

THE STANDARD

Bearers

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MEDITATION

OUR SURE DELIVERANCE

"Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all."

Psalm 34:19

The year 1958 is almost spent.

In the wintry darkness of the last lingering moments of the year I see a small light burning. Someone is keeping a vigil over the sick. Many such lights are burning tonight. Many homes witness the sights of those writhing in pain. Many hospitals all over the world can tell their countless tales of untold anguish.

In some homes the light has been extinguished, because the vigil is over. Some time during the past year death came, and left nothing but a cherished memory, borne in deep sorrow.

There are many other troubles in this world of sin and death tonight. Many more than we can possibly realize. Every home has its own problem. Every individual carries in his soul some great anxiety or care.

I do. Don't you?

How could it be otherwise in a world that is harassed by international strife, political corruptions, economic unrest, labor problems, daily cares?

Many are the troubles of this present world. The wicked may try to drown them tonight in revelry and song, but they are still there.

Many troubles, many afflictions.

But many more are the afflictions of the righteous in the world.

The righteous, you know, make up a certain definite class of people. All mankind can be distinguished in two classes, the righteous and the unrighteous. This distinction regards all men in their relation to the righteous Judge of heaven and

earth. God declares the wicked unrighteous, holding them guilty of transgressing His holy law, and worthy of condemnation according to His righteous judgment. And God declares His people righteous, not on any merit of their own, but on the basis of the merit of Jesus Christ, Who died for them and arose again. The righteous receive that righteousness through faith, whereby they know that their sins are forgiven and they are made heirs of eternal life. The just man lives by faith.

But these righteous do suffer in this present time.

In fact, they suffer much more than the wicked.

Asaph speaks of that in Psalm 73, where he compares the ways of the wicked to his own way, saying, "They are not in trouble as other men are, neither are they plagued like other men. . . . Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. . . . All the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning."

Yes, all of Scripture informs us that the righteous are "scarcely saved," that is, they are saved only through the greatest trials and difficulties.

Witness the pathway of all the saints. None of them had an easy road to travel. Would you care to exchange your burden for any one of theirs? Think of the grief in the family of Adam and Eve, the bitter opposition Abel experienced, the persecution of Enoch, the hard witness of Noah, the trials of Abraham, the difficulties of Isaac, the struggles of Jacob, the weariness of Moses, the lonely battle of Elijah, the tears of Jeremiah, the cross of Peter, the bruises and scars of Paul.

Even David himself at the time this psalm was written, had just escaped from death in the hands of his enemies. He had been fleeing from Saul, had sought his refuge by Doeg, king of Philistia, and even there had barely escaped with his life.

Besides the burden of daily cares, each righteous man has his own struggle against the forces of darkness.

The devil never relents, but is always lurking like a roaring lion, planning his attack for the moment when we are least on our guard.

The world sometimes presents her most appealing smile,

but will as suddenly reveal a hostile sneer. She invites us into her companionship only out of the bitter hatred of her soul against us.

But our worst enemy remains our own sinful flesh, always falling victim to the subtle onslaughts of darkness, always drawn by the evil lusts of our old nature.

What a multitude of sins are on the record for 1958! What a mountain of guilt we have raised! O wretched man!

Many are the afflictions of the righteous.

Of each righteous man.

Of you. And of me.

My thoughts travel back tonight through the years to the central cross on Golgotha.

There among the malefactors hangs The Righteous One.

He is the only one who has right to that name by His own merit. He is the Righteous God Himself. He stands eternally before the face of God as the faithful and obedient Servant of God. He is God's great Prophet, God's holy High-priest, God's glorious King. Even when He came to take on the likeness of sinful flesh, He did so without sin. For God looks down from heaven upon Him as He walks among us and says, "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased."

That Righteous One had many afflictions.

In fact, as I read the text once more I realize that the psalmist is speaking chiefly of Him. This psalm is Messianic. And that the psalmist has Christ in mind in this text is plain from the next verse, where we read, "He keepeth all His bones; not one of them is broken." The apostle John was reminded of this as he stood at the foot of the cross and saw with his own eyes that these Roman soldiers, oblivious of the fact that they were fulfilling the Scriptures, deliberately decided not to break the bones of His legs, as they had done with the other malefactors.

Truly it can be said of Him that His afflictions were many.

They began the moment He was born. There was room for Him only in a cattle stall, and soon after even this little spot was not safe for Him, so that His parents had to flee with Him to Egypt. He was hated by the world, rejected by the Jews, opposed by His own brethren, misunderstood by His most intimate disciples. He was despised, and rejected of men, a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. For all His life He bore the burden of God's wrath against our sins until He had borne it away on the cross.

And now those who are righteous in Him still suffer many afflictions.

Strange, you say?

Not if you consider that we are partakers of Christ's

suffering. The Lord Himself assured us, that even as they hated Him they will hate us. One of His final words to us was, "In the world ye shall have tribulation." Besides, we know, that the Lord chastises those whom He loves, and scourges every son whom He receives.

The past year has witnessed of that in your life and in mine.

The coming year promises to be no different, for we carry the same problems and cares into the new year.

Many are the afflictions of the righteous man.

But . . .

This is one of those powerful "buts" in Scripture, which contradicts all our worries and banishes all our fears.

But the Lord delivers him out of them all.

Tonight will not last. Already the moon and the stars announce the coming of a new day. Somewhere beyond the darkness the sun still shines, and hastens on her way toward the dawning of our day.

This night of sin and death will not last. Already now the Word of God heralds the eternal morning.

For notice, that the psalmist, drawing from his own experience, does not speak of the fact merely that God *will* deliver him, but that God *delivers* him, even now.

Even these afflictions are not accidental. Nor are they sent upon us by some evil power which is beyond the control of the Most High. They also are from the hand of the Lord. As Job said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

The Lord sends these afflictions in His wisdom, for a time, and in the meantime is also busy snatching us out of the midst of them. They may threaten to crush us, but they never do. At precisely the right moment there is always an escape.

The Lord delivers us in many ways.

He may do so by leaving the thorn, but giving us grace to bear it. He then assures us that He will not leave us nor forsake us. As we read in this same psalm, "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous. And His ears are open to their cry." Then the cross remains, but the load is lifted; the tear floods the eye, but we smile through our tears.

The Lord may also deliver us by sanctifying us through suffering. He is like a wise and efficient pharmacist, who carefully measures out the right ingredients in exact proportions, mixes them with infinite care, and administers the right doses according to our peculiar needs. Literally our God causes all things to work together for good for those who love Him, who are the called according to His purpose. He leads us by His hand, and guides us by His counsel.

And ultimately He delivers us by taking us into heavenly

perfection. Death, the greatest affliction for our flesh, becomes our mighty deliverer from sin and misery, into heavenly blessedness.

And so the fleeting hours of the past year have faded into the past.

We find ourselves at the dawn of a new year.

How do we know that this applies to us, also for the coming year?

First, I believe and confess that God delivered Christ from all His afflictions. That is important to us, because all the righteous are included in Christ. He is so completely our representative Head, that when He died we died in Him. When He merited salvation we merited salvation in Him. When He arose we also arose in Him. Therefore His righteousness is ours. And even as God has delivered Him, so also God will surely deliver us with Him into His heavenly glory.

And, secondly, it is Jehovah Who delivers His people. The eternal I AM. He loves us, and He remains faithful to us as the Unchangeable. I may forget Him, but He will never forget me. I may not be conscious of Him, but He will always be conscious of me. I may prove unfaithful at times, but He keeps His faithfulness forever.

Therefore we have not been, and shall not be consumed.

My soul in silence waits for Him. In Him is my salvation.

C. Hanko

Announcement

Classis East of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet the Lord willing on Wednesday, January 7, 1959, at 9 A.M. in the Hope Protestant Reformed Church. Consistories will please keep this in mind in the appointment of delegates.

M. SCHIPPER, *Stated Clerk*

On December 28, 1958, our dear Parents,

MR. AND MRS. GERRIT J. GUNNINK

commemorated their 25th Wedding Anniversary.

We are thankful to our God for having spared them for each other and for us these many years. Our earnest prayer is that He may further bless them in the way that lies ahead.

Their grateful Children:

Mrs. Arthur Gunnink
Mr. and Mrs. Jerold Gunnink
Bernard Gunnink
Betty Jean Gunnink
Johnie Gunnink
Daune Gunnink
Glenn Gunnink
Julia Ann Gunnink
Darwin Gunnink
and three grandchildren
Gary, Ervin, Roger

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Mr. J. M. Faber

Here follows the opinion which Judge Taylor rendered in the case of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids in which he denied the schismatics a retrial. I publish this opinion without comment.

STATE OF MICHIGAN
THE SUPERIOR COURT OF GRAND RAPIDS
IN CHANCERY

A Michigan corporation,
Plaintiff

— VS —

No. 13938

HUBERT DE WOLF, et al,
Defenda

OPINION

The cause has again been brought to the attention of the court by the result of the filing of a petition to amend the above decree. The basis of this present motion is by virtue of the determination by the Honorable Fred E. Searl, Judge of the Circuit Court of Kent County in a cause therein pending in two separate cases in which the Second Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids was in each case the plaintiff. In each case the parties plaintiff were members of Second Church and each claimed to represent the church order and to be entitled to its properties.

As in the present case one of these groups were in sympathy with the Rev. Hoeksema group of the First Church, and the other group were in sympathy with Rev. DeWolf, the deposed minister of First Church. The defendants were the separate ministers of each group.

Judge Searl determined that the group representing Rev. Blankespoor of Second Church were the true adherents of the Protestant Reformed Church, and that they were entitled to the temporal possession of Second Church. Rev. Blankespoor was in sympathy with the Rev. DeWolf group, and Rev. Schippers with the Rev. Hoeksema group. The determination of Judge Searl was sustained by the Supreme Court on appeal — PROTESTANT REF. CHURCH v. BLANKESPOOR, 350 Mich. 347. Our case is reported as FIRST PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCH vs. DE WOLF, 344 Mich. 642.

In the First Church case the plaintiff alleged that they were and constituted the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, and that the temporal properties of the church were being forcibly held by the defendants. One of the principal issues therefore, was to determine in whom the title of the church edifice was held, as well as to the right to possess. The question of injunctive relief was incidental to the determination of whom was the rightful owner and entitled to possession.

The defendants who are the present petitioners, entered a general appearance, answered the Bill of Complaint and filed a Cross Bill in which they claimed to be the rightful church and the owners of its properties. Issue was squarely joined upon their respective claims as to who was the representatives of the First Protestant Church of Grand Rapids, and who were the owners and entitled to possession of the church properties.

In October of 1953, there was a meeting of Classis East of the Protestant Reformed Churches. There has never been any question as to the legality of that meeting. It was the only legally constituted Classis East existing at that time. At that meeting the Rev. DeWolf was denied a seat as a delegate from First Church. It was following this action that the rebellion apparently was organized and went into action although they had forcibly taken possession of the church as early as June of 1953. This group did not obey Classis but in turn continued to hold forcible possession of the church edifice and the church properties.

By virtue of Article 4 of the Articles of Association the defendants were bound to recognize and abide by the ruling of Classis until that ruling had been set aside by the general Synod.

In January of 1954 the present defendants in concert with three other groups of the same persuasion, from three other churches in Classis East purportedly sent delegates to a meeting and organized a new Classis East. These churches therefore represented only a third of the twelve churches in the regularly constituted Classis East. At that time Classis East had ruled, and it was the highest church tribunal to pass upon the controversy up to that time. Therefore, the organization of a separate Classis was in defiance of the then ruling ecclesiastical court, Classis East.

I repeat from the original Opinion in this case on page sixteen —

“This question of self-determination was considered in the East Church wherein the Court, quoting from the testimony of the Rev. Henry Beets, stated — ‘If a man could during his appeal do as he please, that would be inviting anarchy and chaos.’”

And further quoting from the testimony of Rev. Idzerd Van Dellen, stated

“There is nothing in our Church Order that when a decision is made by Classis suspending a minister and finding that the ecclesiastical relationship is broken upon the part of the Consistory, that the Consistory and minister can

continue to function as such officers in a church pending an appeal to Synod. The reason for this is that they promised in signing the formula of subscription to acquiesce in the decision of the Classis and other bodies, even pending their appeal."

The references in that case were to the identical Article 31, and the formula of subscription adopted by First Church. 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 a 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."

Following Article 31, we find the following:

"DECISION PERTAINING TO THIS ARTICLE.

Appeal to a major gathering against any decision of any ecclesiastical body must be made upon the immediately following meeting of the body to which appeal is directed, at the same time giving notification to the secretary of the body by whose decision he is aggrieved. Of every judgment rendered in the case, those concerned shall receive a notification.

(Adopted by classis of June 6, 7, 1934; and Synod of 1944, Art. 66, 67."

If there was any appeal following this decision of Classis to Synod, it was necessary that an appeal from the ruling of Classis of October 1953 should be made to the then Synod, which was the Synod of 1953, and whose next meeting was on March 10, 1954. It was at this meeting in March of 1954 that the first split in the Synod occurred so far as the records show. Those delegates to Synod, who met at First Church on March 10th, were delegates sent by Classis West who were in sympathy with the defendant group. Those of the regularly elected delegates to the Synod of 1953 who were in sympathy with the plaintiffs met at Fourth Church.

Delegates from the newly organized Classis East appeared at First Church at the meeting of March 10th and asked for recognition which appears under Article 315 of the Acts of Synod of 1953 on page 341. The petitioners claimed that they were the true adherents although the legal Classis had ruled to the contrary. They asked to be seated. Their request was denied. From the acts of Synod of 1953, we quote as follows:

"Article 322. The Committee of Article 316 reports regarding the seating of new delegates from Classis East. This report reads as follows:

In re the communication of the newly elected delegates of Classis East, your committee advises: That Synod do not seat them at this session. Grounds: This is a continued session of the Synod of 1953 which should be composed of the originally chosen delegates or their respective alternates. Hence Classis East was in error to designate new delegates to this continued session.

Article 323. Motion is made, supported, and carried that Synod adopt this advise and so express."

Thereafter if the defendants had complied with the Church Order which they affirm, they must have presented an appeal to the Synod meeting of March 10, 1954, and also to have served a notice to the Secretary of Classis East whose action of October 23, 1953 they were asking the Synod to review.

At no time during the trial of this case was it asserted by the defendants that they claimed any right by virtue of an appeal to the meeting of Synod on March 10, 1954.

In the rules and regulations in the Order of Synod, we find in Article 1, on page 54, the following:

"Synod shall meet on the first Wednesday of June each year, preceded by a synodical prayer-meeting, led by the president of the previous synod, or the vice-president of the previous synod."

At the March 10th meeting of the 1953 Synod neither the President or the Vice President of Synod were present.

At the meeting of Synod on June 3, 1953 the duly accredited delegates are named. Rev. Doezema does not appear to be one of these. Likewise the name of S. Bouma appears from Classis East at the meeting on March 10, 1953 as a delegate from Classis East. His name does not appear on the accredited list as of June 3, 1953.

The 1953 Synod ceased to exist on the convening of Synod on June 9, 1954. On page 12 of Article 1 of the Acts of Synod of 1954, it states that the Rev. W. Hoffman, President of the previous Synod opened with prayer. The President and Vice President of the previous 1953 Synod were Rev. R. Veltman, President, and Rev. G. Vos, Vice President.

On page 31, supplement to the acts of Synod 1954 synodical credentials, appears the following:

"To the Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches, to convene June 2, 1954, at Second Protestant Reformed Church, Classis East of the Protestant Reformed Churches has appointed the brethren:

Ministers: Primi	Secundi
J. Blankespoor	B. Kok
A. Cammenga	A. Petter
H. DeWolf	
E. Knott	

Elders: Primi	Secundi
L. DeKoek	J. Cammenga
H. Knott	J. Knott
J. Kok	S. Niersma
D. Ondersma	F. Sytsma

as delegates to represent said Classis at the meeting of Synod above referred to.

We hereby instruct and authorize them to take part in all deliberations and transactions of Synod regarding all matters legally coming before the meeting and transacted in agreement with the Word of God according to the conception of it embodied in the doctrinal standards of the

Protestant Reformed Churches, as well as in Harmony with our Church Order.

By order of the Classis
(W.S.) Bernard Kok, President
(W.S.) E. Knott, Clerk

Done in Classis April 17, 1954."

These delegates appear to represent only four churches from classis East, and on April 7, 1954 the purported appeal taken from the Order of Classis of October 23, 1953 had been denied at the March 10, 1954 meeting of Synod.

If article 31 of the Church Order has any effect; if it means anything it means that when Classis East on October 23, 1953 made its decision that it was binding as long as it was not changed by a general synod. If it was binding then, by what right, under any rule of order of this church could a new Classis East be formed in January of 1954?

In the opinion of this court such procedure was well calculated to produce exactly what the late Rev. Beets stated, and from which we have quoted above — "chaos would result."

We recognize that the Supreme Court in the Second Church Case had apparently stated that these proceedings nevertheless were legal proceedings under the Church Order, and that with them the courts have no right to interfere. We subscribe to this insofar as the proceedings of the ecclesiastical judiciaries are in accordance with the Church Order. On the other hand how can we say that those representing an opposing group are not equally correct? The answer in the Second Church Case was — That you did not meet at the designated church on March 10, 1954, or June 9, 1954.

The trial of this original case commenced on March 25, 1954. It concluded June 13, 1954 with the taking of testimony. In the Cross Bill of Complaint defendants at no place claimed the right of recognition by virtue of a newly organized classis, although they now claim that it has existed as early as January 10, 1954. Synod met June 2, 1954. If the defendants placed any claim to the action of Synod, they failed to make any such claim although they had until June 15th to do so. In fact neither side made any claims in relation to the 1954 Synod. Further, no such claims were advanced on the appeal to the Supreme Court, and no notice was filed following the Opinion of this Court in December of 1954 that a re-hearing was in order based upon the action of Synod. Nothing new has occurred as a claimed right that the defendants were not aware of in 1954. The brief filed by the defendants counsel on August 3, 1954 makes no reference to any synodical action in June of 1954, nor did the brief of the plaintiff. In fact from the decree entered in January of 1955 and affirmed in 1956 by the Supreme Court up to the filing of this motion, more than two years thereafter, no claim has been made by the defendants of any synodical determination.

From the synodical proceedings of 1953 it would appear that an attempted appeal from the ruling of Classis was made on March 10, 1954 and was denied. The synodical proceed-

ings of 1954 do not disclose that any similar appeal was made to the Synod of 1954. The records only disclose that credentials were presented from Classis East which represented only four of the churches in the regularly constituted Classis East. This was the basis of the decision in the Second Church Case and the only basis of it.

We have spent considerable time in reviewing the above happenings as applied to these opposing factions. This will in the course of all normal events be the only time that this court will be called upon to act as an arbitrator of the factions, and therefore can only assert that I am still of the opinion that both bodies, or both groups are bound to proceed according to the articles of the church to which they have severely subscribed. The Supreme Court in the Second Church Case did not make any determination as to the legality of the creation of a new Classis East on January 10, 1954, and before any appeal or attempted appeal has been made. It is our opinion that any such attempt was an illegal procedure and contrary to the Church Order.

However, this is not the basis of decision in the present case. We agree with counsel who have filed the present Motion that it is within the discretion of the trial court to amend its decree but neither the question of whether the motion was filed according to Rule 48, or whether there has been a change of circumstances, or a change of law, are applicable or controlling in the present case for disposition must be made upon an entirely different theory of the law.

It must be remembered that chancery cases are heard by the Supreme Court de nove and that when the Supreme Court made its determination in January of 1956 that the decree binding upon the parties to this action thereupon became the decree of the Supreme Court, and that no power thereafter remained in the minor court to change that decree unless the right to do so was reserved or delegated to the minor court by the Supreme Court in its final determination. There is no question about this as a matter of law.

Three cases are of interest. *LYON v. INGRAM CIRCUIT JUDGE*, 37 Mich. 377, in an opinion by Mr. Justice Cooley. From this opinion the Supreme Court again in the case of *THOMPSON v. HURSON*, 206 Mich. 130, quoted with approval and in that case propounded the following quest.:

"May the Circuit Court upon the application of a party without leave of this court to make such application, modify a decree which has been affirmed by this Court? It is well understood that in chancery appeals this court hears the case de nove and that the decree entered in this court is the final adjudication of the rights of the parties."

The above two cases have again been re-affirmed in the case of *GEORGE v. WAYNE CIRCUIT JUDGE*, 336 Mich. 553.

It may therefore be stated —

"When the court of last resort of a state has finally adjudicated the rights of the parties it cannot remain for the court to which the case is remanded to determine

whether such adjudication shall be enforced. *THOMPSON v. HURSON*, 206 Mich. 139."

This court has not the power to grant the motion of the petitioners and accordingly must be denied.

Respectfully submitted,

(W.S.) Thaddeus B. Taylor

Judge of the Superior Court of Grand Rapids

Dated: December 11, 1958.

OUR DOCTRINE

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

PART TWO

CHAPTER V

The Sixth Trumpet

Revelation 9:13-21

In proof of this contention I point, in the first place, to the mention that is here made of the great river Euphrates. The Euphrates is one of the greatest rivers in western Asia. But the question is here: what is the significance, and why is it mentioned in this connection? I find that Scripture pictures this river as the eastern boundary of the land promised to the children of Israel in Genesis 15:18. There we read that Abraham received the promise: "Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates." And again, in Deut. 1:7 we read that the children of Israel received the command: "Turn you, and take your journey, and go to the mount of the Amorites, and unto all the places nigh thereunto, in the plain, in the hills, and in the vale, and in the south, and by the sea side, to the land of the Canaanites, and unto Lebanon, unto the great river, the river Euphrates." The same we read in Deut. 11:24 and in Joshua 1:4. We find that this promise was realized in the time of Solomon, for of him we read that he ruled over all the kingdoms from the river (that is, Euphrates) unto the land of the Philistines. I Kings 4:21. It was upon that river that Babylon was situated, according to Scripture. And it is in that river that the book that prophesied the destruction of Babylon, written by Jeremiah, was sunk. And therefore I find that the river Euphrates is the ideal and real boundary-line between the outward kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness, and therefore the symbol of the boundary-line between the Christian and the heathen nations, between the so-called civilized world and the Gog and Magog. It is at this river that the four angels are bound. The purpose of these four angels is evidently to seduce the nations of the Gog and Magog, and inspire them to the war with the Christian world. But they are bound. It is the decree of the Almighty, and therefore the will of Christ, that has bound them, so that they cannot influence these nations as yet. For they are bound unto the exact year and month and day and hour. That hour is evidently historically determined by the completion of the preaching of the gospel

also to these nations, and, on the other hand, by the fulness of the measure of iniquity of the so-called Christian nations. That hour has now come, according to the passage. For the blood of atonement cried from between the horns of the altar, and the four angels that are bound at the great river Euphrates are let loose. These four angels, whose very number indicates that we are to have a world war as we never saw before, when they are liberated, now turn themselves upon the nations of the east and seduce them to do battle against the Christian world. Hence, when they are let loose, the woes of war and famine and desolation and pestilence flood the world, rising from the east and coming from the direction of the Euphrates upon the entire world. And finally, this entire view is corroborated by the character of the sixth vial. There is a plain correspondence, as we shall see when we are discussing this vial, between the six trumpets and the six vials that are yet to follow. And the sixth vial, that corresponds to this sixth trumpet, informs us: "And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared." Here we have plainly told us what it will finally mean when the river Euphrates is dried up, when it shall no more serve as a boundary-line between the nations of the so-called Christian world and the Gog and Magog. Then the kings of the east shall come and flood the whole Christian world, and the end of destruction is near. In brief, therefore, we have here the picture of a war that is still to come, in which not only the Christian but also the heathen world shall be involved, and the outcome of which shall be that one-third of men, that is, more than ever before, shall be killed. Faint indications of this we have in history when the nations of the east at the time of the destruction of the Roman Empire rise against it and flood Europe. And more definite indications of this war that is prophesied in the book of Revelation we have in our own time. Nevertheless, the full realization also of this trumpet is still in the future. Also this second woe we must still expect.

We read in the text: "And they repented not." We might think that such severe judgments would break the hearts of these idolaters and murderers and thieves. One-third of men killed; and no doubt also the rest of men are touched and hurt by the famine and especially by the pestilence. Think of the desolation and the woe and the sorrow and the grief and the suffering this sixth trumpet will cause for the remaining two-thirds that are still alive! All the more we would think that they should repent because it has been so plainly foretold in Scripture that these things come and come as a revenge of the blood of Christ that is trampled under foot and a judgment upon the iniquity of the world. But no, they repented not. They are hardened. Even as Pharaoh repented not when plague after plague so plainly came from the hand of Jehovah, but continued till his judgment was complete, so also the wicked world at the end of time will not repent until their destruction is finished. We must expect also this feature.

H.H.

A CLOUD OF WITNESSES

Machpelah

"And Sarah was an hundred and seven and twenty years old: these were the years of the life of Sarah.

And Sarah died in Kirjatharba; the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan: and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her . . .

And after this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah before Mamre: the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan.

And the field, and the cave that is therein, were made sure unto Abraham for a possession of a buryingplace by the sons of Heth."

Gen. 23:1, 2, 19, 20

Sarah stands unique among all of the women mentioned in the Bible as being the only one whose age has been recorded. Commentators are inclined to make of this fact a tribute to the important position which she held in the history of God's Church. Whether it was the intent of Scripture in recording Sarah's age to render to her a special tribute or not, we do not know; that Sarah held a very important place in the history of the Church, we are sure. That is evident enough from the testimony of the New Testament Scriptures in I Peter 3:6, "Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement." In all of Abraham's spiritual trials and hardships Sarah shared very intimately. When Abraham left the wicked city of Ur because of the command of God, Sarah went with him. When Abraham entered the land into which the Lord led him, even Canaan which was the earthly type of the land eternal in the heavens, Sarah entered with him. As Abraham lived in that land a stranger and a pilgrim looking for the city which has foundations whose builder and maker is God, Sarah lived the same life with him. As Abraham lived in hope based on the gracious promises of God, Sarah lived in the same hope with him. As Abraham waited for the promised seed relying on the Word of the Lord, Sarah in patience waited upon the same Word of God, confident that what He had promised He was able also to provide. When Abraham rejoiced in the birth of the promised child, Sarah too rejoiced because she had borne Abraham a son in his old age. When Abraham was somewhat weak in his faith hesitating to cast out the son of the bondwoman because he persecuted the son of the promise, Sarah had reprimanded him and told him that Ishmael must not be given a place in the inheritance of the promise, and the Word of the Lord supported her. In all Sarah accompanied her husband in his spiritual calling, en-

couraged him in his trials, instructed him in his weakness; a companion and help-meet, she shared with him his callings and duties in the love of their God. We need not be surprised that Sarah should be set forth by the Scriptures as an example to God-fearing wives of all generations.

With gentle restraint the Scripture record that upon the death of Sarah, "Abraham came to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her," Gen. 23:2. One who has not experienced the loss of a life-long, spiritual companion can, perhaps, not appreciate the depths of feeling and heartache implied in those few words. For nearly a century Sarah had been by Abraham's side to share with him whatever the way of the Lord would bring. Henceforth he would have to make his way through the few remaining years of his life alone, deprived of the intimate fellowship which years of married unity had provided. Nonetheless, there came to Abraham the comfort that comes to every survivor of a God-fearing marriage; though they must needs be separated for a short time, there would soon be a reunion in a far richer form which would endure eternally within the heavens.

It was then that the difficult but necessary task fell upon Abraham of providing a place wherein the earthly remains of his dear one might be laid. Although Abraham by this time had dwelt in the land of Canaan for fifty years and more, as yet he did not own one square foot of ground in all the land. Although the Lord had promised with an oath that the whole of the land would be his possession, yet after these many years he had not even enough to serve as a burial plot. Still, although all of the land was possessed by others, Canaan meant more to Abraham than it ever could to anyone else. It was to him a part and a symbol of that which he had received by promise of God. It belonged to him not by reason of earthly title and possession; it was his by virtue of the fact that Jehovah had promised it to him with an oath. By faith he was confident that this was to be the dwelling place and possession of his children, an earthly symbol of the even greater dwelling place given to them in the same promise which would be eternal in the heavens. Thus Abraham would have in that promised land a place to lay the earthly remains of Sarah as a testimony to the fact she too possessed the promise.

In searching the land for a place that would properly symbolize Sarah's place in their eternal inheritance, he came upon the cave of Machpelah. The name "Machpelah" is usually taken to mean "the double" signifying that actually it was a cave with two separate caverns or chambers. It is to be noted that in further reference to this cave (e.g. Gen. 23:19; 49:30; 50:13) the name "Machpelah" designates primarily not the cave but the field in which the cave was located. It is better, therefore, to interpret the name "Machpelah" according to another possible meaning — namely, "the separated place." In this connection we may note that according to Gen. 23:9 the cave was located in the end of the field of Ephron. Hence we would conclude that Machpelah

was an isolated spot far removed from the habitations of the people of the land, in fact, so far removed that it was given a name that designated its isolated position. It was for this reason that Abraham desired to have Machpelah as a burial place for his family. He had lived in Canaan for over fifty years and from time to time could not help but come in contact with the inhabitants of the land; but in all this contact he never felt himself and his family to be one with them. There was a difference, a distinction between them, that arose from their attitude toward the land. To the Canaanites the land was nothing more than an earthly possession and a mark of earthly wealth; to Abraham the land was a symbol of the rich and eternal promises given him by God. This difference in attitude always separated Abraham and his family from the Canaanites. It was thus but natural and proper, because his distinctiveness was proper, that in looking for a place to bury his wife Abraham should choose Machpelah, a place isolated from the Canaanites and removed from the ways where they commonly trod. Even in death their dwelling place must be in the land of Canaan but separated from its heathen inhabitants.

Inasmuch as Machpelah was owned by Ephron the Hittite, Abraham approached the children of Heth and made known to them his desire to have Machpelah as a burial place. It seems as though the children of Heth stood somewhat in awe of Abraham. There were reasons why such was so, for Abraham was a very singular figure within the land. Abraham was principally a peaceful man who kept quietly to himself and would go to great ends to avoid conflict with those whom he happened to contact. Nonetheless, when the occasion necessitated it, as when his nephew Lot was taken captive by Chedorlaomer and his confederates, with his 318 servants he was able to wage a strong battle and gain a great victory. He was a stranger and a sojourner in the land; nonetheless, although he possessed no land of his own, his wealth multiplied and grew far beyond that of anyone else. It was evident that a divine power upheld and blessed Abraham, the same divine power which had destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah with fire and brimstone from heaven. The children of Heth were not so foolish as to fail to recognize that, while Abraham would make a formidable enemy, he would be a worthy friend. Hence when Abraham approached them with a request for a burying place they were quick to recognize the opportunity of obligating Abraham to be their friend. Immediately they presented to Abraham a most generous offer, "Hear us, my lord: thou art a mighty prince among us: in the choice of our sepulchres bury thy dead; none of us shall withhold from thee this sepulchre, but that thou mayest bury thy dead," Gen. 23:6. A sepulchre would be for them but a small price to pay for obligating such a mighty man as Abraham to their friendship.

Abraham, however, would have none of their sepulchres; he would have none of their friendship. With bows of for-

mality he gave his answer. He asked only that they entreat Ephron the son of Zohar to give him Machpelah, both field and cave, so that he might make his own sepulchre far removed from them and from their places of burial. Furthermore, he would pay for Machpelah the full price whatever it was worth. He had reason why he would not receive a gift. It was the same reason spoken before to the king of Sodom. "I have lift up mine hand unto the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, That I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich," Gen. 14:22, 23. He would not be obligated to the wicked. His obligation would be to the Lord and not to the Lord's enemies.

Ephron, however, would force the issue. He gave to Abraham a choice. Either Abraham would accept their proffered friendship, or he must pay for the field four hundred shekels of silver, an exorbitant price for the plot of land. Either Abraham would receive it as a gift, or he would have to pay for it the high dollar. But Abraham remained firm in his position. Without question as to the worth of the field, he weighed out in the gate of the city before the presence of all the people four hundred shekels of silver.

It is to be noted that throughout this event as recorded in Genesis 23 Abraham made all of his transactions in public. He made his first approach to the people of the city and not to Ephron alone. When he spoke to Ephron directly it was not in the private of his home but "in the audience of the children of Heth, even of all that went in at the gate of the city." So also in every future mention of Machpelah in Scripture it is always noted that it was purchased by Abraham from Ephron. It was very important for the Hittites to understand, and it is yet important for all ages to know, that the first possession which Abraham received in the land of Canaan was not received by him from the mercies of the wicked. His foothold in the land of Canaan was not received from men but was purchased by the silver which had been given him by his God.

"And after this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah before Mamre," Gen. 23:19. So also we read after the account of Abraham's death, "And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, which is before Mamre," Gen. 25:9. And there also were buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife, and Jacob and Leah his wife, Gen. 49:30. Machpelah was the tomb of the patriarchs, the fathers of God's chosen people Israel. To all generations it is a testimony of the faith of these fathers that they believed their eternal dwelling place to be in Canaan, in type the earthly land of Palestine, in reality the spiritual Canaan eternal in the heavens.

B.W.

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of Luke 1:18-20

This time we shall depart from our series on Matthew 24, 25 and call attention to a beautiful history (heils-geschiedenis) in the Gospel of Luke. Luke had taken in hand to instruct Theophilus, the most excellent, concerning the certainty of the things in which he had been catechized. These historical facts of the Gospel narrative are most solemnly and certainly attested to have complete certainty.

Theophilus must know the certainty of these things.

We should not think that this account is simply good for little children in Sunday School and that these matters herein set forth in an orderly way are too simple for those who are able also to digest the more dogmatical portions of Scripture, such as the Epistles of Paul to the Romans, Ephesians and others.

Luke writes an entire Gospel for the benefit of one who had already been catechized!

We shall, therefore, set ourselves at the feet of Luke next to Theophilus.

The scene which we view in Luke 1:18-20 is in the temple, in the *holy place*! There stood the seven golden candle-sticks, the table of shewbread, and before the veil stood the altar of incense, overlaid with gold, upon which incense was offered in the morning and in the evening. It was the place where Israel, through its representative priest, could draw nigh unto God. Only the veil proclaimed that the way into the Holy Place was *not yet* opened.

Here in this temple, in the holy place, we see Gabriel speaking to Zacharias. The latter was not a high priest, but a priest, of the eighth order of the priests, of the house of Abia (Abijah). By the appointment of the "lot", which is from the Lord as to its outcome, Zacharias' turn was to minister in the temple. He is to bring the offering of incense, and to pray for the people standing in the outer court.

While he is in the temple, Gabriel, who stands before God, comes suddenly to the temple. It is the fulfilment of Malachi, the last prophet. The Lord suddenly comes to this temple. And to Zacharias and Elizabeth is promised, is announced, the birth of a child, whose name shall be called John. Howbeit Zacharias is an old man and Elisabeth is well stricken in years. They are in the same condition as were Abraham and Sarah when the birth of Isaac was announced to them by the angel of the Lord.

Hence, Zacharias asks the question: "*Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man and my wife well stricken in years. And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel,*

that stand in the presence of God: and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings. And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season," vss. 18-20.

Here a tremendous fact is reported to us. The aged and righteous Zacharias is smitten with dumbness!

Let us attempt to understand this just a bit better.

We notice that the text speaks of the fact that Zacharias *did not believe*. Forsooth, the text does not speak of Zacharias that he was an "unbeliever"! On the contrary, Luke informs us already in verse 6 that both Zacharias and Elisabeth were righteous before God, walking in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord blamelessly. What should be noticed is that the text uses a tense in the Greek which is "point-action." It refers to the not believing as just expressed in the question, "Whereby shall I know this?" It refers simply to Zacharias' not rising in faith to this great occasion. He did not by faith connect this word of Gabriel to all the ordinances and commandments of the Old Testament which he himself kept blamelessly. He didn't connect promise and fulfilment; he did not connect promise and fulfilment concretely in what was going to transpire in his own life and that of Elisabeth. They were going to have a son, who would be the "voice of him that crieth in the wilderness." And, therefore, he could not connect the promise of God and its great fulfilment in the Son of His good-pleasure either. He did not see that the Kingdom of God had come upon him!

All the old Zacharias could see was that by all natural standards it was impossible for them, Zacharias and Elisabeth, to have a child!

Was not Elisabeth old? And had she not too been sterile all her life? And was she not known in the church of that day, even as far north as Nazareth, as the "one who was barren"! That had become her surname. And had not Zacharias long ago become reconciled to the fact that theirs would not be the blessing of having a child? He did not think of having children, but rather lived in the hope of presently dying in the hope of the resurrection.

Small wonder (I speak after the manner of men) that Zacharias utters the question: whereby shall I know this? This question is rather pregnant with implications. In the first place the "this" refers to all that is implied in this announcement of having a son. He had died as far as the ability to bring forth seed was concerned. And Elisabeth was too old to conceive seed. By what "standard" shall I know this, shall I be able experientially to gauge this all. By what natural standards?

This is not the language of faith. It does not rise to the height of Abraham's faith when he offered his son Isaac, computing that God was able to give Isaac back again from the dead. He did not believe, that is, he did not connect this

mighty deed of God with all the mighty deeds of God in the past and future!

It did not reckon with the omnipotence of God, who calls the things that are not as though they were and who raises the dead to life!

Hence, the severe announcement, which is at once by implication "the answer" to Zacharias' unbelieving question: "Behold thou shalt be dumb and not be able to speak until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season."

It is a nice touch in the Greek text in verse 20. According to the text the following matters are very succinctly put:

1. These are matters which *shall* be fulfilled. Luke employs the future tense, expressing *certainty*! These things *shall* be "fulfilled." The measure as determined, by God and here announced by Gabriel, the mighty one of God, shall surely be made full. Not one of these words shall fall to the ground.

2. These things have a season. Times and seasons are in God's own power. And all God's words are yea and amen. They are of *such a nature* (hoitines)! Not to believe words of such a nature is sin. These are the words of God himself, brought by him who standeth before God!

3. "Wherefore thou shalt be dumb and not be able to speak for a season."

Concerning this dumbness imposed upon Zacharias we should notice the following:

Firstly, we should notice that this silence was instantaneous in its effect. Immediately Zacharias is dumb. That very second. God does not allow Zacharias to speak another word, nor to utter another question. God is here in His holy temple, and let, therefore, all the earth be silent. Also let Zacharias be silent. Let him in silence see God fulfil his own word!

Secondly, we would notice concerning this silence that it, evidently, symbolized the fact that unbelief cannot speak. Unbelief cannot confess the mighty deeds of God. It cannot say: I have believed; therefore have I spoken!

Thirdly, this silence, indeed, shows us that God would have obedience and not sacrifice! There can be no obedience without sacrifice. However, there can be sacrifice without obedience. God would have the former. And unto that end he forms Zacharias through chastisement.

For chastisement this was for Zacharias. It was God's pedagogy for him. God would lead this righteous one, righteous before the Lord, by the hand as it were. He would show him his glories and teach him to learn in silence. God does not spoil his children, but chastens every son whom he loves!

The Lord will not simply lead Zacharias to walk in faith

in respect to the fulfilment of the birth of John, but will lead him all the way so that he will see the perspective of the things which Gabriel announced concerning the work and calling of John in relationship to the great Son of God, born from the virgin Mary.

How wonderful that this announced "dumbness" is for a season! It shall not last forever. It was to be exactly during the time and days in which these things shall be fulfilled. No longer and no shorter. Zacharias could therefore be silent in hope. He could actively live in the hope of these things. He knew that it was, therefore, at once a sign. It was from the Lord this dumbness. It was not simply a natural phenomenon. He could be comforted.

How the old man, whose parents had named "the Lord will remember," must have trembled in mingled fear and holy expectation when dumbness fell upon him. He must then have indeed put the shoes from off his feet. He goes out to pronounce the Aaronic blessing, but no words are uttered. He must have attempted. But "he remained speechless." Thus this became a sign to the people. They knew that he had seen a vision.

Then when he comes home to Elisabeth, he cannot speak. Did he use a tablet to tell his wife what the angel Gabriel had announced? It was a sign also to Elisabeth. She did not laugh as did that "princess" Sarah of old. She evidently believed. And she rejoiced. She that was called barren conceived. She saw her own life "in all its spacious plan" under the aspect of heaven in the plan and times and seasons of God!

Yes, Elisabeth's parents too were righteous. Did they not name the little girl "Elisabeth," that is, "my God my oath"? I swear by my God!

God had remembered His covenant oath. He had remembered mercy to Israel. He had heard their prayer as it was in the bundle of the prayers of all saints.

The days were fulfilled that the child should be born. God's time.

And all the while Zacharias had been silent, experiencing a new life, a new joy. Had not the mother of his LORD come to his house and prophesied. Had not this babe leaped in the womb of Elisabeth, greeting Jesus in Mary's womb? O, the wonder of it!

And now Zacharias will speak. He is not aware of it. He beckons for a tablet. And he writes, *saying* "His name is John." He shall not be called simply "The Lord Will Remember" (Zacharias) but he will be called "Jehovah is gracious"! He fulfills his oaths of old to us the children.

And then we get the song of Zacharias. It is the sweet incense upon the altar of God. It is faith speaking. It is a Theocentric-Christocentric song. It is not a humanistic song about John, his child, but a song in which the work and calling of John is sung, showing forth the praises of Jehovah, who is gracious.

G.L.

IN HIS FEAR

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

(2)

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God," John writes in his first epistle.

Paul prays, according to his epistle to the Philippians, that the love of the saints "may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment" that they may "approve (or try) the things that are excellent (or differing;) that they may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ."

In His letter to the church at Philadelphia, according to Revelation 3:11, Jesus tells the church to "hold fast that which" she has.

And we do greatly appreciate those who hate even the semblance of the lie and of a departure from the truth. Show me a man who objects to any and all watering down of the truths of Scripture; show me a man who is ready to fight in defense of every truth of Scripture and who insists that you speak the language of Scripture and according to the spirit of the Scriptures; and I will show you a man who loves God!

The man that loves God is not necessarily the man who has thousands upon thousands and gives a little of it for the financial support of God's Church here below. It is not necessarily the man who gives freely of his time and talents for "kingdom work" who loves God. Nor is it necessarily the man who witnesses repeatedly and publicly of God and of His Christ who loves God. All these can be done in love of self, because we seek honor and fame among men, because we find satisfaction for the flesh in doing these things. But the man who is concerned with the glory of God and hates all false doctrines and heresies because they insult and dishonor the Living God, this is the man that plainly loves God. This is the man who fears God. This is the man who lives in His fear. This is the man who knows that to fear God belongs to the sole duty of man. But because Scripture declares in Ecclesiastes 12:13 that to this sole duty of man belongs also the words of our title above, "and keep His commandments," he will agree with us and desire with us to explore this truth and defend it.

Let us examine a few New Testament passages which show that since the cross of Christ God still demands of us that we keep His commandments. Let us see that God still has a "must" for us in His Word and that the cross of Christ does not give us the liberty to be outlaws, lawless ones. In the fifth and sixth chapters of his epistle to the Ephesians Paul gives a series of admonitions which are clearly based on the fifth and seventh commandments. And here he gives absolutely no hint even that those justified by the blood of

Christ, and for whom He fulfilled the law, have the liberty now to do as they please and that God no longer says to them, "Keep My commandments." In fact Paul begins this chapter, the fifth, with the words, "Be ye therefore followers (imitators) of God as dear children; And walk in love as Christ also loved us . . ." Well, if we are imitators (the correct translation of Paul's words) we will surely walk in God's commandments. And this is indeed a command and not simply a suggestion. Paul says, "Be ye therefore imitators of God." He does not simply suggest that it would be nice and would show that we do love God. And in no uncertain terms he condemns all fornication and adultery. Why? Because God hates it; and how can God do anything else but forbid us to do that which He hates? How can God do anything else but demand of us that we love Him and walk as He Himself walks in righteousness and holiness? And as far as the fifth commandment is concerned, Paul goes even a step further than the literal commandment. Not only does he demand in the name of God that children obey their parents but he develops the idea and applies it to wives and servants. And let it be noted that Paul is not at all afraid to tell the New Testament Church at Ephesus that God demands the saints to keep this commandment. Let it be remembered, too, that Paul is writing here to Gentiles who had not been given the Law at Mt. Sinai but had learned of it after the cross and exaltation of Christ.

Peter, in his first epistle does the very same thing. He admonishes the servants to obey their master and wives to be subject to their husbands, I Peter 2:18 and 3:1. He even states in 2:13, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake." Why that last? Why? if God does not demand these same things. Can we ever do something above that which God demands of us? Is there an area of things that God does not demand and we can walk in that sphere and so do more than He demands? Can we bring Him something not demanded? Does Jesus Himself not teach us in the parable? to say after we have done all — and these are Jesus' words — "those things commanded" of us, "We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do." Now you may argue that Jesus taught this parable before His cross and refers to the Jews as they were still under the law. But what will you say of His words to His disciples just before He went to the cross? Jesus has already dismissed the traitor and instituted the Lord's Supper in place of the Passover. He is about ready to go to Gethsemane and order the enemy to take Him to Pilate and to the cross. What does He say? If ye love me you will forget the law of God after my death and show your love to me by such life of lawlessness? Not at all! He says, "If ye love me, keep my commandments," John 14:15. And again, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him," John 14:21. Still again, "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments

and abide in his love," John 15:10. Is there now a difference between Jesus' commandments and those of the Father? He has kept the Father's commandments and demands of His disciples that they so keep His commandments. Does He mean to keep them simply for a few more hours since, before the sun sets on another day, He will have died for their sins and fulfilled all righteousness for them? Of course not! He means that after His ascension into heaven they must keep His commandments. And note that it is commandments and not doctrine. Not simply His doctrinal teachings must they keep, not only must they fear God. They must also keep His commandments.

But what saith the Church in the New Dispensation as led by the Spirit of Christ? The Heidelberg Catechism teaches us that it is a source of comfort to the child of God that his faithful Saviour Jesus Christ to whom he belongs makes him "sincerely willing and ready, henceforth, to live unto him." "Henceforth" means in *this* life. It means from the moment of regeneration and the irresistible calling by the Spirit of this faithful Saviour. This same catechism teaches us that we must do good works in Lord's Day XXXII. It does not ask, Why is it a good idea that we still do good works? It does not ask, Why ought we still do good works? The question emphatically is, "Why must we still do good works?" And in the next Lord's Day in answer to the question as to what good works are it gives the answer, "Only those which proceed from a true faith, are performed according to the law of God, and to His glory; and not such as are founded on our imaginations, or the institutions of men." Note that good works must be performed "according to the law of God." In order to be good in God's sight, they must be according to His law. Good works are demanded of us by God. And so the works of the law, works according to that law are demanded of us. No question of it. And then follows so repeatedly, "What doth God require in the second commandment?" "What is required in the third commandment?" And so it goes literally with the fifth, the sixth, the eighth, the ninth and the tenth commandments. Truly "... and keep His commandments ..." is the teaching of the Scriptures and of our Reformed Confessions.

How can it be otherwise?

Is that not the very essence of our spiritual life? And if God does not demand this of us, does it not follow that He no longer considers it to be sin when we do not keep His commandments? Men can today make so much of it that the law is fulfilled by Christ and from this draw the conclusion that the Ten Commandments are withdrawn. But how then will you explain the words of the author of the epistle to the Hebrews? Mind you, he is busy rebuking the Hebrew Christians for the very opposite tendency. They had been inclined and to a very great degree already had been busy with going back to the Old Testament types and shadows. They, having embraced the truth in Jesus Christ, insisted upon the old ceremonial laws, could not cut themselves loose from the

sacrifices, the temple, the priesthood according to Aaron and all these things which were fulfilled in Christ. Yet to them he declares that God's promises in Christ are realized in this, that God says, I will "put my laws in their hearts, and in their minds will I write them," Hebrews 10:16. If God does not demand that which is written in the law, why does He then write that law in our hearts? Why, too, do we read in Philippians 2:13 that "it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." To do what? To believe? To fear God? Indeed but also to keep His commandments. And note that in the context Paul speaks of obedience.

As we said that is the very essence of our spiritual life. Man is created according to law. The laws of his physical being are very narrow, so narrow that a rise of two or three degrees of the temperature of his body makes him exceedingly miserable; and a rise of five degrees may well bring death to him. He can live without water for only a very short time. He can live without the oxygen in the air for only a few minutes. Hemmed in on every side is he by laws. And spiritually he lives only by the words that proceed from the mouth of God. He does not live by bread alone. He cannot do that. He lives only as He remains in the sphere where God created him. That sphere is the sphere of the love of God, the sphere of doing God's will. And in the Ten Commandments God has expressed to fallen man, who has lost his true knowledge of God and of the sphere wherein he was created, what that will is. And when we do anything contrary to that law we run against the Living God. We violate the very laws of our spiritual existence and do ourselves as much damage as we do when we place our hands on the burning coal of fire. We were not created to touch fire and come out unscathed as the stone of solid granite. Nor were we created to oppose the Living God, Who is a consuming fire. We were created to live in love unto Him and to serve Him. Therefore to our sole duty belongs that we keep His commandments. We must. God demands it of us.

O, yes indeed, we are saved by grace. We must not keep the law in order to save ourselves by that obedience. Then salvation is hopeless. God does not demand that we keep His law as the condition, the prerequisite of our salvation. But He does demand of those who are saved by the blood of the Lamb, of those who are unconditionally promised all the blessedness of His glorious kingdom that they keep His commandments. In fact, He demands the law of the devil, of all his host of evil spirits and of the reprobate who shall never even for one moment have the desire to begin to keep any one of these commandments. But as the Holy God that He is, He demands this of all rational, moral creatures. He is the Unchangeable One, is He not? His demands upon His rational, moral creature do not change even though they cannot do that which He demands. We cannot either until He regenerates us by the Spirit of His Obedient Son. And to

(Continued on page 167)

Contending For The Faith

The Church and the Sacraments

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

THE SEVEN SACRAMENTS.

BAPTISM (continued)

We concluded our previous article with an unfinished quotation from Dr. Bavinck as he wrote on the Romish doctrine of the sacrament of baptism. We now continue with this quotation.

"Grace alone serves to make it again possible for man to merit the heavenly salvation. This was fundamentally even the case with Augustine. Grace, however true it be that it was bestowed without merit, did not consist with him, first of all, in the forgiveness of sins but in regeneration, the infusing of love which enabled one to perform good works and thus acquire everlasting life. The merits do not precede grace and faith, but they do follow upon the same. Later, when the doctrine of the image of God as *donum superadditum* (the gift added in addition, H.V.) arose, this became still worse. The concept, grace, then experienced a significant change. Grace became something that was not only necessary for fallen man; but Adam must also be elevated by it from a common, ordinary man to the image of God. Hence, after the fall grace receives a two-fold task, first to redeem man from sin (*gratia sanationis medicinalis*), and, secondly, to lift him up to the supernatural order (*gratia elevans*). For the first grace is but accidental; for the second it is absolute and physically necessary. Therefore the latter pressed the first more and more upon the background; the ethical contrast of sin and grace makes place for the physical contrast of natural and supernatural. Rome views grace magically, through the means of priest and sacrament, infused into the natural man as a supernatural, created, physical power, which lifts him up to the supernatural order and enables him to merit by good works all subsequent grace and also to merit in this way the heavenly salvation." — end of quote.

Rome, we understand, is thoroughly Arminian and Pelagian in this conception. Our merits do not precede our grace and faith (of course not, as according to Rome) but they follow. In baptism the child receives regeneration (infused grace), and the adult, when baptized, receives a grace which consists of the enlightening of the mind and a strengthening of the will by the Holy Spirit. However, this grace is resistible and man can reject the same. Man can lose the grace bestowed upon him in baptism, but in the grace infused into him he receives the supernatural power to perform good works and thereby merit all subsequent grace, yea everlasting life. Rome maintains the merits of good works. And grace is

magically bestowed, through the means of the priest and the sacrament.

Summarizing the significance of the sacrament of baptism as set forth by the Roman Catholic Church and as therefore constituting one of the seven sacraments, we remark the following. First, the sacrament of baptism is absolutely necessary unto salvation. Incidentally, Augustine also taught that baptism was necessary unto salvation. The Council of Trent decided in its Seventh Session, Canon V, on Baptism, the following, and I quote: "If any one saith, that baptism is free, that is, not necessary unto salvation: let him be anathema." — end of quote. Rome teaches that the sacraments of baptism and penance are necessary unto salvation; or, that the sacrament of penance is absolutely necessary for those who have committed a mortal sin after baptism. Secondly, Rome believes that the sacrament of baptism (as do all the sacraments) contains the grace it signifies, that the sacrament is not merely an outward sign of grace or justice received through faith, and the efficacy of this ordinance lies in the sacramental action itself. Rome maintains that the relation between the sign and the thing signified is physical, and that the reception of the external material necessarily carried with it a participation in the internal or inward material. Thirdly, the sacrament of baptism delivers from the guilt of original sin and of all actual sins committed up to the time of baptism. This means that it delivers infants only from the guilt of original sin. It secures the infusion of sanctifying grace, dependent, however, upon the will of the person receiving it. Man, however, is able to lose this grace through mortal sins; and if he commits these mortal sins penance is required of him. Man can reject this grace but also acquiesce.

This view of baptism was rejected, as we shall see later, by the reformers. Luther understood that the chief part of penance did not consist in the private confessional, whereof Scripture knows nothing, nor in our satisfaction, for God forgives our sins freely, but in a hearty sorrow over sin, in an earnest desire to bear Christ's cross, in a new life, and in the word of grace in Christ. The penitent one does not receive the forgiveness of sin in the way of his satisfaction and priestly satisfaction, but in the way of trusting upon the Word of God, through faith in God's grace. The sacrament does not justify, but faith justifies (although he did not break from Rome, also in this connection, in the complete sense of the word).

THE EUCHARIST

We understand, I am sure, that the chief question in connection with the sacrament of the Eucharist or the Lord's Supper concerns the proper interpretation of the words: "This is My body." That this is the fundamental question lies in the very nature of the case. In the sacrament of the Lord's Supper we eat and drink the body and blood of Christ. This thought is beautifully expressed in John 6:50-56, and we quote: "This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die. I am the

living bread which came down from heaven; if a man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. The Jews, therefore, strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us His flesh to eat? Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him." — end of quote. It is obvious from this passage that we must eat and drink the Lord Jesus Christ. If we do not eat the body of Christ and drink His blood, then we simply have no sacrament, but only a mere form. The question is therefore very important: what is the meaning of the words: "This is My body."

Relative this important question we may say that there are at present four different views concerning the Lord's Supper. There is, first of all, the Roman Catholic view known as Transubstantiation. This word refers literally to a change of substance. Rome simply identifies the sign and the thing obnoxious. They teach that the bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of the Lord. This doctrine of Transubstantiation constitutes a very vital part of the teaching and life of the Church of Rome.

Another view of the Lord's Supper is that which is entertained by the Lutheran Church. This view of the Lord's Supper is known as Consubstantiation. According to the Lutheran conception of the sign and the thing obnoxious, they are not identified. Luther certainly rejected the view that the bread and wine are actually changed into the body and blood of the Lord. However, although the Lutheran conception refuses to identify the two, they do maintain that they are objectively and really connected. Their view, we repeat, is known as Consistentiation. And this means literally: with the substance. Lutheranism maintains that the body and blood of the Lord are really present in, with, and under the bread and the wine. Very strenuously and vehemently the German reformer maintained that Jesus said: This is My body.

A third view of the Lord's Supper is the Calvinistic conception. The Calvinistic view we may designate as the sacramental conception. This conception teaches and emphasizes that the relation between the sign and the thing obnoxious is purely spiritual. It rejects the literal and natural interpretation of Jesus' words: This is My body, and maintains that the bread and wine are purely and exclusively symbolic. The eating and drinking of Christ's body and blood does not occur through the mouth and is exclusively an act of faith. The bread and wine must be separated from Christ's body and blood, are merely symbols of this body and blood. However, this does not mean that the Lord's Supper is merely a remembrance feast, a joyful occasion at which we simply

meditate upon the sufferings and death of our Lord. The Lord's Supper is a sacrament; an operation of grace certainly accompanies our eating and drinking of the bread and wine; only, this relation between the sign and the thing obnoxious is purely spiritual.

The fourth and final view that has been developed in connection with the Lord's Supper is known as the Zwinglian conception. Zwingli was the Swiss Reformer. He entered once with Luther into a very violent and utterly fruitless debate. He disagreed completely with the German reformer, maintaining that Christ is in heaven and not upon the earth. His view may be designated as the symbolical view, the merely symbolical view. He maintained that the elements of the Lord's Supper (the bread and wine) were symbols and nothing more. It is true that the Calvinistic conception also stresses the symbolical character of the bread and the wine. However, we maintain the sacramental relation between these symbols and the Living Bread and Wine, Christ Jesus, our Lord, whereas Zwingli's conception of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is such that this sacrament is a mere feast of remembrance at which we remember the death of a departed friend.

During the earliest period of the Church in the New Dispensation, the so-called first period of the Church, none of these four views had been distinctly and fully developed. This is readily understandable. The Church simply observed the Lord's Supper without entering into its deeper significance. Standing upon the threshold of the New Dispensation, the Church of God did not enjoy the clear understanding of the Scriptures which characterizes the Church of God today. It did not give itself immediately a clear and distinct account of the meaning of this sacrament. However, it may also be observed that also to this sacrament, as to the sacrament of baptism, a profound significance was attached, although it had no clear idea or conception of its significance. And we may also remark that by various writers of this early period, the seeds were sown for the development of all the various views of the Lord's Supper that were to be developed in a later period. More specifically we may observe, in the first place, that the present Roman Catholic doctrine of Transubstantiation was entirely unknown in this early period of the Church. Some views, as those expressed by Ignatius, Justin and Irenaeus, remind us of the present Lutheran doctrine. They emphasize the real presence of the body and blood of the Lord. The North African Church, however, revealed rather clear tendencies toward the Zwinglian conception. However, Clement, Tertullian and Cyprian inclined toward the Calvinistic or sacramental conception. The Lord willing, we will continue with this in our next article.

H.V.

O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Be Thou our guard while troubles last,
And our eternal home.

PLAYS, DRAMA AND TELEVISION

Advertisers like to assure us that the radio is America's number one source of entertainment. If that is true, it only follows that television runs radio a close second.

Television programs have a strong appeal, especially because they reach us through a double set of our strongest senses, through both the eye and the ear simultaneously. Any audio-visual experience makes a deep and lasting impression on us. Therefore a three dimensional picture with sound accompaniment becomes so real to us that the figures seem to step out of the picture into the room, the scent of smoke or of flowers almost seems to fill the air, and a sense of being a party in the activity becomes very acute.

Anyone can well imagine that such audio-visual means of communication has immense possibilities for the future. It will undoubtedly play a prominent part in the education of children. How much more impressive a history lesson becomes if the book with its words and pictures is replaced by a dramatic presentation of the events as they actually happened. How much easier it will be to study geography by means of a travelogue on the screen. Even physiology and civil government will be made simple through talking pictures. With a little stretch of the imagination we can see our children learning languages and mathematics through motion pictures.

From there it is no big step to a marked change in the manner of catechetical instruction. Already today the psychologist frowns on memory work, but would certainly welcome a movie which depicts the lives of the various Bible characters. But in that case, what about the pulpit? Will at some future date Rev. So-and-so be the main character in a Christmas pageant? And will the sermons be moral lessons from actual life displayed on the screen? Will that be the only kind of sermon the future generations will be able to grasp?

But I am not writing about television as such. That is obviously here to stay, until some greater invention replaces it. And a mere blanket statement that condemns the instrument, or all that is produced upon it, will convince no one.

I am writing particularly about television as a source of entertainment through dramatic productions or plays.

That raises the question, what is drama?

Webster defines drama as "A composition, now usually in prose, arranged for enactment, and intended to portray life and character, or to tell a story by actions, and, usually, dialogue tending toward some result based upon them, a play."

We could therefore say that drama is a composition that intends to portray the life and character of individuals, either imaginary or real, by action and dialogue. Or, it could be said, that drama is the audio-visual presentation of the life of some person. The actor places himself in the circumstances

of another, and tries to duplicate that person in some manner before the audience.

We might ask, but is not our daily life and speech full of drama? A child begins to imitate its parents already at a very early age. Johnny holds a pipe in his mouth just as daddy does. Mary talks to her dolls as she hears mother talk to baby sister. A pupil will often adopt the tone inflections, expressions, and mannerisms of a teacher whom he highly respects. We often try to imitate the peculiar motions and dialect of another person in telling a story. In fact, examples can be quoted from Scripture, where the prophets were told to perform certain actions as a demonstration before the eyes of the people. Besides there is a very close similarity between writing a novel and enacting it, or between reading a very interesting book and watching it enacted on the screen.

Now if imitation is a natural and integral part of our lives, does it follow that drama is a legitimate and proper form of entertainment? Should we and our children indulge freely in watching TV programs? And is it also proper for us to attend indoor and outdoor movies? Is it a matter of the place? Or is it a question of degree, as to how much we should indulge, or what kind of plays we should watch? And if it is proper to watch the play on the screen, is it also proper to be an actor in it, and to make the stage a profession for life?

The problem is a serious one and threatens to become more so as time goes on.

In answer to the various questions that have been raised, it is important to make a distinction between *imitation* and *impersonation*.

To imitate means "to follow as a model, pattern, or example; to copy or endeavor to copy in acts, manner, or other wise." Thus you could imitate a farmer plowing a field, a man driving an automobile, or a woman shopping, merely as an outward act, without any display of feeling or emotion. In that case, the question of right or wrong would hardly enter in. Even if those actions are portrayed on the screen, accompanied by some dialogue, the ethics of it can hardly be questioned.

We can even make a demonstration of human actions, which could serve a good purpose. A story told with the proper tone inflections and motions can leave a lasting impression, especially on a child who is very receptive. There is no doubt about it but that audio-visual means of instruction is highly effective.

Even the Bible uses that form of demonstration to bring home very forcefully a certain truth. Elijah on mount Carmel, for example, mockingly urges the Baal priests to cry louder, "for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked." Plainly he mimics their manner of speech concerning their gods, in order to point out how ridiculous and how wicked are all their efforts to persuade Baal to bring God's fire from heaven.

It is, likewise, possible to demonstrate how a murder was committed by imitating the actions of the murderer. A detective may reconstruct the entire crime in order to prove the guilt of the suspect. As much as he plainly abhors the deed he is demonstrating, he will go through all the actions to show that everything fits into the picture as he sees it. But you will readily agree that this is by no means the same as impersonation or even dramatization in its strictest sense.

For impersonation is defined as assuming or acting the person or character of another. That is the prominent element in a play. In order to be successful, an actor must be able to enter into the thoughts and feelings of the person he is portraying. For in the minds of the audience the actor must be so completely associated with the real person that the audience forgets the actor and lives into the life of the real person, as if they were going through the same experience with him. The actor and his audience must be able to put their heart and soul into that experience in order really to enjoy it.

It is, therefore, exactly at this point that dramatization assumes an ethical character, that is, at this point it must be judged to be either right or wrong.

And it hardly needs proof to show that at this point dramatization becomes sin, both for the actor and the audience.

That is quite obviously the case if the actor assumes the character of a murderer or fornicator, as is so frequently done on the screen. The actor must relive the deed even as that person did himself. He must also be able to carry his audience along with him, so that they also are absorbed into the same feelings and emotions that accompany the deed. The degree in which he succeeds will determine the success of the play. How can he do that without making himself and his audience guilty of the sin that is being enacted? And, even if this were possible, how can it ever be right to play sin, and that for the sake of entertainment? Are we not accountable to God for all that we do?

But if it is wrong to play sin, it would seem to follow that it should be perfectly proper to act out that which is holy. Yet again we are confronted with a very serious situation. The actor will play, let us say, the life of Christ, as is done in the Passion plays. The audience will watch him, try to associate him with the sinless Son of God, and share the experiences of Christ anew with the actor, all by dramatization. The very attempt is blasphemous. But it certainly can be no better for an actor to play, and for an audience to watch an enactment of the prayers and soul struggle of Martin Luther, or the spiritual experiences of John Calvin, or Abraham's trial in the sacrifice of Isaac. How can anyone go through those experiences without playing the hypocrite? True enough, he is not actually deceiving anyone into thinking that these are his own experiences. But what is still worse, he is playing the part that does not actually exist in his own soul, but belongs to another. And that before the face of the living God! Are there not many things in our

lives that we can talk about, but only with deepest fear and reverence? These things cannot be dealt with lightly by impersonation.

And since there is no neutral zone in the life of any individual, no area in which we need not love the Lord our God with our whole being, there remains strictly no sphere that can be impersonated without treading upon either the holy or the unholy.

Dr. L. Greenway writes in a similar strain in his book, *Basic Questions About Christian Behavior*, copied in the May-June, 1958, issue of *Torch and Trumpet*, "Some of us are inclined to believe that dramatic and theatrical filming is basically wrong. We believe that God has given every individual his own unique creatural distinction in life and that it is sinful for anyone habitually to reshape his individuality and to twist his personality for dramatic purposes. To 'make love' or to display anger, sorrow, fear or elation under artificial stimulation is a profanation of gifts and powers which God intends shall be used only in sincerity and truth."

The evil of dramatics is also borne out by its evil consequences.

There is a real danger of losing our spiritual sensitivity by dealing lightly with the holy and the unholy. Those who make it a practice to watch the many plays on television can become so calloused to sin, that they can no longer distinguish clearly between the holy and the unholy, or between right and wrong. Promiscuous love making, vengeance, stealing, and gun play become common things in the lives of growing children as well as adults. Just watch the child on the street enacting the part of a western cowboy, or the like. That may account, at least in part, for the many gruesome murders done in cold blood, and the bold thefts that make headlines in the daily papers, as well as for much of the parental and juvenile delinquency of our day.

Moreover, there is no small danger that we are producing an illiterate generation, that not only is too lazy to exert itself, but also is no longer interested in reading and writing, thinking and reasoning. It is so much easier to watch a play on television than to spend the time laboriously reading the book. It is so much simpler to page through a picture magazine than to study the current events. It seems to become increasingly difficult for our young people to memorize their catechism lessons or to write an essay for the society, even though they have a much broader education than their parents ever had. The education they receive may very well surpass anything that the past has ever known, but this education is not brought into practice, so that it is soon forgotten. No wonder that there is such a general complaint that doctrinal matters are too deep, church papers are too dry, and the Scriptures themselves too difficult to grasp.

And finally, television is a great time consumer. Meetings for adults cannot be attended because they interfere with

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DECENCY and ORDER

Can the Classis Depose the Consistory — A Report!

The relation of the local church to the denomination is comparable to the relation of a member to the local church. In both cases the joining is voluntary. In relation to Christ, it is an act of obedience to the command of Christ because neither a member nor a local church ought to remain separate but should unite themselves with other members of the body of Christ. Yet, from their side, in relation to the denominational bond it remains a voluntary act. Whenever then a member becomes unruly and is threatened with discipline and he declares that he severs the relation with the church; such a member must answer to God but then the church cannot proceed with the discipline but has to declare that such a member has terminated his relation with the church. This is then also the viewpoint that the Christian Reformed Church in the Synod of 1918 rightly took. And even so, a local church has to answer before God whenever she does not fulfill her duties toward the denomination and fails to act in agreement with the acts of fellowship (according to Art. 31) and also actually breaks the denominational bond but the right to that even as the responsibility for it rests with the local church that functions through her lawful office-bearers.

The same position (viewpoint) is adopted by Voetius. Speaking on the question (Book I, Pg. 11, Chap. V, Ques. XXII), "Whether any part of the ecclesiastical power, also the excommunication, in case of misbehaviour and incurable evil, belongs to the Synodical gathering of the churches and can be executed by her?" he gives the answer: "I do not see why this can be denied in the cases and circumstances aforementioned." And then he states further in Answer XXII that "through some novices (recensiores, that is, independents) the power of excommunication is called in question but this by others, through distinguishing and reconciling of conflicting views, is so explained that in the case of misconduct, the direction and preparation of the decision but not the excommunication itself, belongs with the Synod; that nevertheless, the excommunication itself or, if you will, the execution of it must be left to the local church." Then he speaks of two cases. The first case wherein a part of the consistory is yet healthy. The second case that is related to the present question, is that wherein a congregation, together with the consistory, is hopelessly incurable and made themselves worthy of the excommunication. He then gives this solution: "Yet these distinctions (namely, guidance, preparation and executing) do not raise difficulties in the aforementioned cases. Those who with us acknowledge the Synodical power must also reckon to the Synod the power of *excommunication*; if not formally, then yet *in the place of coming action* through which the curse is announced with the warning of

peace, the brotherhood, and the special Synodical correspondence, whether publicly or secretly or by both means."

Now it to all appearances would seem that Voetius here advocates the deposition of a consistory by the Synod because he speaks of "*excommunication*." But that he by this does not mean this but has in mind the setting outside of the denomination as also the *ex-communication* (to place outside the communion) indicates, is evident from many considerations: (1) Out of the fact that also other Reformed authorities of this time spoke of excommunication in the same vein (spirit); Hoornbeek, a well-known authority in the sphere of Church Right and a disciple of Voetius, combatting the recensiores (novices) and independents in his *Summa Contraversiarum* (pg. 771) mentions that the Reformed Synods can absolutely not administer any hierarchical jurisdiction over the local churches and then these independents answer that whenever they speak of banning a church from the denomination and having no fellowship with such a church, it is the same as when the Reformers speak of excommunication, and to this the Reformers have no objection. And also the same position is taken by the Reformed Churches of Scotland. Rev. John Brown, in his book, *Vindication of the Presbyterian Form of Church Government as Professed in the Standards of the Church of Scotland* (pg. 202), combatting the well-known Dr. Owen who was an independent, mentions that the *courts of review* for which he strove could only give blunt advice as follows: "Dr. Owen affirms, however, in common with Goodwin, that if this particular congregation does not comply with the decision of a Synod or Assembly, all the churches, whose representatives sit in these courts, may withhold communion from it. Is not this, however, by whatever name you call it, as much authority over this particular congregation, even by the pastors and members of other churches, as is ever assumed by a Presbyterian Synod?" (2) Secondly, it appears from the quotations of Voetius itself when he speaks of "*excommunication*," then he himself explains how he will have that understood when he says, "Those who with us acknowledge the Synodical power must also reckon to the Synod the power of excommunication; if not formally then yet in the place of coming action through which the curse is announced *with warning of peace, the brotherhood, and the special Synodical correspondence*, whether publicly or secretly or by both means." Such an excommunication can never mean setting out of the office but is the same as banishment from the denomination.

There are in these pages various quotations of Voetius that prove that he reckoned to the broader gathering the right to depose (*af te zetten*) a consistory. But in our opinion these quotations do not prove this. All the time it shall be noted that Voetius teaches that in the last analysis the formal act of deposition is done by the congregation.

Historically it appears, in our opinion, also from the cases mentioned by Reitsema and Van Veen, that the Reformed Synods, etc., indeed advised and decided that consistories

were to be deposed, but whether such should occur, the actual act of deposition, took place through the local church, according to the form of deposition of South Holland, 1619, then also presupposed. Yet, to prove this in detail would make our report too long and we refer, therefore, to what is presented regarding this from both sides.

Also the authorities in the Netherlands of later date all speak agreeably with us. All teach that a Classis cannot depose a Consistory. Not only is this the sentiment of Dr. Rutgers and Dr. H. H. Kuyper of the Free University, but as much that of Dr. Bouwman of the Theological School in Kampen. The last named writes in a published letter to Dr. J. Van Lonkhuyzen as follows: "Your question whether I have even in my lectures said that a Classis can depose a consistory, surprises me somewhat. I do not remember ever having taught this *and I would say that this is impossible*. (Italics ours). The Classis can help the consistory in the deposition of an elder. The Classis can also, when a consistory is completely in error or acts contrary to the right of the Church and her confessions, help the congregation in the election of another consistory, but the Classis may not act without the congregation. In 1905, when the question of N. Pekela was treated on the Synod, and I was deputed with Dr. Hania and Rev. Breukelaar to restore order in cases there, I strongly maintained this principle. The churches in general must not do what belongs to the consistory. According to Reformed Church Right, if the whole denomination (this should be "consistory") is corrupt and there is no normal way to rectify it, the power of the church reverts back to the congregation and the denomination can and must then offer help so that another consistory is chosen in the place of the unfaithful one."

C. Intentionally we wrote firstly of the discussion of Reformed principles and the references to Reformed authorities as also indicating wherein the members of the committee were and were not agreed and saved the discussion of the articles of the Church Order to the last. From the foregoing it can be made evident what the leading principles of our Church Right are as also wherein lies the point of difference. The point of difference is not whether a Classis has jurisdiction over the Consistory. That is by all heartily agreed. But concerning the question: "How far does that jurisdiction extend?" In the event that this jurisdiction of the Classis reaches so far that the Classis not only can nullify certain decisions of the local church but can depose the local consistory, what then remains of the autonomy of the local church? For the right of a consistory to remain in continuance is certainly the last (thing) that a consistory can be deprived of. If the denomination (federation of churches) has the right to this, then the denomination can do anything if it considers such to be necessary. And then we are on a hierarchical line!

But does the Church Order anywhere give the right to the Classis or Synod to depose a Consistory? The following

articles of the Church Order must be considered more closely: Articles 30, 31, 79, and 84.

Article 30 already indicates that the task and sphere of the broader gatherings is more limited than that of the minor gathering for it emphatically declares: "In major assemblies only such matters shall be dealt with as could not be finished in minor assemblies, or such as pertain to the churches of the major assembly in common." From this is evident that the Consistories do not relegate all their power to the Classis for as Ds. J. Jansen expresses it: "Overagainst ten cases that a consistory can finish there stand perhaps *one* that requires the help of the broader gathering." (*Jansen Korte Verklaring van de Kerkenordening*, Pg. 142). That the Classis does not have all power over the consistory, even to deposition, but is limited in her power is clearly evident from this article.

Article 31 maintains the binding power of ecclesiastical decisions. This article cuts off all striving toward independency, as if anyone did not need to observe the decisions of the broader gatherings in case they did not agree with them. The decisions of the broader gatherings are binding also if a consistory is not in agreement, as has been written before. Only then when the decisions are proven to conflict with the Word of God or the Articles of the Church Order, do men have the right to oppose them. In this case it can appear necessary that a consistory forsakes the denomination instead of subjecting itself to them. As, according to Ds. Jansen (*Korte Verklaring*, Pg. 147). "Voetius also says that a local church that is compelled to enforce a decision that is found to conflict with the Word of God, if need be must leave the denomination rather than to act contrary to the Word of God and conscience." Yet, as long as a consistory remains in the denomination, she must submit herself to the decisions. But in this article the right to depose a consistory is nowhere given.

Article 36 acknowledges to the Classis jurisdiction and *the same* jurisdiction over the consistory as the particular Synod has over the Classis and the General Synod has over the Particular Synod. But, on the other side, the power of the Classis does not reach as far as the consistory so that, if need be, it can do what belongs to the consistory. It follows from this that the line is not carried through for it does not say: "The consistory has the same jurisdiction over the congregation as the Classis has over the consistory." According to Voetius and Rutgers, it is evident from this that the power of the broader gathering is not identical with that of the consistory. A Particular Synod would not depose a Classis though, if need be, it may declare it outside of the denomination. If then a Classis has the same jurisdiction over the Consistory as the Particular Synod has over her, then the right of deposition is not given to her but the right to declare a Consistory outside the denomination is.

From Article 79, that treats the deposition of ministers of the Word by the Classis and the deposition of elders and

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ALL AROUND US

"Make Up Your Mind!"

Such was the title of a radio sermon delivered sometime ago by the Rev. Peter Eldersveld on *The Back to God Hour* sponsored by the Christian Reformed Church. The brother who gave me the copy of this sermon also wrote some interesting marginal notes in the copy which clearly indicate that he has been blessed with Reformed sensitiveness. He felt, as I did when I read the sermon, that Eldersveld really went all out to imitate Billy Graham with his *Hour of Decision* for Christ.

We do not intend to quote the entire sermon but to give our readers a few snatches to show what happens when you adopt the doctrinal position of the Christian Reformed Church on common grace with its general offer of grace in the preaching of the gospel. Before we do so, however, we wish to make this remark, that Rev. Eldersveld is not always as bad as he was in this sermon. Though we do not have opportunity to listen to all of his sermons, we have heard quite a few, and sometimes, in our judgment, he delivers sermons which are quite Reformed. Then again, you can hear one that makes you wonder whether he ever heard the word "Reformed." The latter is certainly the case with the sermon to which we now refer. Eldersveld begins the sermon with the following:

"Have you made up your mind about Jesus Christ? Millions of people are confronted by the gospel of the crucified and risen Christ, in one way or another, almost inescapably, but many of them have not come to any decision about Him. They are impressed, they pause for a moment to think about the matter, they are even attracted to Jesus, but then they go on their way again; like the passing multitudes at the cross 1900 years ago, as Luke put it: "... all the people that came together at that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned." That's all! So too these people today. They look at the Lord on the cross and at the empty tomb, and leave Him—not necessarily rejecting Him, as many others do, but just postponing the whole problem, or avoiding it, or trying to forget it for a while. They don't want to decide, or they don't know what to decide.

"Maybe you are one of them. If so, there is no point in procrastination. You won't gain a thing by it. In fact, you stand to lose a lot by it. For your own sake you ought to come to a decision. You can't go on this way. You'll be miserable, you won't have a moment of real peace in your soul. For you won't be able to put the question aside. It will always be with you. As the old hymn puts it:

Jesus is standing in Pilate's hall—
Friendless, forsaken, betrayed by all:
Hearken! what meaneth the sudden call!
What will you do with Jesus?

Will you evade Him as Pilate tried?
Or will you choose Him, whate'er betide?
Vainly you struggle from Him to hide:
What will you do with Jesus?

What will you do with Jesus?
Neutral you cannot be;
Some day your heart will be asking,
What will He do with me?

"The question of personal salvation, of getting right with God through faith in Jesus Christ, is the primary question for all of us as individuals, isn't it? For we are sinners by nature, and our basic need is salvation from sin. Why do so many people put it off indefinitely? In one way or another, they are constantly saying to God: not just yet, wait a while!"

The brother who gave me this sermon wrote at this point this question: "Where is God's almighty power?" And I would ask the same question. It seems that Rev. Eldersveld was moved more by the hymn he quoted than he was by the Word of God at this point. Throughout the sermon we could not help feeling a little as Elijah must have felt when on Carmel he mocked with the Baal priests concerning their god. But Eldersveld continues:

"That doesn't make sense, does it? It may be natural for a man to postpone doing the more disagreeable things of life, but why does he postpone the salvation of his immortal soul? He commits a twofold blunder: he robs himself of living his life with Christ, and, if he persists in his folly, he discovers eventually that he will have to live forever without Him. For salvation is both temporal and eternal. A man should believe in Christ not only because he doesn't know how soon he may die, but also because he doesn't know how long he may live. It will be a terrible thing to spend eternity without any Savior, but it is also a terrible thing to spend time without Him. So why keep putting Him off? What is this perversity in human nature?

"Moreover, how do men dare to treat God that way? They are punctual for their business appointments; they are on time for their weddings; they hurry to catch a train or punch a clock, or to open their stores for trade. When the government calls them for military service, and tells them to be on hand or induction at a specific time, they will be there without fail. In response to a court summons they never say, not just yet, wait a while! But when God calls them to faith in Jesus Christ, they think they can keep Him waiting indefinitely. And, in fact, they often give every indication that they do not even take Him very seriously. It's a wonder that His patience is not more quickly exhausted, that He actually bothers to call them again and again before He finally gives up on them altogether. But He does, He even pleads with them, in tones of infinite love and mercy:

Softly and tenderly Jesus is calling,
Calling, O sinner, come home!

"But don't get the wrong idea about this patience of

Jesus. It doesn't mean that He is quite willing to put up with your procrastination for a while, that He doesn't care if you postpone your decision and keep Him waiting. On the contrary, He considers it a very bad thing, a terrible sin, and He said so in no uncertain terms."

Where Eldersveld asks the question: "What is this perversity in human nature?" the brother who gave me a copy of the sermon wrote in the margin the answer: "Total depravity." He sensed as I did that this is a marked weakness in the entire sermon that Rev. Eldersveld failed to tell his radio audience that man by nature is in total spiritual darkness, and therefore cannot will to be saved. But Eldersveld really leaves his audience with the impression that man can will to be saved, but he is just putting it off.

Besides, Eldersveld again seems to be moved more by a hymn than he is by the Word of God when he describes the Lord as one whose patience should be almost expended because of man's procrastination. O, he warns that we should not have a wrong idea of this patience; he tells us that Jesus considers it a terrible sin to procrastinate; but there He stands nevertheless, softly and tenderly calling the sinner who obstinately refuses to heed His call.

The brother to whom I referred above as making marginal notes wrote here in the margin: "What a poor, weak God, who wants to save you, and can't, so He gives up." Well, again I must agree with him. And I would add, this is so pathetic because we all know that Eldersveld knows better. There is nothing distinctly Reformed in this preaching. It is the same stuff you get from the majority of Arminian preachers. Jesus wants you badly, O sinner, but you are so obstinate, you refuse to heed His pleading. If you would only heed His call, things could be so much better for you. But so long as you refuse to heed His tender call, you keep Him waiting.

One wonders, if this were true, what happens to Matthew 1:21 where we are told "He *shall* save His people from their sins." Of this you hear nothing in the sermon.

But Rev. Eldersveld might say at this point, "well, I wasn't preaching on Matthew 1:21. I was referring to the text found in Luke 9:61, 62 where you read of the man whom the Lord called to follow Him, but who replied, 'Lord, I will follow Thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house.' I was speaking in my sermon of a man who offered on the surface a very legitimate excuse for procrastinating."

And, of course, we shall have to grant Rev. Eldersveld his objection. But this does not make the sermon he presented any better. Referring to the text in Luke, Eldersveld writes:

"Now on the surface that sounds like a very legitimate reason for delay, doesn't it? But evidently Jesus didn't think so, for in reply He said one of the hardest things He ever said in His whole ministry. With real contempt in His voice He said: 'No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of heaven.'

"What did He mean? Well, actually this was a very dangerous and a very insulting case of postponement, and Jesus knew that it would only lead to something far worse. That man was not just asking for time to take leave of his loved ones. He was looking back fondly on all the things he would have to forsake, the sinful pleasures from which he simply could not break away. He was really asking for 'one last fling' before he became a Christian. For that's what he meant when he said that he wanted to 'bid farewell' to the folks at home. That was the custom of his day — one big final celebration, which might go on for days, and even weeks, with all the wickedness of dissipation and debauchery. Jesus never spoke more harshly than He did on this occasion: 'No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of heaven.'

"What a scathing indictment! He told him he wasn't fit to be saved! Of course, he wasn't, for he was going too far with his procrastination. Imagine a man saying to Christ: let me go back into sin just once more before You save my soul! You just wait here until I come back from a round of godless pleasure, which will add to the guilt from which I must be delivered! Imagine a man who isn't quite ready to be redeemed from the very thing that damns his soul, who wants the Son of God to stand by and watch him sin for a while before He saves him!"

We haven't the space to quote more, but this will suffice to show the trend of the rest of the sermon. One gets the impression that one must be "fit to be saved" before he can be saved. Also there are many lost who are apparently not "fit to be saved." The brother who gave me this sermon wrote in the margin, "What makes a man fit to be saved?" Eldersveld's answer is evidently: "A man is fit to be saved who no longer procrastinates, but accepts Christ as His Savior." And this is exactly the answer of the Arminian. Man is not lost, accordingly, but he will be if he does not accept the offer of salvation.

Rev. Eldersveld tells us that Jesus is tenderly calling, graciously waiting, and if you make Him wait too long He may go away and never come back to you again. Then it will be forever too late. We ask: is this not the same presentation as that of the multitude of Arminian preachers today? This may be the tactic of an association such as the Billy Graham Association, but this can hardly be the mission and ministry of the Christian Church, especially not of a Reformed Church.

M.S.

Conference

Office Bearers' Conference January 6 at 8 P. M. in our Hope Church.

Rev. H. Hoeksema will speak on the topic "The Origin and History of Church Visitation in Connection with Article 44 of Our Church Order."

All past and present consistory members are urged to be present.
Sec. H. Veltman

QUESTION HOUR

Held after Address at Hull Mass Meeting

July, 1953

Questioner: Rev. H. C. Hoeksema

Answers by: Rev. H. Hoeksema

(Continued)

Question: Why was this meeting called by the Committee for Protestant Reformed Action, and why were all our ministers with the exception of one, and all our consistories by-passed? Doesn't that look very suspicious?

Speaker: Well, that's up to my son to answer. I've no business there.

Chairman: It's been mostly answered. The purpose of the meeting is plain tonight: it was called for information. By-passing the ministers and consistories? That has nothing to do with the matter. The organization is free. We did not by-pass them either. Every minister was informed and asked to announce it, and he had the right, if he wanted to and as I understand some did, to bring it to their consistories before they announced it on the bulletins. They were invited as well as the members of the churches to be present here tonight. And they're invited if they wish to go along with us in our Committee for Protestant Reformed Action still, as we invite all of you who wish to support us in this work.

Question: Here's the next question: Rumors have it that you said at the mass meeting in Grand Rapids that too many people went along in 1924, that you are not interested in numbers, etc. I would like to know: 1) How do you explain that in those days you traveled all over the country, wherever you found an opening, and organized various churches and were willing to accept almost anybody without asking any questions as to their doctrinal soundness? May we have a little light on this? 2) Is it true that you are not interested in numbers? If so, how come you are here out West right now?

Answer: Both questions can be answered very easily. The first is not true. Anyone that has heard me from 1924 on here in the West knows very well that that is not true. I never asked people to organize as churches before they understood the doctrine, before they understood our position against the Three Points and against the doctrine of common grace. I remember in those years I spoke for two hours and a half in a stretch to explain to the people again and again and again the doctrine of the Three Points. Did I ask for people, for members? Did I ever look for members? I did not. I say before you and before God that that was never my purpose. The same is true of this meeting. You think I came here to gather people? I told you again and again this evening that I didn't. I want you to know the truth, and then make your own decision. I thank you.

Question: Did you and Rev. Ophoff vote on the evening of June 22, and thus voted in your own case?

Answer: I did not. I did not vote in my own case. That was the case of the elders and the Rev. De Wolf, as had already been decided by the Classis. It was no longer a case of me. It was a classical decision. And as soon as it became a classical decision, I certainly as elder had not only the right but the duty to vote. And I did.

Question: Why were the 11 elders and Rev. De Wolf not notified of the consistory meeting which you called together on the evening of June 23? Doesn't that look bad for the public for our churches?

Answer: I already explained that, I think, didn't I? The reason why they were not notified is simply that it was not necessary to notify them at all, because they had already voted against their own suspension.

Question: How can you people defend before the churches, before God, that you deposed an elder from his office who had scarcely served in the consistory for 2 days and with whom you never had labored?

Answer: I explained that too.

Question: Why do you not read the apology of the Rev. De Wolf without all your own additions and explanations?

Answer: Well, that's my business, I think. I read the apology literally and faithfully. And with my own comments, as I will make them anytime, anywhere. It certainly is . . . I have the right to explain to you why that apology is no good. That's certainly my right. Certainly is.

Question: Does not the Bible read, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved"? Am I not directed to work out my salvation with fear and trembling? These questions are asked removed from the context, as you accuse Rev. De Wolf in removing his statements from their context.

Answer: I don't know what that means. Of course, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved? I'll preach on that if you want me to. In fact, I think if I may preach on that, I'll preach on that next Sunday in Doon, — if they let me preach; I don't know whether they will. But otherwise I'll preach on that very text. That's very beautiful text, by the way. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you'll be saved. Do you think that means the same thing as saying, "God promises everyone of you salvation if you believe"? Can you discern? Of course, if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Listen. Maybe I won't preach on it Sunday. Maybe I won't preach Sunday. But if I'd preach on it now, I'd say this: If I say, "Believe," it means nothing. Don't forget that. I say to you, "Believe," and to you, "Believe," and to you, "Believe?" Has no effect. No effect upon the elect. And no effect upon the reprobate. No effect at all. But if Christ says, "Believe," — not I, but Christ, as was the case with the Philippian jailer, thru the preaching of Paul.

If Christ says, "Believe," then that preaching has a two-fold effect. Upon the elect it has the effect that they will believe, as the jailer did. And upon the reprobate it has the effect that they become mad and hardened, and aggravate their judgment. That's what Christ says, not when I say anything. So, if I ever preach on that, then you can depend on that, I'll preach on it in that light. I thank you.

Question: Two more questions: Is it always necessary for a consistory to abide by decisions of Classis? That's the first one.

Answer: No. But, if the matter is serious, as was in this case, and if then the consistory would not abide by the decision of classis, then, of course, the only course of action to take is that they separate themselves, after they have appealed to synod, and synod has justified classis, — the only way is that they separate themselves from the churches. Or, that the churches express that since they do not abide by the decision of the major assemblies, they are no longer of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

Question: This is the last one: Some seem to be of the opinion that the consistory meeting where Rev. De Wolf and the elders that stood with him were suspended was an illegal meeting, as they had not called the Rev. De Wolf and the elders. What is the church political procedure on such a particular case.

Answer: There is, as I said, there is nothing in the Church Order that calls for a meeting with the elders that are to be deposed and the minister that is to be suspended, — there's nothing in the Church Order that requires anything of the kind. And as I said in my talk, or in my answer, there are plenty examples, historical examples, to the contrary.

Speaker: Well, is this the last?

Chairman: That's all.

Speaker: Well, brethren, I hope that you have not found me personally offensive. You cannot say that. You cannot go out and say that I was offensive. I was not. I avoided personal enmity, malice, and hatred. There's nothing in my heart that even has anything to do with it. All my purpose was that you may be acquainted with the case. Nothing else. Please bear that in mind. Bear that in mind. Please consider the question itself. And if you come to the conclusion that I'm all wrong, all right. Same good friends, but not in the same church. Remember that. I said in my introduction, "I'm not looking for converts. I'm not looking for crowds. I'm not looking for numbers." It's up to you now. I've done my best. I have it off my conscience. It's up to you to decide. I'm very glad, nevertheless, that you came. It's always disappointing when people are not even interested to know the truth or to judge the truth. For that reason I'm very glad that you came. I thank you for your attention. And I say to you, "God's blessing. Good-bye."

IN HIS FEAR

(Continued from page 157)

us He promises that we shall be brought into His kingdom where, as holy citizens we shall fully do all that which He, the King, demands.

We appreciate the man who abhors the philosophy and theory of conditional promises of the Unchangeable God. We, too, hate every semblance of denying God His glory. But we, therefore, would uphold His glory as the Unchangeable God Who created us in righteousness and holiness and by the blood and Spirit of His Son restores us to a life of keeping His commandments, now in principle and presently in heavenly perfection.

J.A.H.

PLAYS, DRAMA AND TELEVISION

(Continued from page 161)

some favorite program. There is no time to prepare for society because entertainment comes first. And some would have to admit, if they were honest with themselves, that they enjoy a TV program much more than a church service. Likewise, the children are walking in the footsteps of their parents, even as in the days of the Judges (Judges 1:10-12). Children are just "too busy" to prepare for catechism, "too busy" to study the Scriptures, too busy for the important things of life.

In conclusion, there is undoubtedly a place in our lives for an audio-visual presentation of the facts of our daily life, particularly in the realm of education. But it is also a fact that plays have become a real menace in the Christian home, for the old as well as for the young. It may be well for some to get rid of the TV set and to give the Bible its proper place in the home once more.

C.H.

DECENCY AND ORDER

(Continued from page 163)

deacons "by preceding sentence of the consistory thereof and of the nearest church," is the argument established that a Classis can depose a whole consistory. The deposition of ministers of the Word is by this article definitely entrusted to the Classis. And an elder or deacon is deposed by the foregoing sentence of the consistory and of the nearest church. Therefore, it can also be done by the Classis. And if a Classis can depose one member of a consistory or a minority of a consistory, then she can also depose a whole consistory. Thus goes the argumentation!

But is this conclusion correct?

(Next time, D.V.)

G.V.D.B.

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

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

December 20, 1958

The Radio Committee of First Church is looking forward. Forward, that is, to February 12, when they intend to give a program; theme: "Progress Report of 1959." If you live in the Grand Rapids area, be sure to circle that date when you hang up your new calendar.

The Hope, Holland and Hudsonville bulletins always seem to have announcements regarding the Hope School. It surely has a large place in the hearts of the members of those churches, and well may they be proud of their school. The children rendered a Christmas program in First Church Thursday evening, Dec. 18. It was a marvelous program, from the rhythm band — with its clashing cymbals — to the Hallelujah Chorus. Notwithstanding the defect of the piano by going slightly out of tune during some of the solo work, the audience thoroughly enjoyed the whole program. The theme, "The Lord is My Shepherd" was carried through the entire evening by speeches, songs and chalk artists. It surely is heart-warming, in the midst of a world-conforming "Christmas Rush," to be called to celebrate Christmas with our children from Sunday School and day school.

The ancient practice of Christmas caroling was revived in Grand Rapids this year by at least two groups. The young people from Creston joined those of First Church to sing carols at the Holland Home, and at the home of Rev. and Mrs. Ophoff. After the caroling they met at First Church for a Christmas party.

The other group comprised the choir from Adams St. School, all forty-seven of them, with Mr. and Mrs. Fred Hanko, Miss Dykstra and, of course, Miss Kuiper singing with them. They sang at the homes of several shut-ins, slipping and sliding down slippery front steps. That couldn't happen in Redlands!

Both the servicemen of First Church are in the Air Force, John Bult, who was home on a Christmas furlough; and Donald Ezinga, who was recently inducted.

Doon has reduced the furnace debt from \$1,500.00 to \$512.00 through a drive and other collections. Doon's Men's Society will start the new year by studying the Book of Revelation, having finished the Book of Romans.

The new address of Southeast's pastor is 1543 Cambridge, S. E. The Rev. Veldman's family moved to the new parsonage Wednesday, Dec. 17. To meet the requirements of the City tax laws, the new house had to be occupied in December in order to benefit from the tax-free status of church-owned buildings.

Adams St. ninth graders worked hard getting ready for,

and serving a spaghetti supper on the evening of December 12. Dishing out spaghetti, pouring second cups of coffee and serving ice cream and desserts kept them busy — with a little assist from their parents. It is reported that some six hundred mouths were fed — that took quite a mountain of spaghetti!

Mr. Kortering of Holland's Men's Society gave a paper on "The Salvation of Infants" at the joint meeting held at Southwest Church.

Holland's people, like those of Hudsonville, must share transportation costs, besides tuition fees, to furnish Protestant Reformed education for their children at Hope School. Good things are usually expensive, but our people do not complain over this burden; Oak Lawn and South Holland also testify to that fact with their continued efforts to build a school of their own.

No doubt, but you have already read the decision, handed down by the Superior Court of Grand Rapids, as it is found on the Editorial page of this issue.

Hudsonville heard the public Confession of Faith of twelve of their young people Sunday, Dec. 14. Also from Hudsonville: Donald Dykstra, Jr. has completed his service for Uncle Sam, and John Kamp's induction was postponed for a while.

Rev. Mulder was unable to occupy Kalamazoo's pulpit Sunday, Dec. 7, because of a cold. Student Kortering was called in to break the Bread of Life in his stead.

Rev. Emanuel reminded the people of Randolph that the Reformed Witness Hour is broadcast at 9 a. m. during the winter months when the station signs off at 4 p. m. Randolph's two servicemen are John and Jim De Vries.

Another situation impossible to arise in Redlands: The Men's Society meeting of South Holland scheduled for Dec. 8 was frozen out!

Hope School P.T.A. meeting of Dec. 12 scheduled a round table discussion on "Manual Training." The ninth graders were on hand to sell Rev. Hoeksema's books and subscription to *Beacon Lights*.

From Lynden we learn that Mrs. Harbach was saddened by the death of her mother, who passed away Friday, Dec. 5. Their bulletin expressed this prayer: "May the Lord, who is our only comfort in life and in death, sustain her and the bereaved relatives."

Now that we have exchanged gifts on Christmas eve; wished one another a blessed Christmas; discarded the tree and tinsel; and realize that Christmas is all "over" — let us remember: that because Jesus came to be born in our flesh we have borne the image of the earthy and shall also bear the image of the heavenly; that this mortal shall put on immortality. Therefore, let our watchword for the year 1959 be: "Be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord!"

. . . see you in church.

J.M.F.