Romans 9 is applying himself to the problem of the distinction, not between two nations, but between individuals within one nation. He is concerned with the fact that "they are not all Israel, which are of Israel" (vs. 6), with the fact that "they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for seed," (vs. 8). Therefore he uses the example of Jacob and Esau because they were both according to the flesh of the seed of Abraham, twins, born at the same time of the same parents. There he asks what caused the distinction between them, that the one should be a true spiritual son of Abraham while the other was not. (The fact that Esau was the father of a nation which was antithetically opposed to the nation of Israel was of course true but entirely irrelevant to Paul's argument.) The answer to this problem, the reason for the distinction between those two individual men, Paul found to be ultimately only in the good-pleasure of God "that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth."

It is not surprising that the Arminian should put forth so much effort to try to find some other meaning for this text. But the ultimate reason for that also is that they "stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed."

B.W.

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of Matthew 24 and 25

XII.

(Matthew 25:14-30)

It is the ever repeated warning of the Lord Jesus that as his church we shall be watchful unto prayer unto his coming. And His reassuring word is ever and anon: behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me! Thus we read in the last chapter of the book of Revelation: "He that testifieth these things saith, Yea: I come quickly"! and all who love the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ respond from the depths of their hearts: "Amen, come, Lord Jesus"!

To excite in us that prayerful disposition of heart and mind through the Holy Spirit the Lord Jesus utters his prophetic-eschatological address as recorded in Matthew 24 and 25. We have taken note of the instruction of the Lord Jesus in eleven essays thus far. We shall need to add just a few more, and we trust that there are some of the readers who have followed and are following this series of essays too.

It is a particular and important point in this discourse of Jesus that the exact point, the time when Jesus shall return upon the clouds of heaven is known to no one, not even to the angels in heaven! We are even taught that the Son does not know that day and hour, but the Father only! Hence, there is the element of surprise, and the spiritual-psychological necessity of constantly being watchful and ready.

The return of Christ, His Parousia, will be unexpected to all. However, there is a twofold sense in which his return will be unexpected. In the first place, there are those, who are such that they are in a completed state of being lovers of the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ. For them there is laid away in that day the crown of life, II Tim. 4:8. They are those, who give heed to the Word of God, which "instructs us to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world, *looking for the blessed hope* and appearing of the glory of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a people for his own possession, zealous in good works," Titus 2:12-14. For these the return of Christ will indeed be at a moment when they think not. But it will be the most joyful surprise under heaven! For everyone that hath this hope of seeing God in Christ in that day, *purifieth* (present indicative) himself as he is pure. On the other hand, to all those who hate this appearance, because they are haters of God and of His Christ, this shall be the great day of the Lord, a day of wrath and of anguish of spirit.

In view of this tremendous serious and glorious reality in the saints and the awful reality for the wicked Jesus utters the Parable of the Talents. We underscore once more that this is a prophetic utterance! It is not simply a foretelling of future things, but it is the prophetic word which is most sure, unto which we do well to give heed as unto a light shining in a dark place until the day dawn and the day-star arise in our hearts. It is full of admonition and nurture of the Lord. While we are instructed we are also exhorted and admonished. We are even admonished by what will take place to the wicked, the evil and sloughful (irksome) servant in this parable. These things are also written for *our* admonition upon whom the ends of the ages are come, even by that which we are foretold concerning what will happen at the very end of the ages to those who all around us walk in wickedness!

We generally as Protestant Reformed people understand quite well that the "Son of God from the beginning to the end of the world, gathers, defends and preserves to himself by His Spirit and word, out of the whole human race, a church chosen to everlasting life . . ." but that he does this in such a manner that it is ever by "his Spirit and word" is not always so readily understood. In our emphatic emphasis that the Gospel is no offer but a power of God we sometimes forget to explicitly state that this power of God is exercised also through the admonitions of the Gospel; that when we are kept (guarded) in the power of God through faith (I Peter 1:5) the admonitions of the Gospel are an *integral* part of this Gospel which *is* power of God unto salvation! Now we must teach the one without neglecting the other, otherwise we do not merely have a tendency to onesidedness, but do not teach the full counsel of God on this point of the means of grace! Here we are reminded of the warning finger of the fathers of Dort. In Canons III, IV, 17 we read, "The almighty operation of God . . . does not exclude but requires means, by which God of His infinite mercy hath chosen to exert his influence (*deze zijne kracht heeft willen uitoefenen*) . . . so even in this day be it far from either instructors or instructed to presume to tempt God in the church by separating what he of his good pleasure hath most intimately joined together. (*zich zouden vermeten God te verzoeken door het scheiden van dier dingen, die God naar zijn welbehagen heeft gewild dat ze te zamen gevoegd zouden blijven*). Translation in Holland language by Rev. H. Meijering. Compare also Canons V, 14.

We do well to continually heed this warning.

God is not mocked!

What is said by our fathers in Canons V, 15, concerning the inability of the carnal mind also holds in respect to the "manner of conversion" and that in two directions, both to those, who make admonitions presuppose the "can" in all who hear, (Arminians and Pelagians and those who tempt God by neglecting the admonitions of the Gospel, including also the "threatenings"! Compare Ezekiel 3:16-21.

As the chief prophet who has come to reveal the secret counsel of God concerning our redemption he unfolds the counsel of God here concerning the redemption which shall be ours in the Parousia. See I Peter 1:11-13. And the central thrust of the parable of the Talents is evidently given in Matthew 25:13, "Watch therefore, for ye know not the day or the hour." And to excite us unto the watchfulness of hope, to crucify our old nature and to walk in a new and holy life, he compares the Kingdom of heaven in the Parousia like unto a man that went into a far country.

But let us quote the parable itself verbatim: "*For it is as when a man going into another country, called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto the one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his several ability; and he went on his journey. Straightway he that had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made other five talents. In like manner he also that received the two gained other two. But he that received the one went away and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. Now after a long time the lord of those servants cometh and maketh a reckoning with them. And he that receiveth the five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliverest unto me five talents; lo, I have gained other five talents. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy lord. And he also that received the two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliverest unto me two talents: lo, I have gained two other talents. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy lord. He also that had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou didst not sow, and gathering where thou didst not scatter; and I was afraid and I went away and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, thou hast thine own! But his lord answered and said unto him, thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I did not scatter? Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the bankers, and at my coming I should have received back mine own with interest. Take ye away therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him that hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*" Verses 14-30.

In this essay we will make the following remarks yet, and that will be all. The exposition of the various elements in the parable and its teaching we will need to finish in another essay in the next issue of *The Standard Bearer*.

In the first place, we believe it is of importance to state it as being our conviction that we need not spend precious

time and effort in a purely comparative study of the parable before us, the parable of "The Talents" and that of the "Pounds." The latter is recorded in Luke 19:12-27. Such effort and study from the very nature of the endeavor yields very little positive fruit to the correct understanding of Jesus' word of prophecy and of his admonition unto watchfulness of a living hope in His appearance and Parousia! What we are interested in is the message and teaching of Christ to His disciples and to the church of all ages.

In the second place, we would remind ourselves and our readers that we do well to keep in mind that Jesus' Parables are stories, narratives taken from real life. It should not be overlooked that Jesus as the master-teacher and pedagogue, the great Prophet which was to come, took the materials of His "stories" as it suited best to bring out the point at issue. In this case He emphasizes: the *wisdom* and justice of God when he shall take account from his "servants," rewarding each according to his work! That in the case of the "good and faithful servants" this was a matter of a reward of grace is not stated in the parable, but must be supplied from the abundant and clear teaching of Scripture. Here we remember the rule: *theologia parabolica non est argumentiva*, that is, parables do not give doctrinal arguments. They presuppose doctrinal teaching. Thus earlier in this discourse. Here the doctrine is *illustrated* by the parable but not demonstrated or proven! See G. H. Scholde in International Standard Bible Encyclopedia. See also Bishop Trench.

In the light of these two observations we do well to bear in mind the scope and point of view of this parable.

We notice then the four following elements:

In the first place, that this parable refers to the truth, the reality of the Kingdom of heaven, as all of history must needs end in a day of reckoning, the day of judgment. The history of the world is each day a judgment of the world, whether to condemnation or to acquittal and reward. See also Romans 2:1-16.

In the second place, the entire parable is in its warp and woof admonitory in nature. This we have signalled above.

In the third place, the inner motives of the good and faithful servants are laid open, as well as of the evil and slothful servant.

Lastly, that the Lord speaks here of talents, "according to the ability of each" also calls for special attention.

G.L.

Notice for Classis West

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet, the Lord willing, in South Holland, Illinois, on Wednesday, March 18, 1959, at 9 A. M.

The consistories are reminded of the rule that all matters for the classical agenda must be in the hands of the Stated Clerk not later than 30 days before the date of Classis.

REV. H. VELDMAN, *Stated Clerk*

IN HIS FEAR

"... And Keep His Commandments ..."

(5)

Without faith it is impossible to please God, the author of the epistle to the Hebrews tells us. And therefore we may say that unless we fear God, we cannot keep His commandments. Remembering that keeping His commandments is not simply conforming to them in the outward sense but performing an act of love to Him, we will readily see that this second matter, which Solomon says belongs to the whole duty of man, cannot be carried out unless we have that fear of God which is the first part of the whole duty of man. Of that we wrote last time.

At this writing we wish to make a further observation concerning this keeping of God's commandments as an essential part of our whole duty before God. The fear of God will always be accompanied by the keeping of His commandments. You will never find the one or the other alone. Either we fear God and keep His commandments, or we neither fear Him nor keep His commandments. It is impossible that we keep His commandments without His fear in our hearts, we pointed out above in a few statements and last time more in detail. But it is equally true that the fear of the Lord will always have for its fruit the keeping of God's commandments. To have faith and not works is impossible. To fear God and not keep His commandments never happens. Where there is life there is always activity. The new-born babe manifests his life immediately by his crying. And surely the beating of his heart, the activity of his little lungs shows that he has life. So the fear of God will always manifest itself in the keeping of His commandments.

As we already remarked, using the words of James, "faith without works is dead." "Shew me thy faith without works," James says, "and I will shew thee my faith by my works." Pray, tell me, how will you manifest your faith without works? Must I simply take the words you speak and whereby you tell me that you have faith as the proof that you do? Your works can all be works of unbelief? You fear God as the devil does and tremble, but you do not behave at all as though He is God. You still go your own way. You oppose Him as God and His commandments you treat as something that does not apply to you. And then you expect me to believe that you believe that He is God? You tell me that you fear Him as the Lord of heaven and earth and then say that you need not keep the commandments of this Lord of heaven and earth? No, if you cannot show me works of love to God, there is nothing for me to see that can assure me that you have His fear in your heart. Nor is there anything to which you can point yourself for your own assurance and comfort that you are His believing child. Fear God and you will keep His commandments.

These two are always present and belong together, but not as your shadow that always goes with you. It is not a mechanical unity that links these two. It is a living union that resides in the soul of the regenerated child of God. As the fire always generates heat and light, so the fear of God in our hearts always produces works of love to God; and therefore the man who fears God delights in the law of God and desires to keep His commandments with all his heart and soul and mind and strength. By faith we are engrafted into Christ and stand in a living connection with Him. Through that bond of faith the spiritual life which Christ has merited for us flows from Him into us, as the sap flows from the tree trunk into the branch that has been engrafted into it. And that life will cause our hearts to beat with the love of God and move our members ever to keep His commandments.

Therefore "... and keep His commandments ..." may not be left out of that which is the whole duty of man before God. We err as greatly when we deny that man must keep God's commandments as we do when we say that he is not obliged to believe in God. Indeed, there are those who to all practical purposes do ignore and by their ignoring deny that we must live in the fear of God. No, not directly or literally. They would be the first to deny vehemently that this is their stand. Their stand is that we must have practical preaching alone. Always we must be told what we must do. Every sermon must be a moral lesson and hold clearly before our eyes our calling before God. Now, we do not mean to say that all desire for practical preaching is per se sinful. We are aware of the fact that many use the word practical very loosely. Often it simply means that the preaching is hard for them to understand — due not to the preaching as such or the preacher but to their own spiritual background. Coming from a sphere where either other terminology is used or else where the preaching has always been superficial, they find it difficult to follow. Such, of course, exactly need doctrinal preaching. But they need more. They need instruction either through a catechism class or else a society in the congregation, supplemented with personal reading and study to learn this new terminology. We can understand it that those who come from other circles can get lost in a sermon whose terminology they do not understand. But when those in our own circles, who have been taught from infancy the doctrine we know and love, have had explained time and again to them the terminology employed in our circles, clamor for practical preaching, you have another matter. That is clamoring to maintain that we must keep His commandments but that our faith does not need to be fed. Doctrine feeds our faith and is used by God to strengthen it. Practical preaching may serve to point out to us how we may and must keep His commandments. But, surely, we know not what to put into practice, and there is no foundation for practice without doctrine. Unless we know God in all the doctrines He has revealed of Himself in the Scriptures, we cannot possibly know how to serve Him and what His commandments mean. Take a look at the Decalogue itself. What a tremendous

amount of doctrine God Himself includes in it. "I am the Lord Thy God which hath brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." With that doctrinal preface He begins these Ten Commandments. "I the Lord thy God am a jealous God" He adds in the third commandment continuing with the doctrine of His just and severe judgment upon all evildoers. In the fourth commandment He gives the doctrine of His Sabbath and work.

However, we must not go to the other extreme either and clamor for doctrine without application. We must not behave as though the word of God simply states that our whole duty is to know God, fear Him and have faith in His promises. We have a beautiful example of the blending of the doctrine or dogmatic teachings of the Church and the application of this to our lives in the midst of this world in the Heidelberg Catechism. It begins with that very, very practical question, "What is your only comfort in life and in death?" It takes us through the so-called Apostolic Creed and treats the doctrines of God the Father and our creation, God the Son and our redemption, God the Spirit and our sanctification. But it also treats the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer, and it is not at all afraid to ask, as we pointed out before, "What is required . . ." in this and that commandment. It is not afraid to ask, "Why hath Christ *commanded* (italics are ours) us to address God thus: Our Father?" Or even before this, "What hath God commanded us to ask of Him?" Clearly also in this monumental work the underlying principle may be found that to fear God *and keep His commandments* is the whole duty of man.

It cannot be otherwise. John writes in I John 3:9, these amazing yet absolutely true words, "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." Of course, that does not mean that the child of God attains to perfection in this life. This same John writes in I John 1:8, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." And again in verse 10, "If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us." It means that the new principle of life which we receive through regeneration, when we are born of God, as the text states, this life cannot sin. We still have the flesh. The old man of sin is still with us, and we have a constant struggle with him. But this new man, this new life which those born of God receive remains in us everlastingly; and this new man cannot sin because he is born with the life of God. It is that new life that enables us to fear God and believe all His promises. But it is also that same life that causes us to keep His commandments. As John writes in I John 3:23, 24, "And this is His commandment, That we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment. And he that keepeth His commandments dwelleth in Him, and He in him. And hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us." You may note also here that faith or the fear of God and keeping His commandments or walking in love together are

presented as our whole duty before God. The man that is born of God does not do the one or the other. He does both. He does all that is commanded of him. And note that believing is here presented as one of the things which God commands of us. And so, he that is born of God doth not commit sin, for he does both: he believes on the name of God's Son Jesus Christ, and he walks in love, keeping God's commandments.

Such is also the testimony of the Netherlands Confession in article XXIV. There we read, "We believe that this true faith being wrought in man by the hearing of the Word of God, and the operation of the Holy Ghost, doth regenerate and make him a new man, causing him to live a new life, and freeing him from the bondage of sin. Therefore it is so far from being true, that this justifying faith makes men remiss in a pious and holy life, that on the contrary without it they would never do anything out of love to God, but only out of self-love or fear of damnation. Therefore it is impossible that this holy faith can be unfruitful in man: for we do not speak of a vain faith, but of such a faith, which is called in Scripture, a faith that worketh by love, which excites man to the practice of those works, which God has commanded in His Word. Which works, as they proceed from the good root of faith, are good and acceptable in the sight of God forasmuch as they are all sanctified by His grace: howbeit they are of no account towards our justification."

It is plain then that the fear of the Lord will always be accompanied by the keeping of His commandments. They who fear the Lord will have an intense and abiding desire to keep His commandments. Freedom from the condemnation of the law will not move them to lawlessness but to the works of love which the law demands. Such will not ban the reading of the law in their services of worship. Such will not frown every time mention is made of the demands of the law. Such will say with Solomon that to fear God and to keep His commandments is the whole duty of man and that by His grace His redeemed, regenerated people do both.

J.A.H.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On February 15, 1959, the Lord willing, our dear parents,

MR. AND MRS. JACOB MANTEL

expect to commemorate their twenty-fifth anniversary.

We give thanks to our Heavenly Father for sparing them through these many years for us and for each other. Our sincere prayer is that the Lord may continue to bless them in their remaining years.

Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Surma
Miss Mary Ann Mantel
Mr. and Mrs. Arnnie Reid
Jacob Mantel
Miss Lois Ruth Mantel

Redlands, California

Contending For The Faith

The Church and the Sacraments

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

THE SEVEN SACRAMENTS.

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC DOCTRINE OF TRANSUBSTANTIATION.

The doctrine of Transubstantiation as set forth in the decrees of the Council of Trent.

In chapter 1 of the decrees of this council, calling attention to the real presence of our Lord Jesus Christ in the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist, we read: "In the first place, the holy Synod teaches, and openly and simply professes, that, in the august sacrament of the holy Eucharist, after the consecration of the bread and wine, our Lord Jesus Christ, true God and man, is truly, really, and substantially contained under the species of those sensible things. For neither are these things mutually repugnant, — that our Saviour himself always sitteth at the right hand of the Father in heaven, according to the natural mode of existing, and that, nevertheless, he be, in many other places, sacramentally present to us in his own substance, by a manner of existing, which, though we can scarcely express it in words, yet can we, by the understanding illuminated by faith, conceive, and we ought most firmly to believe, to be possible unto God: for thus all our forefathers, as many as were in the true Church of Christ, who have treated of this most holy Sacrament, have most openly professed, that our Redeemer instituted this so admirable a sacrament at the last supper, when, after the blessing of the bread and wine, he testified, in express and clear words, that he gave them his own very body, and his own blood, words which, — recorded by the holy Evangelists, and afterwards repeated by Saint Paul, whereas they carry with them that proper and most manifest meaning in which they were understood by the Fathers, — it is indeed a crime the most unworthy that they should be wrested, by certain contentious and wicked men, to fictitious and imaginary tropes, whereby the verity of the flesh and blood of Christ is denied, contrary to the universal sense of the Church, which, as *the pillar and ground of truth*, has detested, as satanical, these inventions devised by impious men; she recognizing, with a mind ever grateful and unforgetting, the most excellent benefit of Christ."

In chapter III of these decrees, calling attention to the excellency of the most holy Eucharist over the rest of the sacraments, we read: "The most holy Eucharist has indeed this in common with the rest of the sacraments, that it is a symbol of a sacred thing, and is a visible form of an invisible grace; but there is found in the Eucharist this excellent and peculiar thing, that the other sacraments have then first the power of sanctifying when one uses them, whereas in the

Eucharist, before being used, there is the Author himself of sanctity. For the apostles had not as yet received the Eucharist from the hand of the Lord, when nevertheless himself affirmed with truth that to be his own body which he presented (to them). And this faith has ever been in the Church of God, that, immediately after the consecration, the veritable body of our Lord, and his veritable blood, together with his soul and divinity, are under the species of bread and wine; but the body indeed under the species of bread, and the blood under the species of wine, by the force of the words; but the body itself under the species of wine, and the blood under the species of bread, and the soul under both, by the force of that natural connection and concomitancy whereby the parts of Christ our Lord, *who hath now risen from the dead, to die no more* — I Cor. 6:9, are united together; and the divinity, furthermore, on account of the admirable hypostatical union thereof with his body and soul. Wherefore it is most true, that as much is contained under either species as under both; for Christ whole and entire is under the species of bread, and under any part whatsoever of that species; likewise the whole (Christ) is under the species of wine, and under the parts thereof."

Christ is present in this ordinance, not spiritually as taught by the Reformed, nor by the real presence of his body and blood in, with, and under the bread and wine, but by the bread and wine being by the almighty power of God changed into his body and blood. As at the feast in Cana of Galilee, the water was changed into wine, so in the eucharist, the bread and wine are changed into, and remain the body and blood of Christ. The doctrine is thus set forth in the Canons of the Council of Trent, in which the Roman Catholic Church anathematizes all those who deny this doctrine as follows. Canon I: "If any one denieth, that, in the sacrament of the most holy Eucharist, are contained truly, really, and substantially, the body and blood together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and consequently the whole Christ; but saith that he is only therein as in a sign, or in figure, or virtue: let him be anathema." Canon II: "If any one saith, that, in the sacred and holy sacrament of the Eucharist, the substance of the bread and wine remains conjointly with the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and denieth that wonderful and singular conversion of the whole substance of the bread into the body, and of the whole substance of the wine into the blood — the species only of the bread and wine remaining — which conversion indeed the Catholic Church most aptly calls Transubstantiation: let him be anathema." Canon III: "If any one denieth that, in the venerable sacrament of the Eucharist, the whole Christ is contained under each species, and under every part of each species, when separated: let him be anathema." Canon IV: "If any one saith, that, after the consecration is completed, the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ are not in the admirable sacrament of the Eucharist, but (are there) only during the use, whilst it is being taken, and not either before or after; and that, in the hosts, or consecrated particles, which are reserved

or which remain after communion, the true body of the Lord remaineth not: let him be anathema." Canon V: "If any one saith, either that the principal fruit of the most holy Eucharist is the remission of sins, or that other effects do not result therefrom: let him be anathema." Canon IV: "If any one saith, that, in the holy sacrament of the Eucharist, Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, is not to be adored with the worship, even external of latria; and is, consequently, neither to be venerated with a special festive solemnity, nor to be solemnly borne about in procession, according to the laudable and universal rite and custom of holy Church; or, is not to be proposed publicly to the people to be adored, and that the adorers thereof are idolators: let him be anathema." Canon VII: "If any one saith, that it is not lawful for the sacred Eucharist to be reserved in the *sacrarium*, but that, immediately after consecration, it must necessarily be distributed amongst those present; or, that it is not lawful that it be carried with honor to the sick: let him be anathema." Canon VIII: "If any one saith, that Christ, given in the Eucharist, is eaten spiritually only, and not also sacramentally and really: let him be anathema." Canon IX: "If any one denieth, that all and each of Christ's faithful of both sexes are bound, when they have attained to years of discretion, to communicate every year, at least at Easter, in accordance with the precept of holy Mother Church: let him be anathema." Canon X: "If any one saith, that it is not lawful for the celebrating priest to communicate himself: let him be anathema." Canon XI: "If any one saith, that faith alone is a sufficient preparation for receiving the sacrament of the most holy Eucharist: let him be anathema. And for fear lest so great a sacrament may be received unworthily, and so unto death and condemnation, this holy Synod ordains and declares, that sacramental confession, when a confessor may be had, is of necessity to be made beforehand, by those whose conscience is burdened with mortal sin, how contrite even soever they may think themselves. But if any one shall presume to teach, preach, or obstinately to assert, or even in public disputation to defend the contrary, he shall be thereupon excommunicated."

Commenting on these decrees and canons, Hodge in his *Systematic Theology*, pages 680-682, writes as follows: "From this statement it appears, first, as concerns the elements of bread and wine, that in and by the act of consecration, their whole substance is changed. Nothing of the substance is changed. Nothing of the substance or essence of either remains. The accidents, or sensible properties, however, continue as they were. The form, colour, taste, odour, the specific gravity, their chemical affinities, and their nutritive qualities remain the same (this Rome cannot very well deny. These things can easily be proven. — H.V.). So far as the senses, chemical analysis, and physics are concerned or are to be trusted, no change has taken place. As the sensible properties of the bread and wine do not and cannot inhere in the substance of Christ's body and blood, and as their own substance no longer exists, those properties do not in-

here in any substance. This is stated literally in a Roman Catholic Catechism (H.V.).

Secondly, as to what is said to be present under the species of bread and wine, it is the body and blood of Christ; the body which hung upon the cross; the blood which flowed from his side; with the nerves, bones, and whatever pertains to the completeness of man (this, too, is literally stated in a Roman Catechism — H.V.). As, however, the body of Christ is inseparably connected with his soul, so that where the one is, the other must be and as his soul is in like manner connected with his divinity, it follows that the whole Christ, body and soul, and divinity, is present (Catechism by Rome — H.V.).

Thirdly, the whole Christ is in the bread and the whole Christ is in the wine: and not only so, but in each and every particle of both species. Thus again the Roman Catechism.

Fourthly, Lutherans teach that the presence of the body and blood of Christ in, with, and under the bread and wine, is confined to the time of the administration of the sacrament. Romanists, on the other hand, teach that as there is an entire change of the substance of the elements into the substance of the body and blood of Christ, that change is permanent. From this it is inferred, (1) That the consecrated wafer as containing the whole Christ may be preserved. (2) That it may be carried to the sick. (3) That it may be borne about in procession. (4) That it should be adored.

It is well known that Romanists distinguish between the "cultus civilis," or worship (that is, respect) due to our superiors among men; *douleia*, due to saints and angels; *huperdouleia*, due to the Virgin Mary, and *latreia*, due to God alone. The ground of this worship is the real or supposed possession of divine perfections in its object. When our Lord was upon earth He was the proper object of this divine worship, because He was God manifested in the flesh. The worship terminated on the person; and that person is and was divine. If Christians err in believing that the person known in history as Jesus of Nazareth, was, and is the Eternal Son of God clothed in our nature, then their worship of Him is idolatry . . ." With this analysis of the canons of the council of Trent by Hodge we will continue, the Lord willing, in our following article.

H.V.

Attention! Consistories!

The Questionnaire for the annual Yearbook has been sent to all the churches. Will the Consistories see to it that these are properly filled out and returned as soon as possible? Your cooperation is necessary!

The Committee

M. SCHIPPER

G. VANDEN BERG

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 6 (continued)

We must still call attention to the meaning of the several negative statements in this article. These statements by their negative form, remember, set the limits beyond which the saints cannot fall, due to God's preserving operation, no matter how grievous their fall and how enormous their sin. Specifically the article defines these limits in the following statements: 1) God does not wholly withdraw the Holy Spirit from His people. 2) God does not suffer them to slip to the point that they fall out of the grace of adoption and the state of justification. 3) God does not suffer His people to commit the sin unto death, the sin against the Holy Spirit. 4) God does not suffer His people to plunge themselves into everlasting destruction.

The first statement is very important, for it means that principally the saints always remain children of God, no matter how deeply they fall. Let us try to see the importance of this. We are from eternity the people of God by sovereign election. We are legally and objectively the people of God through the atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which He purchased all the elect as His peculiar possession. We become actually and subjectively the people of God when the Holy Ghost as the Spirit of Christ takes up His abode in us. That Holy Ghost "makes me by a true faith, partaker of Christ and all his benefits." Heid. Catechism, Q. 53. It is by the efficacy of the same regenerating Spirit that God "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." Now the question is: what happens when the child of God falls into sin? Does the Holy Ghost come and go, depending on whether one walks as a child of God or walks in sin? When the saint falls into sin, does he at that moment become no more a saint? Are the people of God alternately children of God and not-children-of-God? This must necessarily be the Arminian answer because of his conditional system. The Arminian must, if he is consistent, maintain that just as the initial entrance of the Holy Spirit into a man is dependent upon that man's willingness to receive the Holy Spirit, so the Holy Spirit's continued abode in that man is dependent upon that man's willingness to continue to keep Him. Hence, man can drive the Spirit out of his heart just as easily as he can allow Him entrance. This is

consistent; but it is consistently Arminian and consistently wrong. Nor are the *Canons* the first to maintain this. Our *Canons* define it more carefully. But do not forget that the Heidelberg Catechism already stated, Q. 53: "secondly, that he is also given me, to make me by a true faith, partaker of Christ and all his benefits, that he may comfort me *and abide with me for ever.*" The Arminians could not subscribe to this. It means that once the Holy Ghost takes up His abode in a man, He remains in that man from that moment on, forever. No action of that man can ever drive Him out! Let us remember this. The Holy Ghost is always sovereign and efficacious in His operations. That is true of His initial operation in the regeneration and conversion of the elect sinner, but also of His continued operation. The sinner has absolutely nothing to do with the question whether or not the Holy Ghost shall take up His abode in him. He cannot accomplish it, and he cannot prevent it. That is the very essence of the work of grace. And therefore, the sinful saint cannot drive out the Spirit once He has taken up His abode. In fact, to deny this is a terribly hopeless doctrine. It would certainly mean that the Holy Ghost would never take up His abode in the heart of any sinner. And it would imply that should the Holy Ghost perchance enter a man, He would not stay there for a moment. Hence, we must maintain in the most complete sense of the word that the abode and operations of the Holy Ghost in God's people are absolutely sovereign and unconditional from beginning to end.

Moreover, we must remember that even when the Holy Ghost in some sense and to some degree withdraws, He does so sovereignly, not conditionally. You will notice that the article implies that there is indeed a sense in which the Holy Ghost withdraws or is withdrawn from the saints. This is implied in the statement that God "does not *wholly* withdraw the Holy Spirit from His own people." And this is further defined by the expression later in the article to which we referred in our remarks about the translation. (Cf. the Feb. 1 issue.) That expression means that the Holy Spirit does not inwardly, internally desert us. Hence, at those times when the Holy Ghost is grieved through the sin of the child of God, He indeed recedes from the foreground of our conscious life and experience, and He as it were goes back into the inmost recesses of a man's being. But He never deserts the saints as far as those inmost recesses of their being is concerned. Nor does He become inactive. Nor does He become dependent upon our action. He Himself withdraws; but He also makes His way back into our conscious life and experience. And He does so, not when we allow Him, but when He sovereignly drives the erring and sinning saint out to Christ for forgiveness, causes him to forsake his sin, repent, and confess it. In that way the child of God once again becomes conscious of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost and has the assurance of his salvation restored and renewed. But unless the Holy Ghost were sovereign even in this partial withdrawal and return, He would never return after He once withdrew.

The second statement is that God never suffers the saints to fall out of the grace of adoption and the state of justification. These two are mentioned together undoubtedly because they are so intimately related. In the inclusive sense of the term our adoption belongs to our justification. Justification means that God declares us righteous in Christ Jesus. Our adoption means that God takes us as His children on the basis of the perfect righteousness of Christ. Both our justification and our adoption are eternally fixed in sovereign election, and both are objectively accomplished by the cross and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification. Subjectively, they are accomplished by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and through faith. And the fathers teach us here that the saints can never fall out of this grace of adoption and the state of justification. The reason is again that the blessings of justification and adoption are absolutely unconditional. The realization of them is not in any way dependent upon anything we may or may not do. Long before we believe our justification is accomplished forever in the cross and resurrection of Christ. In fact, the very wonder of justification lies in the fact that it triumphs over our sin and guilt. "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly," Rom. 5:6. And: "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us," Rom. 5:8. Justification is of such a nature that all our good works cannot possibly add to the righteousness which we have in Christ. But it is also such that all our sins, even the sins committed after believing, cannot possibly take away from our righteousness. This is true because in the most real sense of the word our Lord Jesus Christ atoned and made satisfaction for all our sins. The justified sinner never commits a sin which has not been paid for 1900 years ago on the cross of Calvary. And therefore no sin that the saints ever commit can cause them to fall out of the state of justification or from the grace of adoption. But we must say still more. Principally the child of God cannot even fall from the state of justification subjectively. He may lose the conscious assurance of justification for a time and lose the joy of being righteous in Christ when he does not walk by faith. But the principle and power of faith cannot be lost because the Holy Spirit never withdraws totally from God's people. And if faith cannot be lost, then the righteousness which is by faith cannot be lost. Once justified is always justified, and once having received the adoption unto children is always adopted. The unconditional blessings of justification and adoption cannot be lost because they are unconditional.

The third statement is that God never suffers the saints to proceed so far that they commit the sin unto death or the sin against the Holy Spirit. We cannot here go into a detailed explanation of the passages that speak of this sin. Scripture speaks of it in various passages. In Matthew 12:31, 32 it is referred to as the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, and is spoken of by Jesus as the sin which shall not be for-

given, neither in this age nor in the age to come. In Hebrews 6:4-6 it is spoken of as the sin according to which men crucify the Son of God afresh and put Him to an open shame, and we are instructed that it is impossible that those who commit this sin are renewed again unto repentance. And in I John 5:16, ff., it is called the sin unto death. Concerning it we may say: 1) That it is a sin which can take place only in the sphere of the covenant, not in heathendom. This follows not only from the fact that it is a sin against the Holy Ghost, and must therefore take place in the sphere of the Spirit's operations; but it also follows from the fact that it is a *crucifying afresh* of the Son of God. 2) That it is a sin which is characterized by the fact that those who commit it never come to sorrow and repentance over it. This is undoubtedly not because any sin is so great that God cannot conquer it by the power of His grace, but because God does not so operate that in the process of sanctification the Holy Ghost first lets a man go so far that he blasphemes the very Spirit of sanctification Who works in him and then brings him to repentance. The impossibility of repentance therefore is due to the fact that this is contrary to the Holy Spirit's mode of operation. 3) In this light we may also see why this sin is never forgiven. Only those sins are forgiven of which a man feels true sorrow, of which he repents, and of which he makes confession. 4) We may also conclude that the sin against the Holy Ghost is never committed by the elect, only by the reprobate, and that therefore the child of God, who is sorry for his sin never need fear that he has committed this sin against the Holy Ghost. He who commits this sin is hard and indifferent, shows no concern about this sin or about any other sin when he has reached this state. Anyone who is anxious about having committed the sin unto death certainly has not committed it. But let us notice once more that the impossibility of this sin for the people of God lies not in them, but in God's own grace. If we could ever commit this sin unto death, it would mean that the Holy Ghost had already withdrawn Himself totally and inwardly from us. But God Himself through the indwelling Spirit prevents us from ever falling so far.

Thus, finally, we can understand the last statement, namely, that God never suffers us to plunge ourselves into everlasting destruction. We must remember that we are, on our part, ever ready to do exactly this. But God never suffers us to do it. Once delivered out of the clutches of death and hell is always delivered. He that hath begun a good work in us shall finish it unto the day of Jesus Christ.

How could we better conclude than by calling attention to the one clause which we have not discussed as yet? You will find it at the beginning of the article under discussion: "But God, *who is rich in mercy* . . ." How we learn from this wonderful work of preservation to acknowledge more and more the truth of that clause! For mercy, rich mercy, pure, sovereign mercy it is alone that preserves us to the very end! It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. H.C.H.

DECENCY and ORDER

The Report Continued

We must carefully distinguish here. The independence of believers is not encroached upon when the office of believers is regarded as *non-institutional* in character!

Only there, where the office does not yet exist and also because of circumstances it cannot be instituted by virtue of the ecclesiastical federation (according to the rule that the ordaining unto office must take place through the office — see D.K.O. Arts. 4, 22, 24) may believers apply their spiritual power to the ecclesiastical (*kerkrechtelijk*). Yet also only in such particular cases or circumstances.

The spiritual power of believers, though no official power, stands nonetheless in close relation to the institutional life of the church. This because the offices are instituted by Christ, “for the perfecting of the saints, etc.” (Eph. 4:12) and the official, that is, power of ecclesiastical law is therefore never to be separated, not in the office bearer nor in his exercise over the congregation, from the spiritual background of the religious fellowship with Christ.

This spiritual power is not ecclesiastical in nature. Therefore, the congregation cannot delegate to the office bearers the official ecclesiastical power. The congregation does not possess this. What she does not have, she also cannot delegate.

We come, therefore, to this position. The office bearers receive ecclesiastical power: (1) from Christ Who has and retains all power, (2) through (per) the already existing office (special circumstances excluded). (See D.K.O. Art. 2, 22, 24).

3. In connection with the spiritual religious fellowship which they have with Christ as believers. An unbeliever is not eligible; the ecclesiastical office is never to be separated from the congregation. It can only be exercised over the congregation.

The members of the congregation exercise the spiritual power which they direct toward the institutional life of the church through the use: (1) of sufferage (*kiesrecht*) electing the personnel of the office bearers; (2) of the right of approbation; the right to approve that also involves the right to disapprove. This right of approbation exercised by the congregation is an essential element in the legality of actions according to ecclesiastical law. Thus the office of the believer remains preserved. The question arises here whether this office is not better called a *Right* rather than a Power. For those ruled instead of exercising power, have nevertheless, rights by which they can respectfully demand justice.

4. The local church, therefore, is independent (not autonomous) while in her the complete power of Christ (three-fold power) is exercised in the administration of the Word, the ruling (*regeering*), and the mercy (*barmhartigheid*)

through ministers of the Word, elders and deacons, each in their office.

(a) The ecclesiastical federation does not bestow something upon these offices and nothing upon the power of the office bearers of the local church whenever they are gathered in broader gatherings.

(b) The power of the broader gatherings which they use in the *broader sphere* (*op breeder terrein*) is, therefore, in character no different than that of *Consistories* or *Consistorial power*. There are no other ecclesiastical offices than those of the Consistory and, consequently, there is also no other ecclesiastical power than that of a consistory.

(c) Where an individual *believer* combine all their rights when he unites himself to the local church, there follows that also the local churches, present through the Consistories in the broader gathering, combine all their power that Christ has entrusted to the Consistories.

5. Therefore, as concerning the legal competency of the broader gatherings, it is established that this legal competency is *Consistorial* power according to essence and character. (a) The Consistorial power is not capable of being enlarged. Therefore, the gatherings of the ecclesiastical federation are not in the qualitative sense *superior* (*meerdere*) or, principally are no *higher* gatherings because superior and higher power than the Consistorial does not exist in the church of Christ. Neither is the consistorial power rightly capable of being reduced. Christ alone would be capable of reducing it and it is nowhere evident in His Word that He does this. And no office bearer or consistory may lay aside the delegated power (*opgedragen*) any more than they may assure undelegated power (*eigenmachtig*).

B. But there is indeed a difference as to the sphere wherein this Consistorial power is exercised. This sphere is again twofold: (1) In regard to *geographical limitation* (*geographische uitgestrektheid*) — (Consistory, Classis, Synod); (2) In regard to *limited cases*, whether they concern a church, a Classis or the whole ecclesiastical communion, (K.O. Art. 30). The cases that belong to the broader gathering of the churches are:

(1) Cases that cannot be finished in the minor gatherings.

(2) Cases that belong to the churches of the broader gathering in general.

(3) Cases that come to the broader gathering by way of appeal from the minor gathering.

From this it is evident that a Classis has the ecclesiastical right to make decisions respecting differences in doctrine and life.

6. Article 31 of the Church Order states: “If anyone complain that he has been wronged by the decision of a minor assembly, he shall have the right to appeal to a major ecclesiastical assembly, and whatever may be agreed upon by majority vote shall be considered settled and binding, unless it be proved to conflict with the Word of God or with the articles of the Church Order, as long as they are not changed by a general synod.”

From this article the *legal competency* (*rechts bevoegdheid*) of the broader gatherings and the *legally valid character* (*rechtsgeldige karakter*) of her decisions appears evident. What is here stated does not apply only to those decisions taken in matters of appeal. All decisions taken by majority vote must be considered settled and binding.

Now the firmness of these decisions stands upon the authority of this condition: "Unless it be proved to conflict with the Word of God or with the articles of the Church Order . . ." Now some have interpreted this last clause as though thereby is meant: "Unless those who are grieved by a decision consider it proven that the decision is in conflict with God's Word." (cf. Jansen, *Korte Verklaring van de Kerkenorde*, pg. 146, 147). This interpretation, however, runs amiss under very serious difficulties (objections):

(a) The language is strongly not in favor of this interpretation. The expression "must be proven" presupposes that a plea is issued and that one convinces the other of something. One does not convince himself that something is this way or that. Whoever proves something does this to others. Obviously the expression, "unless it be proved . . ." intends to say: "unless those who observed this decision to be in conflict with God's Word prove to the gathering that made the decision, that is, convinces her that such a decision is in very deed in conflict with the Word of God."

(b) There is yet a more serious difficulty. From the viewpoint adopted by Jansen, the Church Order says that the decisions of the broader gathering do not have to be considered settled and binding whenever anyone believes for himself (and with out convincing the gathering that they erred) that a decision is unbiblical. This is like saying that a case is settled and binding for someone not according to the decision of a gathering but according to personal conviction. But from this point of view a decision of a gathering is really of no significance, and all ecclesiastical life is hopelessly given over to unrestrained arbitrariness. Nothing remains but advice in the Independentistic spirit. Why then would decisions be made if anyone has the right according to the Church Order to reject these decisions and reject submission to them also when he has not convinced the gathering of error?

7. Article 36 of our Church Order reads: "The Classis has the same jurisdiction over the Consistory as the particular Synod has over the Classis and the general Synod over the particular." Also this article establishes the legal competency of the broader gatherings by a well defined limitation. Classis and Synod have jurisdiction, that is, authority (*gezag*) "*omdat het samenkomsten van kerken zijn die van Christus wege gezag hebben ontvangen dat zij door de aangewezen organen oefenen*." (Keegstra and Van Dellen, *Kerkelijk Handboek*, pg. 51).

The authority that such gatherings exercise in behalf of Christ is also a disciplinarian authority. They have the right in the name of Christ to demand obedience and to use discipline toward rebellion. They use the power whenever a

minister deviates in doctrine or life. Why not then whenever a Consistory becomes rebellious?

8. Finally, we point out yet the *Formula of Subscription* wherein men, among other things, subscribe to the following: "being ready always cheerfully to submit to the judgment of the Consistory, Classis and Synod, under the penalty in case of refusal to be, by that very fact, suspended from our office."

Herewith men acknowledge the legal competency of the broader gatherings *to exercise discipline* whenever men become rebellious. The form does not speak of a break with the consistory when men become rebellious but of disciplinary action (*from our offices to be suspended*). This expression demands an official deed whereby such discipline is executed.

II. The Real Question In Particular:

A. The question is not: Does a Classis have the competency to depose members of the consistory? Concerning this there is no difference. But the question is: Does a Classis have the competency to depose a consistory? Not so as though then a consistory is deposed as a body but so that the majority of the members or all the members are deposed as individuals by a Classis. The question thus deals with cases where the Consistory in its entirety, at least in her *majority* or perhaps in all her members fall under the terms of discipline and make themselves deserving to be deposed from their office. If not all the members or the majority of a consistory are "worthy of discipline," then the Classis does not have the competency to proceed to depose from office. For this other provisions are made (D.K.O. Art. 79).

In this connection with regard to the deposing of some consistory members, there is a hint for the case that occupies us at present. A Consistory may, with the consent of Classis, apply to the end discipline over the members of the congregation. Without acknowledging the ecclesiastical federation (the classis) a consistory cannot excommunicate a member (Cf. K.O. Art. 76).

An *office bearer* may not be deposed from his office by a consistory but only through a combined consistory, consisting of the local consistory and a neighboring consistory. (See K.O. Art. 79.) This does not lie in the nature of the case because it is possible that the ground for deposing from office is raised beyond all doubt. But this lies in the general, the universal element that also lies in the office of elder. The office of elder, for example, extends further than the local church (with reference to the cases which are mentioned in the K.O. Art. 30, for which reason they are given, with mandate, delegation to the broader gathering). While this universal element with elders and deacons is not as strong as with the ministers of the Word, the K.O. demands in cases of the former not the same as in cases of the latter that the whole Classis actively acts but it does require that with the deposition of elders and deacons the ecclesiastical federation works and acts that even then more than one local church judges and acts according to the circumstances.

G.V.D.B.

ALL AROUND US

Are All Who Die In Infancy Saved?

Dr. William Hendriksen, writing in the *Torch and Trumpet* of February, 1959, in his series of *Outlines on the Doctrine of the Last Things*, raises the above question and devotes an entire outline to it. Though, as we remarked before concerning his writings we are generally pleased; we feel that on this subject he should have been a bit more explicit.

He had a splendid opportunity to instruct his readers, many of whom he knows and we know embrace the error that all children of believers who die in infancy are saved, but he did not take advantage of it. And really I'm not so sure but that he himself embraces this error. The reason for this last statement is due to the fact that his article is not clear as to his actual position. One wonders what Dr. Hendriksen would say on the subject if he were to preach the funeral sermon of an infant in his church. I am inclined to believe he would not speak differently than many others of his colleagues who have no scruples in putting each child of believing parents in heaven. But let Dr. Hendriksen speak for himself. Here is what he writes:

1. THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS SUBJECT

Until recently a very high percentage of human beings never attained to maturity. In fact, ever so many died in infancy. Of late, this tragic situation has taken a turn for the better. Concerted efforts are being put forth to counteract the high rate of infant-mortality and to improve the health of the nations. Think of what is being done by the World Health Organization (W.H.O.), an agency of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, and by other agencies all over the world. Even so the goal is not yet in sight.

The question naturally arises, Where are the souls of all those who constitute a surprisingly large proportion of the sum-total of all those who at one time or another lived on this earth, be it only for a few years, months, weeks, days, hours, or even minutes or seconds? Must we believe that by far the most of them are in some sense experiencing the agonies of everlasting perdition?

2. WRONG APPROACHES

First, there is what may be called the prevailing view in the Roman Catholic Church. It amounts to this: all unbaptized children are lost. When they die they enter the *Limbus Infantum* (or *Infantium*), a place on the outskirts of hell. Their suffering here is negative rather than positive. They suffer the lack of "beatific vision."

Now this approach, while containing indeed an element of truth (inasmuch as it rightly recognizes the fact that responsibility varies with opportunity), is wrong on two counts: a. Scripture nowhere ascribes such importance to the omission of the rite of baptism; b. it also nowhere teaches the existence of a *Limbus Infantum*.

Over against this is the position of those who hold that all babies are "innocent." According to this view, "original sin," if it can be spoken of at all, is not punishable apart from actual transgression. Since little children are not capable of actual transgression but are innocent, all are saved if they die in infancy. This, or something akin to it, is the position of many evangelical Protestants today. We love these people as brothers in Christ, but we do not believe that Scripture endorses this reason for their position. Infants, too, are guilty in Adam. Moreover, they are not innocent (see Job 14:4; Psalm 51:5; Romans 5:12, 18, 19; I Corinthians 15:22; and Ephesians 2:3). If they are going to be saved at all, this salvation will have to be granted on the basis not of their innocence but of the application of Christ's merits to them.

3. THE OFFICIAL POSITION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH U.S.A.

The Westminster Confession does not give a clear answer to the question whether all those who die in infancy are saved. In fact, it leaves room rather for the opinion that some might not be elect and saved. See this for yourself. It states, "Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who worketh when and where and how he pleaseth" (Chapter X, Section III). In the year 1903 the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. has, however, "interpreted" this article so that today one knows exactly where this denomination stands with respect to that issue. It adopted the following Declaratory Statement:

"The Presbyterian Church in the United States of America does authoritatively declare as follows . . . With reference to Chapter X, Section III, of the Confession of Faith, that it is not regarded as teaching that any who die in infancy are lost. We believe that all dying in infancy are included in the election of grace, and are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who works when and where and how he pleases."

4. QUOTATIONS FROM THE WORKS OF REFORMED THEOLOGIAN

"All who die in infancy are saved. This is inferred from what the Bible teaches of the analogy between Adam and Christ (Romans 5:18, 19) . . . The Scriptures nowhere exclude any class of infants, baptized or unbaptized, born in Christian or in heathen lands, of believing or unbelieving parents, from the benefits of redemption in Christ" (Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. I, p. 26).

"Their destiny is determined irrespective of their choice, by an unconditional decree of God, suspended for its execution on no act of their own; and their salvation is wrought by an unconditional application of the grace of Christ to their souls, through the immediate and irresistible operation of the Holy Spirit prior to and apart from any action of their own proper wills . . . This is but to say that they are unconditionally predestinated to salvation from the foundation of the world" (B. B. Warfield, *Two Studies in the History of Doctrine*, p. 230).

"Most Calvinistic theologians have held that those who die in infancy are saved . . . Certainly there is nothing in the Calvinistic system which would prevent us from believing this; and until it is proven that God could not predestinate to eternal life all those whom he is pleased to call in infancy we may be permitted to hold this view" (L. Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, pp. 143, 144).

Nevertheless, not all Reformed theologians speak so positively. Some bring out more clearly the difference, as they see it, between infants of believers and all other infants. "The children of the covenant, baptized or unbaptized, when they die enter heaven; with respect to the destiny of the others so little has been revealed to us that the best thing we can do is to refrain from any positive judgment" (H. Bavinck, *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, third edition, Vol. IV, p. 711).

Similarly, L. Berkhof, while in full agreement with the Canons of Dort regarding the salvation of children of *godly parents* whom it pleases God to call out of this life in their infancy, states with respect to the others, "There is no Scripture evidence on which we can base the hope that adult Gentiles, or even Gentile children that have not yet come to years of discretion, will be saved" (*Systematic Theology*, pp. 638, 693).

5. SCRIPTURAL TEACHING

a. If those who die in infancy are saved, it is not on the basis of their innocence but on the basis of the sovereign grace of God in Christ applied to them (see under point 2 above).

b. The fact that the heart of God is concerned not only with the children of believers but also with those of unbelievers, even with those "who cannot discern between their right hand and their left" is clearly taught in Jonah 4:11.

c. "God's tender mercies are over all his works," and "God is love" (Psalm 145:9; I John 4:8). One is therefore permitted to agree with the beautiful lines:

"For the love of God is broader
Than the measure of man's mind
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind."

(F. W. Faber, 1854)

d. Infants have not sinned in any way similar to the adults who have rejected the preaching of the gospel and/or have sinned grossly against the voice of conscience.

e. Scripture nowhere *explicitly teaches* that some or all unbelievers' children who died in infancy are saved. Though on the basis of b., c., and d. (above) a person may feel strongly inclined to accept the position that some or all of these are saved, he can never say that Scripture *positively and in so many words* declares this to be true.

f. God has given to *believers and their seed* the promise found in Genesis 17:7 and Acts 2:38, 39. Cf. also I Corinthians 7:14. Hence, the Canons of Dort declare, "Since we are to judge of the will of God from his Word, which testifies that the children of believers are holy, not by nature, but by virtue of the covenant of grace, in which they together with

their parents are comprehended, godly parents ought not to doubt the election and salvation of their children whom it pleases God to call out of this life in their infancy" (I, article 17).

So far Dr. Hendriksen.

There are two points the writer makes clear and they are: that all children of believers and unbelievers are conceived and born in sin and their salvation is determined only by the sovereign grace of God in Christ; and the error of the Roman Catholics. No one of Reformed background will dispute with Dr. Hendriksen on this.

But notice what else he produces in the way of argument. We call attention first of all to c. Does he mean by this that on the basis of God's tender mercies and love we may conclude the salvation of dead infants? Or, does he mean that on the basis of God's mercies and love we may agree with the verse of poetry he quoted? We are inclined to believe the former. But if that is the case, does the writer imply that the universal display of God's mercies and love saves all infants who die in their infancy? We do not know what he means.

Or again, notice d. Does Dr. Hendriksen mean by this that the rejection of the preaching of the gospel or sinning against the voice of conscience are the sole factors in determining the damnation of human beings? It would seem that he cannot mean that on the basis of what he wrote regarding original sin and guilt. Does he mean then that because infants cannot be as great sinners as adults because they cannot reject the gospel and sin against conscience, and therefore are in a better position to be saved? Again, we do not know what he means.

Regarding above, though Hendriksen feels he can say nothing positive on the basis of Scripture he nevertheless leaves the impression that he is inclined to believe that some or all infants of unbelievers who die in infancy are saved. But again, he is not clear.

As to f. above, though the writer makes no definite assertion of his conviction he nevertheless leaves the impression that on the basis of the Scriptures quoted and the statement of the Canons of Dort, he believes that all children of believers who die in infancy are saved. Here Dr. Hendriksen would have done his readers a service if he had given a brief explanation especially of Article 17 of Canons I. Regarding this article the question arises: Did our fathers make an objective statement of fact here regarding the salvation of children of believers who die in infancy? Or, Were they merely subjective, making no positive statement at all regarding salvation of infants, but merely instructing parents to rest in the comforting promises of God's covenant?

We are of the conviction that the latter is explanation of the article, and that the fathers make no objective statement whatever concerning the salvation of infants. Our ground for this interpretation is the historical background of the article, particularly the discussion of the subject at the Synod of Dort when the article was adopted. It is plain from that

history that our fathers could not make a positive statement concerning the salvation of infants who die in infancy because no such objective statement is possible. The Arminians accused our fathers of being monsters who delighted in teaching that God would condemn even the infants of believers to hell. In answer to this accusation, they offered article 17 as a judgment of love. This is the only possible position we can take. M.S.

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

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

February 5, 1959

The Protestant Reformed Male Chorus gave its winter program as advertised, Jan. 25, after the evening service, at First Church. The sad feature of winter programs was present: a snow storm of such vehemence that many of our people of the neighboring churches could not attend. Mr. Roland Petersen has a knack of training untrained voices to do his bidding, and the result was an outstanding program which should be repeated when the snow storms are past; not only would the absent neighbors come to hear it, but those at the first performance would be repeaters, we are sure. It has been rumored that the Male Chorus might travel to Illinois for a concert.

Adv. The Adams St. School Mothers' Club plans to sponsor a Smorgasbord Feb. 26. Another foreign sounding event, this time Swedish, and according to the dictionary, consisting of many hors d'oeuvres, etc. What is that third generation of Hollanders eating?

From Hudsonville's bulletin we learn that Hudsonville's Rev. Vos suffered another heart attack, this one less severe than his last one. Rev. Vos was forbidden any activities or visitors, but the next bulletin reported that the Reverend was again in harness (we like to think that a Minister's harness is one described in Ephesians 6:14-18), using the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

We wonder how Grand Haven's Men's and Ladies' Societies answered the question, "Are we born to live, or to die?"

Five young men of Hope's congregation made public confession of their faith Sunday evening, Jan. 25. They were John Kalsbeek, Gerald Kuiper, Harry Langerak, Wayne Lanning and Merle Veenstra.

Rev. Mulder of Kalamazoo preached a sermon based on Psalm 73 verse 24 Sunday evening, Jan. 25, as encouragement for the congregation, and especially for Harold and Frank Triezenberg who made public confession of their faith. And so our churches grow.

News from Lynden, by grapevine instead of their bulletin: Lynden was hard hit by a blizzard in December which felled power lines, breaking the poles like matchsticks. Due to the power failure, which began Sunday morning at 2 o'clock and lasted till Wednesday, everyone was without light

and heat. There was, of course, no church service, no heat in the homes, no cooking (they lived on cold cereals and sandwiches), no night life except by candlelight; and the citizens dressed like their northern neighbors, the Eskimos, in their warmest clothing, keeping them on for four days. Further, besides the correspondence with people out east, Rev. Harbach also has opportunity to write an occasional article for the local newspaper; takes his turn to speak in the High School Chapel; speaks frequently on The Lynden Hour, a program on the radio in that region. His last Chapel talk was on the Covenant, and we venture to say that those young people never heard one like it before. It looks like the Reverend's easy chair, pipe and slippers will not rapidly wear out.

Have you agreed to be a sponsor for the Young People's Convention to be held in Oak Lawn this year? By sending a contribution you may help our young people in Oak Lawn and South Holland provide the material things that are necessary for a successful convention.

Redlands enjoyed their former pastor, Rev. Kuiper, sent on classical appointment a scant month after his departure for Loveland. Rev. Van Baren ministered to their spiritual needs the next three weeks, Doon meanwhile having one service a week led by Rev. Heys. Jim Lanning and wife are leaving Redlands because his military career is finished and he plans to enter Calvin College in February. Mr. and Mrs. Lanning are members of Hope Church.

South Holland cancelled catechism and society meetings in the week of Jan. 18 due to stormy weather.

Here are the changes in the Year Book we promised you, and will report others as they come to us.

First Church. Clerk, Gerrit Stadt, 754 Prince St., S. E., Grand Rapids, Mich. Treas. Geo. Yonker, Jr., 230 Calkins, S. E., Grand Rapids, Mich.

Grand Haven. Clerk, F. Petersen, 113 N. Division, Spring Lake, Mich. Treas. W. DeWitt, 16916 Fruitport Road, Spring Lake, Mich.

Holland. Clerk, Bernard Windemuller, 267 East 32nd St., Holland, Mich. Treas. Marvin Haveman, 2731 North 112th Ave., Holland, Mich.

Redlands. Clerk, Edwin Gritters, 1418 Washington St., Redlands, California.

South East. Clerk, John Veltman, 1112 Prince, S. E., Grand Rapids, Mich. Treas., Herman Ophoff, 1632 Nelson, S. E. Grand Rapids, Mich.

South Holland. Clerk, John Flikkema, 18288 Ada St., Lansing, Ill. Treas., Adrian Lanting, 16348 Prairie Ave., South Holland, Ill.

The young people of Loveland organized a Y. P. Society Sunday, Feb. 1. Another society to send delegates to the August Convention! While Rev. Kuiper was away on classical appointment Loveland conducted services by reading in the morning, and hearing a tape recording in the evening.

. . . see you in church.

J.M.F.