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MEDITATION

THE PURPOSE OF CHRIST'S COMING

*"Think not that I am come to send peace on earth:
I came not to send peace, but a sword."*

MATT. 10:34

"..... and on earth peace"

LUKE 2:14b

"..... The Prince of Peace."

ISA. 9:6b

Higher criticism delights to find contradictions in the Bible.

Well, the above texts seem to teach such.

On the one hand we have heard the song of the nightingale in the Old Testament: Isaiah. He sang beautifully of the coming of Jesus. And he told us even of the various names which He would bear. In Isaiah 9:6 we read, "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

Later, much later, we heard the song of the heavenly host at the birth of this Prince of Peace, and here are the words of that glorious song: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

And so both Isaiah and Luke agree: Jesus is the Prince of Peace, and He shall, as such, bring peace upon the earth.

However, when Jesus began to teach He seems to tell us the very opposite. Especially Luke's version is emphatic: "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace to the earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division."

And so, again, higher criticism once more has a hellish delight in pointing to another (?) contradiction in Scripture.

Indeed, there are more texts that seem to stand in opposition to Matt. 10:34 and Luke 12:51-53. Read, e.g., Eph. 2:14, 15: "For He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of

commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace."

And Zacharias the priest sang of Him: "To guide our feet into the way of peace!"

Is it not startling that Jesus seems to contradict the Holy Spirit in Isaiah, Zacharias and the angels in the fields of Ephratha?

We have heard from our youth, yes, even from our earliest infancy that the Bible is true; that the real Writer of the Bible is God, from Genesis to Revelation; that God cannot contradict Himself.

If there is one thing which is cemented in the hearts of the little ones when they come to their first catechism class it is this: The Bible is true! God is true! Jesus is true!

Does it then not shock us when we hear Jesus say: Think ye not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword!

* * * *

It is my habit to say to persons, to the devil and to myself when confronted with so-called contradictions in the Bible: God is true!

I cannot believe that there are contradictions in the Bible. The very thought is monstrous.

I readily admit that there are difficult texts in the Bible, and that it is difficult to harmonize one text with another. I will also admit that the branch of study called Textual criticism is warranted, although I hasten to add that we should be very careful with that branch of study.

But even after we have studied a seeming contradiction in the Bible and have not come upon a satisfying solution, I am ready to confess: O Lord! I cannot understand this or these texts, but I confess that it is because of my stupidity. Thy name is TRUTH! Amen.

* * * *

However, in the case of the above texts there is only a *seeming* contradiction.

Let me show you first that the expression of Jesus in Matt. 10:34 is according to Divine Planning.

The plan of the Almighty for all of history is exactly as Jesus expressed Himself: He came not to bring peace on earth but the sword, or, according to Luke: division!

The Plan of God is war, division, strife, rebellion, blood and tears. The first revelation of that plan is uttered in Paradise: And I will put enmity between thee (the devil) and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

This was spoken by God to the devil who stood before Him in the guise of a serpent.

And this statement by our God is confirmed soon after in the slaughter of innocent Abel, and the subsequent struggle between the two seeds. On the one hand we see in all history the seed of the devil, and on the other hand we see the seed of the woman, that is, the church.

That struggle started at once; it continued every moment of time since; it is with us right here and now; it shall continue unabated until the last moment of history.

Listen to Enoch, the seventh from Adam: "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."

Enoch is only the seventh from Adam, and note the intensity of the warfare which God brought upon the earth, by putting enmity between the devil and the church.

Next note the appellation which the Holy Ghost gave to Noah: the preacher of righteousness! Noah was not the preacher of the Gospel of God, but of righteousness.

God did not decree any positive fruit either: the ark had no room for many thousands, while there must have been millions of men upon the earth.

The theme of Noah's preaching must have been: The flood is coming; The flood is coming! And all because of your unrighteousness! God will come to convict all of you! In one hundred and twenty years he had not one convert.

But what a battle!

It was not any different in the days of Nimrod, the mighty hunter before the Lord.

In his days the tower of Babel was an attempt of wicked men to maintain themselves against the Lord and His people.

But the time would fail me to tell you of the unrest, the strife and the conflict between God and His anointed on the one hand, and the devil and his seed on the other hand. I would have to tell you of Nineveh, Syria, the Chaldeans; also of men like Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Alexander the Great, Antiochus Epiphanes, and more of their godless ilk.

But in all the ages we see nought but the holy war

of God on the earth. Wherever God manifests Himself among men, you find the godless reaction of the devil and his followers. Wherever Jehovah reveals Himself there you always find war, bloodshed, division and unrest.

A great weariness comes over you when you follow God's footsteps in the Old Testament: the patriarchs, the judges, the kings, the priests and the prophets. There are the foes without the camps of the seed of the woman, but also the foes within the gates of Zion. At one time David wends his way in sweet company to the house of God, and later this same sweet(?) company will strangle him. Christ complains in David that they gave Him hatred for His love.

* * * *

But it is not any different in the New Testament.

Wherever the Son of God appears there is strife, hatred, war, unrest.

During his three and one half years of preaching He is ever surrounded by a brood of devils. They watched His every word and move.

The hatred found its bathos in the crucifixion.

But even then the devil was not satisfied.

After the Ascension and Pentecost the hatred of the seed of the devil broke out anew. The devil knew that his time was short.

Wherever Paul appeared with Jesus in his heart and mouth, there you found strife, unrest, bloodshed.

Only one of the twelve died in his bed.

Read your Gospels and the epistles of the witnesses of Jesus. Even in the organized churches of Jesus there is no rest. You read of divisions, hatreds, jealousy and envy. James complains: "From where come wars and fightings among you?"

Will you please read the seven letters to the seven churches in Asia Minor?

And will you continue to read what Jesus prophesies relative the Church of Christ and its reception in the world?

Was it any different after John closes Holy Writ?

Wherever you see Jesus appear on the scene you also find war and unrest, blood and suffering.

Indeed, God's plan for the Seed of the woman is not to bring peace on the earth, but a sword.

* * * *

But what about Isaiah, the angels at the birth of Jesus, and Paul?

They all herald the coming of Jesus as the Prince of peace!

And the angels literally say: on earth peace!

Here is the solution, beloved: Christ did not come to send peace *for the wicked on the earth*. Christ came to do the exact opposite with respect to them: He came to destroy them!

He came to destroy and to bruise the HEAD of the devil. The HEAD, that is, the intellect, the thought, the counsel, the conception of the wicked. His Own Name of TRUTH, and with the word of His mouth, that is, His truth, He destroys the lie and the makers of the lie, and at the same time, and through the same truth He sets you free!

And so Jesus did indeed come to bring peace on the earth. Both Isaiah, the angels and Paul are right: His name is Prince of Peace. He did come to bring Peace upon the earth. A correct reading of the song of the angels would read: Peace on earth toward the men of good will, that is, to God's elect church.

And how?

Paul told us in the above quoted text of Ephesians 2: 14, 15.

Christ brought peace on the earth by shedding His precious blood for you and me. So making peace.

Christ took our hatred against God on His neck, and paid the price of eternal death.

So making peace for us.

Peace now: a little bit of heavenly peace in our heart; a peace that passeth understanding.

And presently? In the sweet by and by? A Kingdom of heavenly peace! G.V.

QUESTION BOX

Mr. F. Harbin asks:

Rom. 8:29 says: "For whom he foreknew, he also fore-ordained to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren, and whom he foreordained them he also called, and whom he called them he also justified and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

Will you give me your explanation of the words "For whom he did foreknow" in connection with the rest of the verse and as foreknowledge is used in the Bible?

Answer: First of all, it seems to me that, a few years ago, I delivered some radio sermons on Rom. 8 in which I also answered the question of Mr. Harbin. Perhaps he can still obtain them from the radio committee.

Secondly, we must remember that the foreknowledge of God is never to be compared to our knowing something before it comes to pass. With God this is impossible, first, because his knowledge is eternal and, secondly, because He brings all things to pass according to the counsel of His own will.

Thirdly, we must, therefore, explain the foreknowledge of God in Rom. 8:29 as a foreknowledge of love. God eternally foreknew His people in sovereign love and as He knew them in love He also predestinated them to be conformed according to the image of His Son. H.H.

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EDITORIALS

Discussion of the Three Points

In *Torch and Trumpet* the Rev. Fred H. Klooster discusses the "Three Points." In a footnote he informs us that what now appears as an article in *Torch and Trumpet* was originally a paper read before the Holland-Zeeland Inter Nos.

The article has three divisions. The first part discusses the general features of the decisions of 1924; the second section offers a brief discussion of the "Three points" proper; the third attempts to prove that the "Three Points" are Reformed.

We are interested chiefly in the second and third parts.

First of all, then, we will discuss the First Point. We will quote it here in full, then see what the Rev. Klooster has to say about it and, finally present our own view of the matter.

The First Point reads as follows:

"Relative to the first point which concerns the favorable attitude of God to humanity in general and not only towards the elect, Synod declares it to be established according to Scripture and the Confession that, apart from the saving grace of God shown only to those that are elect unto eternal life, there is also a certain favor or grace of God which He shows to His creatures in general. This is evident from the Scriptural passages quoted and from the Canons of Dordrecht, II, 5 and III, IV, 8, 9, which deal with the general offer of the gospel, while it also appears from the citations made from Reformed writers of the most flourishing period of Reformed Theology that our Reformed writers from the past favored this view."

Such is the First Point, which is also the most important of the three.

Now what does the Rev. Klooster have to say about this?

Fact is that he says very little about this which could probably be expected from a brief essay on such an important subject, but which, nevertheless, is deplorable. I could wish that the Rev. Klooster would write a series of articles on the "Three Points" and then enter into a thorough discussion especially of the proof the Synod offered from Scripture and the Confessions. He does nothing of the kind.

What he writes on the Scriptural proof I will quote here:

"The passages mentioned are Psalm 145:9, Matthew 5:44, 45, Luke 6:35, 36, Acts 14:16, 17, I Timothy 4:10, Romans 2:4; as well as the passages concerning the well-meant gospel offer, Ezekiel 33:11 and 18:33. Unfortunately the advisory committee does no more than list the passages in proof-text method. However, the problem involves divergent exegesis of each passage. It is not possible to evaluate each passage here. It must be admitted that they are not all equally valid. It seems to me that one of the strongest passages in defense

of the Synodical decision is Luke 6:35, 36; 'But love your enemies, and do them good never despairing; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be sons of the Most High: for He is kind toward the unthankful and evil. Be ye merciful, even as your Father is merciful.' If this passage is parallel to Matthew 5:44, 45, as I believe it is, then this attitude of kindness and mercy is applied to the gifts of rain and sunshine given to all men as well."

This is all.

In reality, therefore, the Rev. Klooster can produce only one sure text in proof of the doctrine of the universal favor or grace of God.

For about the other passages of Scripture to which the Synod refers he writes himself that "the problem involved divergent exegesis of each passage." And again: "it must be admitted that they are not all equally valid." Hence, the only passage he has left is the one in Luke 6 and the parallel text in Matthew 5.

But is it Scriptural and Reformed to base an entire doctrine on a single text of Holy Writ? We know better.

Even if the text in Luke 6 in connection with Matthew 5 would seem to teach universal grace, which it does not as I hope to show later, I surely would not dare to base an entire doctrine on it especially in the light of the fact that the Bible teaches very clearly that God hates the wicked every day.

At any rate I wish that the Rev. Klooster would still offer a careful exegesis of all the passages which the Synod of 1924 quoted in favor of the First Point. Only then can we possibly get something worthwhile.

The Rev. Klooster also refers in his article to the so-called proof of the First Point the Synod of 1924 adduced from the Canons. And again I will quote him in full. Writes he:

"The Synodical decision seeks support for the well-meant offer of the gospel by an appeal to the Canons of Dort. The Canons (III, IV, 8, 9) are indeed quite explicit in asserting the doctrine of the well-meant gospel call, for they say: 'as many as are called by the gospel are unfeignedly called.' But I do not think the Canons say much concerning the precise point at issue; namely, whether this well-meant offer of the gospel is evidence of an attitude of favor on God's part to mankind in general. Perhaps the statement that 'God calls men by the gospel and confers upon them various gifts' (III, IV, 9) comes closest to the point at issue. The Synod claims further support for the first point by an appeal to the classic Reformed theologians who have maintained this doctrine."

Do we not receive the impression from the foregoing that the Rev. Klooster does not believe that the Synod of 1924 adduced any proof for the First Point from the Confessions?

First he writes that the Synod "seeks support for the well-meant offer of the gospel by an appeal to the Canons of Dort." This already leaves the impression that the Rev. Klooster is not sure that the Synod succeeded. Then, although he asserts that the Canons are quite explicit in teaching the well-meant gospel call, he evidently doubts whether

this proves the main point at issue, namely, the favorable attitude of God to all mankind in general. And finally, he writes that a statement in Canons III, IV, 9 "perhaps comes closest to the point at issue." Hence, we claim that the Rev. Klooster is not at all sure that the First Point finds any support in the Confessions.

And as far as I am concerned, as the Rev. Klooster well knows, there is no proof at all in the Confessions for the doctrine of "common grace." And what is more, I maintain that all our Confessions teach the truth of particular grace and stand diametrically opposed to any favorable attitude of God to the wicked and ungodly.

This I hope to prove in future articles.

H.H.

Evolution, Long Periods, or Days

I meant to write on this subject already for some time, but several important subjects demanded my attention.

Now, however, I will put my thoughts on paper immediately.

The occasion for this is that a certain brother, who is himself a student at Calvin, approached me in connection with an article in the S.B. in which I wrote that the theory of evolution was taught at Calvin College. He claimed that this was not true.

In our conversation he emphasized that, at Calvin, no Darwinism was taught. This I readily admitted, but, at the same time I claimed that Darwinism is dead and that no one believes anymore in the theory of evolution as Darwin taught it.

He admitted, however, that at Calvin long periods of millions or even of billions of years of creation were taught instead of, as Scripture has it, days of twenty-four hours. And this I claimed is the same as the theory of evolution.

Well, this may explain why I write on the above mentioned subject at the present time.

* * * *

Let me, first of all, write a few words about Darwinism, as this subject was brought up in the conversation I had with the brother I referred to above.

It is many years ago that I made a study of the theory of evolution as presented by Darwin. I investigated especially two works of his, namely, the book on "The Origin of Species" in which he emphasizes "natural selection" and that on "The Descent of Man" in which he literally teaches that man is a descendant of the ape or chimpanzee.

Without entering into detail, I may say:

1. That Darwin denies creation altogether. The world was not created by God at all, whether through long periods of time or in six days as the Bible teaches. This is

evident from the following quotation from "The Descent of Man":

"Thus we can understand how it has come to pass that man and all other vertebrate animals have been constructed on the same general model, why they pass through the same early stages of development, and why they retain certain rudiments in common. Consequently we ought frankly to admit their community of descent; to take any other view, is to admit that our own structure and that of all the animals around us, is a mere snare laid to entrap our judgment. This conclusion is greatly strengthened if we look to the members of the whole animal series, and consider the evidence derived from their affinities or classification, their geographical distribution and geological succession. It is only our natural prejudice, and that arrogance which made our forefathers declare that they were descended from demi-gods, which leads us to demur to this conclusion. But the time will before long come, when it will be thought wonderful that naturalists, who were well acquainted with the comparative structure and development of man and other mammals, should have believed that each was the work of a separate act of creation." p. 41.

I can quote other passages from the same work of Darwin.

2. That Darwin was an atheist. This stands to reason in view of the fact that he does not believe that God created the universe. He who denies the latter has no God left. Even the consciousness that there is a God is, according to Darwin, a matter of gradual development. He denies, of course, revelation altogether, whether in nature or in Scripture, and without revelation we cannot possibly have any knowledge of God. Let me quote once more from his "The Descent of Man."

On pp. 636-37 he writes:

"The belief in God often has been advanced as not only the greatest, but the most complete of all the distinctions between man and the lower animals. It is, however, impossible, as we have seen, that this belief is innate or instinctive in man. On the other hand, a belief in all-pervading spiritual agencies seems to be universal; and apparently follows from a considerable advance in man's reason and from a still greater advance in his faculties of imagination, curiosity and wonder. I am aware that the assumed distinctive belief in God has been used by many persons as an argument for His existence. But this is a rash argument, as we should thus be compelled to believe in the existence of many cruel and malignant spirits, only a little more powerful than man; for the belief in them is far more general than in a beneficent Deity. The idea of a universal and beneficent Creator does not seem to arise in the mind of man, until he has been elevated by long continued culture."

This is downright atheism. It is a denial of sin, of revelation, of man's consciousness of God.

And this is the necessary implication of any form of the evolution theory, and not only of Darwinism.

H.H.

OUR DOCTRINE

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

PART TWO

CHAPTER V

The Locusts Out of the Abyss

Revelation 9:1-12

The answer to this question we must first of all seek in the description of the locusts themselves. There is evidently a marked contrast between their front and their tails. Their appearance in front makes us think of war and victory, of power and glory, of intelligence and invention, of charm and fascination. For they look like horses prepared for battle. They wear crowns as of gold. They have teeth as the teeth of lions. They wear breastplates as it were breastplates of iron. They have faces as the faces of men. And they have hair like the hair of women. In a word, these spirits represent all that attracts the wicked world, all that which the world of sin considers as the source of bliss and salvation. They are the spirits that play on the passions of men. Already the world has sought its happiness in power and dominion, in war and victory. These spirits emphasize these passions. Already the wicked world has sought help in vain in philosophy, in following the lie, in science and invention, — all without God. These spirits simply must emphasize this passion, so that they seek their bliss still more exclusively in these things. Already the world has sought salvation in the satisfaction of its lion-like greed. These spirits must emphasize this sinful passion and cause it to glow still more. Already the sinful world has thrown itself in the arms of a sinful art, yea, in the charming pleasures of vile sin. These spirits must incite men to do still more, and to give themselves up to all the pleasures of sin. Such is their appearance: they appeal to the sinful passions of an already wicked world. But this is not their final, and therefore, not their real task. It is not their essential characteristic. On the contrary, these evil spirits, whether they like it or not, have power to hurt men, such men as have not the seal of God on their forehead. Their tail-end is their real nature. These same spirits that have incited the wicked world to plunge still more deeply in sin and vile transgression fill the hearts of men with the darkness of despair. They are the spirits of pessimism. And after men have followed their inspiration, they find that their end is more bitter than death itself. Just as the children of God have sometimes a foretaste of the pleasures of heavenly glory because they walk in the way of God's covenant and of His precepts, so the children of the world, under the influence of these infernal locusts, are given a foretaste of the despair of hell. They follow their sinful ambition for power and victory to its very end. But despair follows in its wake. They give

themselves to the satisfaction of their lion-like greed; but also this is immediately followed by a gloomy pessimism. The path of philosophy is trodden to the end, only to look into the mocking eyes of the devil of despair and dissatisfaction. Art and pleasure and vile lust are worshipped as the saviors, until the dissatisfaction of them is proved and gloomy pessimism is the result. Thus the purpose of these demons is to emphasize sin and all its pleasures and all its evil passions so that men follow them to the full, only to be tortured by them in the end by these same demons on the rack of pessimism and despair.

That this is actually the case is also evident from verse 6. The nature of their torment is, of course, purely spiritual; and it consists in a being tired of life, in a seeking of death: "And in those days men shall seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them." Literally the state of these men, therefore, is one of the most gloomy pessimism. Do not say that such a condition is inconceivable, for that would be beside the truth. Do not say that if men really seek death, they can find it in suicide: for then you do not know the heart of men. The meaning of this text is simply this, that the pessimism of men in those times is so great that they cannot even find the courage and the incentive to take their own lives. Not the suicide, that hastens to take his own life when all of life is despair, but he who desires to die and cannot find the courage to commit suicide is the living illustration of the most terrible pessimism in this world. These same spirits that torture them have not the power to kill them. They have power to hurt them, but nothing more. Time and again such waves of pessimism have swept in limited proportions over the world. It swept over the world of Grecian civilization when all the efforts of sinful men to find the way to happiness along the road of sin and idolatry and vain philosophy and lusts failed absolutely. It swept the Roman world when it had cast itself into the arms of conquest and power, into the arms of luxury and dissipation. Gloomy pessimism was the result. It also has swept the modern world more than once whenever it has had to confess failure to find the road to happiness. What else is the spirit that prevails in the spheres of spiritualism and Christian Science and theosophy, yea, even of Buddhism and heathen religions, than the black smoke that is rising from the abyss? But all these things are only a limited fulfillment of what is still to come upon the world. As the time draws near for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, as the world once more exhausts itself to work out its own salvation without Christ and without God, as it exerts itself to find this way in paths of war and conquest, in ways of philosophy and vain lies, in ways of lusts and vile pleasures, it will also become prepared more and more for the influence of these infernal locusts. And literally also this part of Revelation is still to be fulfilled, so that the state of utter despair will come upon the world of sin, and men will continue to follow the paths of sin and transgression and of blasphemy against the name of Jesus Christ. Then again men will seek

death, but will not be able to find it. Not as if this state of universal pessimism will be the final state. On the contrary, the power of the locusts is limited to five months. It is only a preparation for still greater efforts and for the final public worship of the beast that comes out of the abyss. But surely, it will come; and the children of the world will then have a foretaste of the torments of hell.

Blessed is the comfort that is implied in these words. For those that have the seal of God on their forehead in those days, that do not follow the ways of the world and sin and lust and the lie, are protected by Christ Himself. From Him these locusts receive their power and authority. And that power is limited to the world of sin only. These sealed ones have put on the whole armor of God, and they are not generally under the influence of the powers of the air. Christ and all His holy angels protect them, so that they are not hurt. And though they more and more may have to fear the gloomy despair of the sinful world, it will remain literally true that the gates of hell shall never prevail against them.

The Sixth Trumpet

Revelation 9:13-21

13. And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,

14. Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates.

15. And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men.

16. And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them.

17. And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone.

18. By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths.

19. For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt.

20. And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk.

21. Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

The fifth and the sixth trumpet belong together, as is plainly indicated in the text. As we have already remarked, they are separated from the former four trumpets by the plain indication that they are all "woe trumpets." Already before the fifth trumpet sounded, its coming was announced by the eagle that was flying in mid-heaven and that threatened a three-fold woe. And in the twelfth verse of this chapter we are reminded of this fact in the words, "One woe is past; and, behold, there come two woes more hereafter." Besides, there is also difference in contents between the first four trumpets and the last three, which is undeniable. The difference consists in this, that the first four all relate to the visible universe outside of man though influencing the history of man and of the nations, while the last three are directly referring to the world of man. And at the same time it may be remarked that as "woe trumpets" they are more vehement in their element of judgment than the former. As to the sixth trumpet, it is of importance that we notice, in the first place, what is the condition of the civilized world at this time. There can be little question about the fact that this sixth trumpet will find its realization more completely in the period of the last hour in the narrower sense of the word, that is, in the period that immediately precedes the time of the last judgment and of the final coming of the Lord. And what is the condition of society at this period? There are two indications in the text that inform us about this state. In the first place, the close of our text indicates that it is a state of sin and gross iniquity in which the sixth trumpet finds the world. We read in vss. 20 and 21: "And the rest of men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts." Of course, that they did not repent of these sins after the plague had been upon the world and one-third of men had been killed certainly indicates that they did commit these sins even before the plague came, and that this condition of society and of the world in general is the cause and the occasion for the blowing of the sixth trumpet. Notice about this condition, in the first place, that it is characteristic of a general violation of the entire law. Of course, this is not meant in the sense that we all and always fall in respect to all the commandments of God, but in a very special sense of the word. The times of Noah and of Sodom and Gomorrah have returned at this period once more to the world. And what the Lord predicted in regard to the resemblance between these Old Testament periods and the period preceding His second coming now has become realized with this sixth trumpet. The picture here given of the world is indeed a very evil one. In the first place, we are told that the people are worshipping devils; that is, they are acknowledging and placing their confidence in and seeking help and comfort in the spirits of evil that have fallen away from God originally

with the prince of darkness. Do not say that this is impossible and inconceivable. For, in the first place, let me remind you of the fact that the sinful world as such is always serving Satan, and that he is their king and leader. And in the second place, remember, as we have stated in the last chapter, the world is actually surrendering itself to those spiritual hosts of wickedness that are in aerial places, against which the people of God are admonished to put on the whole armor of God. And in the third place, take a look in the world, and see whether all such things as spiritualism, theosophy, and all kinds of occult and abominable movements and sects are not the literal fulfillment already of this statement that people are worshipping devils. It is their influence that is felt, to which people freely yield. It is their will that is accomplished. It is the worship of devils that is not so far from being literally realized even today. In the second place, we are told that idolatry, the worship of silver and gold and brass and wood and stone, also once more is placed on the foreground. It may very well be that the heathen world in the future will have such an influence on the so-called Christian world that also this will be literally fulfilled. But even besides this possibility, is it not true that the service of Mammon, practical materialism, reliance upon silver and gold, the things of the world, as well as the worship of man, is essentially the same idolatry in a little different form than is here mentioned?

Small wonder, then, that where the first table of the law is thus violated, and men follow the worship of devils, also the second table is entirely trampled under foot. We read of this society that murders and sorceries and fornication and thefts abound. This is not meant as an exception, but as a rather general condition. Men have become murderers. They kill self and others. They have become sorcerers, which indicates, according to the original, that they employ all kinds of poisonous drugs for various purposes. They indulge in fornication, and commit adultery, and satisfy their greed for material things by becoming thieves and robbers on a large scale. Lawlessness, greed, treachery, adulterous lusts and passions, — all the evil passions of men reign supreme at this period. In a word, there is a general degradation, and the world is steeped in iniquity, — an entirely different picture here than that which is presented by the philosophers of the world of today, and, in fact, of all times. O no, the world is not growing worse; it is gradually improving. Such is the gospel that is preached rather generally today. And the time will come when mankind along the lines of gradual development shall have reached the heights of its ambition and the climax of its development. Sin and transgression shall be abolished, and justice and peace and happiness shall reign supreme. But the Word of God tells us a far different story. As already pointed out, the Lord compares the times of the end to the times that immediately preceded the flood and the destruction of the cities of the plain. And if you ask Paul what the Spirit told him about these latter days, then he will tell you: "But know that in the last days grievous times shall

come. For men shall be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, haughty, railers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, implacable, slanderers, without self-control, no lovers of God, no lovers of good, traitors, headstrong, puffed up, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding a form of godliness but having denied the power thereof. From these also turn away." II Tim. 3:1-5. To be sure, this is not a very attractive picture. But remember that it is the Word of God that assures us of all this. And I rather adhere to the Word of God, which is always true and safe, than to follow the wisdom of men.

I find still another indication of the general and grievous wickedness of the world of that period, namely, in the first part of this passage. We read that a voice is heard from the horns of the golden altar which is before God, saying to the angel that had the sixth trumpet that he should go to the river Euphrates, in order to loose the four angels that were bound in that region. The altar that is here referred to is evidently the same as the one that is mentioned in chapter 8, verse 3. Also there we read of an altar in connection with the prayers of the saints that were offered together with the incense to God Almighty. Also that altar was a golden one, and also that altar stood before the throne of God and of the Lamb. And the idea of atonement, on the basis of which the prayers of the saints could be offered to God, was pre-eminent in that connection. Here we read that a voice proceeds from the horns of the altar. Both the altar of burnt offering and the altar of incense had horns, four in number. What is the idea of these horns? In Exodus 30:10 we read: "And Aaron shall make atonement upon the horns of it once in the year; with the blood of the sin offering of atonement once in the year shall he make atonement for it throughout your generations. It is most holy unto Jehovah." And thus we find it more than once in Scripture. The horns were the most sacred part of the altar. Upon them was sprinkled the blood of atonement. And therefore, we are safe in saying that they stood above all for the idea that the blood of atonement was shed. And now what do we notice? We notice that it is from these same horns, representative of the blood of atonement, that a voice proceeds, calling for a terrible judgment upon the world. It is the voice of the blood of the Lamb that cries for this judgment. And with a view to the wicked world, it indicates that the time has come when the world has trampled under foot and despised the blood of the Savior. It is that blood that now cries for revenge. It has therefore become plain that the world rejects the Christ and despises the blood of atonement. Whatever form of godliness they may have and have had in the past, they have always stubbornly refused to acknowledge that there is salvation only in the blood of Christ. And now it is this blood that must be revenged and that cries: "Loose the four angels that are bound in the great river Euphrates."

H.H.

A CLOUD OF WITNESSES

Abraham Accounting God As Faithful

"By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure."

Hebrews 11:17-19

Man, by virtue of his creation, is a thinking being. God created him to be a rational creature, and of this capacity he can not help but make use. Man cannot keep himself from thinking. If you tend to question this, try it. Sit back in your easy chair and try once to stop thinking. Try to think of absolutely nothing. At best you will find yourself thinking whether you are succeeding in your attempt not to think; actually to cease from thinking you will not be able to do. One's thoughts may be vague and wandering, or they may be concrete and pointed; they may be aimless and disconnected, or they may be logically united; they may be futile and vain, or they may be worthwhile and effective; but in any case man is thinking as he must.

Of the pointed and logical thoughts of man, which are by far the most important, there are again two different kinds contained in two different kinds of minds. There is, on the one hand, the mind which reaches out into the world of experience and tries to determine which things may be considered true. Approaching the various ideas and notions that arise in the minds of men, it tries to analyze, evaluate, and determine which are worthy of being accepted and called "truth." These chosen ideas, selected according to certain earthly standards, are again used as postulates and premises from which further thoughts are deducted and affirmed. Such activity of the mind we call philosophy or, more specifically, rationalism. On the other hand, there is the mind which is directed by the regenerated heart. It too seeks for truth. It goes not to the world of experience but to the infallible revelation of God. It receives not that which measures up to some earthly standard, but that which the mouth of the Lord hath spoken. With the Word of God it fills itself, and upon the Word of God it thinks, seeking to arrive at a greater understanding and comprehension of that which the Lord has spoken. Such is the activity of the sanctified mind.

Abraham, the father of believers, had much upon which to think. God had given him a command, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." About this he could not help but think. It was a command of such immense magnitude and significance for his life that he could

not dismiss it from his mind. As is usually the case when something very important enters a person's life, it will not allow itself to be neglected by the mind. Always it lingers about the back of the mind, at every possible occasion rushing forward to captivate one's conscious attention. So was this command with Abraham. We read in Hebrews 11 that Abraham "accounted." Here we find a word that means "to reason, to count, to calculate, to think upon, or to ponder." Abraham thought upon the command of God, and with his mind he pondered all of the promises which God had given to him, seeking to arrive at an understanding of that which the Lord had told him to do.

It would seem quite easy even to imagine the pattern of thought which the mind of Abraham followed. It had all begun many years before when God had first brought him into the land of Canaan and promised to give the land to him and to his seed after him unto all generations. From that day forth he had looked to the day when a son would be born unto him from whom that seed should come. Long had been that wait and with each passing year the promise of God had grown more dear to him, and the more he had to rely purely upon faith. At time his faith had wavered, as at the time when Ishmael had been born, but always again it had been restored stronger than before. Finally when that son was born, Abraham was fully prepared through years of patient waiting to appreciate his importance. Isaac was a wonder child brought forth by the miraculous power of God. He was a miracle of grace and upon him rested all of the promises. In Isaac Abraham saw the promised seed through whom he would be blessed and be made a blessing unto all of the nations of the earth. How he loved that son and thanked the Lord always for his birth.

Now the Word of God came to Abraham, however, and commanded him to offer this beloved son as a burnt offering to the Lord. This command was not without reason. Abraham, of course, was fully aware of the fact that he was himself a sinner unworthy of the promise. Furthermore, he realized that the guilt of his sin was infinitely great. Hence it was not surprising that God should tell him that as an atonement for his great guilt the greatest sacrifice should be offered, even his son Isaac, the promised seed. Only thus, as the greatest price was offered as a covering for his sin, could his guilt be removed, and could Abraham be blessed.

Nonetheless, it would seem that this left Abraham with an unanswerable dilemma. The one Word of God would seem to cancel out the other. Abraham had specifically been told that he would be blessed in becoming a great nation and the father of many nations. For that reason Abraham had longed for the birth of his son, and had rejoiced when Isaac was brought forth. Moreover it was specifically with reference to Isaac that God had said that in him the covenant would be realized. Now it was that same Isaac that he was commanded to offer up upon the altar. The life of Isaac had to be offered as a covering for sin. But that would make the

former impossible of realization. The one would cancel out the other. We can well imagine the mind of Abraham struggling with this contradiction. In which should he hope? Should he look upon Isaac as the son through whom the future generations should be brought forth? or should he forget that former promise and sacrifice his son as a covering for sin? . . . But how vain have not our imaginings become. God is a God of harmony and not of contradictions. God does not contradict Himself, and neither does He contradict His revelation before His people. It is not the way of faith to grapple with unanswerable dilemmas.

There are those who like to find in Scripture many contradictions. They call them "paradoxes" or "apparent contradictions" lest their orthodoxy should be questioned. They find in Scripture the truth of a sovereign God; but over against it they claim to find that he can save no one without his consent. They find the truth of divine predestination whereby God sovereignly elects some unto salvation and reprobates others unto damnation; but over against it they claim to find that God wants all men to be saved. They find that salvation is all of God from beginning to end; but over against this they find that at least in the subjective consciousness of man, it is conditional upon the act of man. They like these contradictions because it leaves to them to determine at any particular time which element they will proclaim and also which element they will ignore. Such would find little difficulty in presenting Abraham as standing before a contradiction.

The fact of the matter is, of course, that if such a contradiction had existed in the mind of Abraham, he would have very little difficulty. The Arminian has no difficulty with his contradiction. He merely stresses the fact that man must make the decision to be saved and ignores the sovereignty of God. The teacher of "common grace" has little difficulty with his contradiction. It is up to him to decide, and he finds it easy to press the teaching that God is pleased with all men. The truth of predestination is more and more ignored. The conditional theologian has little difficulty with his contradiction. He would prompt people to a better life by stressing the conditions that they must fulfill. The truth that God is sovereign in salvation finds less and less place in his mind and, sad to say, in his heart. The fact is that both elements of a contradiction can not exist together in the mind of man. He may choose to love the one but the other must then be ignored. Hence, if Abraham had seen in the Word of God a contradiction, he too would have had little difficulty. He would have merely grasped the promise that generations were to come forth from Isaac and ignored the other. Still he could have laid claim to belief in the promise of God; but then Isaac would have never been sacrificed.

Abraham, however, was a child of faith and his mind followed the way of faith. He did not look for contradictions in the Word of God so that he might choose between the contrary elements and follow the one he wanted. He did not

imagine the possibility of there being a contradiction in the Word of God; he did not look for one; he did not find one. Convinced within his soul that God's Word never contains a contradiction, he received the Word as it came to him and searched for the inner harmony that he knew was sure to exist.

With this understanding in mind, we can follow the reasoning of Abraham much more accurately. By faith Abraham received the Word of God as it came to him. He received first the truth that God through Isaac would raise up unto him a great nation and a seed that would be a blessing to all nations. Then came to him the second word of God, Isaac as the promised seed must be slain upon the altar as a sacrifice for sin. The mind of Abraham being rich in faith, he would not conceive of the possibility that this second word of God might contradict or cancel out the first. Therefore he reached forth in faith seeking to find wherein these two might be harmonized. Convinced that there is always complete harmony in the revelation of God he thought, he calculated, he reasoned, he pondered the Word of God; and he arrived at a glorious truth. "God is ruler over all things," he reasoned, "even over death and the grave." If God demands that Isaac must die as an atonement for sin, and at the same time promises that he will bring forth from Isaac a great and mighty nation, it can only mean that after Isaac is dead God will raise him up again. Though Isaac must die yet shall he live. God will give him a victory over the grave. We can only stand and marvel at the wondrous faith of Abraham. Following the way of faith he searched all that he knew about God and arrived at the glorious truth of the resurrection of the dead.

We saw in our last article on this subject that God was preaching the gospel to Abraham. Isaac was to Abraham the promised seed and, in Old Testament type and shadow, a picture of the seed which was to come, even Jesus Christ. As God commanded Abraham to sacrifice his son, He was thereby teaching him that the promised seed must make atonement if the covenant promise was to be realized. In a figure God pictured to Abraham the fact that Jesus Christ must die upon the cross for the sin of all God's children. Now to that truth God added another glorious revelation. Guiding the sanctified mind of this father of all believers, He brought him to see that, if the promised seed must die for sin, he must also be raised from the dead. The resurrection of Jesus Christ we often consider as being a New Testament truth. But already Abraham with a mind of faith reached forth through the age of shadows and heard the gospel preached, "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept." I Cor. 15:20.

B.W.

Rejoicing in God, my thought shall be sweet,
While sinners depart in ruin complete;
My soul, bless Jehovah, His Name be adored,
Come, praise Him, ye people, and worship the Lord.

IN HIS FEAR

"Many Antichrists"

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits . . ."

"Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist . . ."

"And even now already is it in the world . . ."

". . . Even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time."

These statements concerning the antichrist were written by the apostle John in his first epistle. The word of God speaks of one final, dreadful form of the antichrist which shall be upon this earth at the very end of this new dispensation. Paul gives a word of warning concerning him in his second epistle to the Thessalonians and calls him the son of perdition, the man of sin. The same John who wrote the passages quoted above presents a twofold picture of this antichrist in the thirteenth chapter of the book of Revelation when he records his vision wherein he saw this antichrist in the form of a beast coming up out of the sea and as a beast that comes forth out of the earth.

But the spirit of the antichrist was in the world from the days of man's fall in Paradise. As John says, ". . . even now already is it in the world," I John 4:3c. And hereby may we know that spirit of the antichrist: "Every Spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist . . .," I John 4:3a, b. And even as the fear of the Lord is faith in Him and in His Christ, so is all that which does not confess Christ trust and confidence in the antichrist. All that which is not in His fear is antichristian. It is not simply unbelief — which it surely is in that it does not believe in God and in His Christ. It is antichristian. Jesus says, "He that is not with me is against me," Matthew 12:30a. It is either . . . or. Either we walk in His fear or we walk in the way and in the spirit of the antichrist. There are but two classes of people in this world. Either one is of Christ's followers, or one is of the antichrist's disciples.

Jesus said also in Matthew 24:5, "For many shall come in my name saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many." False christs they are. Imposters, deceivers they are; and we are, therefore, to try the spirits. And we may be sure of this one thing: if we do not try the spirits we are walking, not in His fear but in the ways of the antichrist.

There are two things that may be said of the antichrist which characterize all his activity. He is, first of all, a false christ. He is not the Christ, but he will claim to be such. He has never been anointed by God to be our chief Prophet, our only High Priest and our eternal King. This will not

prevent him from claiming so lofty a position for himself. In fact Paul writes of him in II Thessalonians 2:4 that he "opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." You will find him in the false church where the truth as it is in Jesus Christ is not purely preached; where that truth in Christ in the sacrament is corrupted by an improper administration; and where that truth in the walk and life of those regenerated by the Spirit of Christ is cast aside as an unwanted thing. And John in his vision of the antichrist as the beast out of the earth likewise shows that this antichrist has his origin in the false church. For although he has a form of religion, all his efforts reach out to cause man to worship the image of the beast that came up out of the sea.

But all this we will not fully understand unless we take into account the fact that his name, antichrist, does not express that he is a false christ but instead that he is against Christ. The "anti" in his name means exactly that: against. And then not against as the child presses tightly against his parent when frightened or fearful of some danger, but against in the sense of coming up against with the express purpose of overthrowing in order to supplant. Such is the antichrist's nature; and so does he always behave. Such is the spirit of the antichrist; it always seeks to dethrone Christ and to overthrow the things of His kingdom.

In that light it is easy to see how John can say that there are now already many antichrists in the world. All that which opposes Christ; all that which militates against the truth as it is in Christ is antichristian. In that light there is so much in the world today that is called christian which actually is antichristian. In our land where we are promised freedom of religion men freely propagate and embrace all kinds of theories and philosophies which are direct denials of the truth as it is in Christ; and the Christ of the Scriptures they deny. Yet they claim as much right to the name Christian, as does the true believer. They call the object of their faith, "Christ," as well as we do. And therefore they claim the right to the same name which has so much meaning for us. Yea, they may in the very literal sense of the word do as John says of those who follow in the way of the antichrist and still insist that they be called Christians. This, of course, is also to be expected. For as we saw, the spirit of antichrist is a spirit that seeks to overthrow the Christ and take His place in the spiritual lives of men.

And the sad thing in the religious world of today is that men will so readily give a place to this antichristian spirit. So sad is the picture in the church world today that the more insistent you are in your determination to defend the truth as it is in Christ, the more you will be opposed as one who has no right to the name of Christian. Just this morning we heard such wickedness aired over the radio from the "Pillar of Fire" station of the West (Rocky Mountain region) when those who believe in the Christ Who declares, "Except a

man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of heaven," were called "Hardfisted Calvinists." Rather than to credit those who believe in sovereign and eternal election with following Christ in His teachings, this mere man, who plainly hated the election which Christ taught, would label us as disciples and followers of Calvin with the direct insinuation that Calvin also was preaching the antichrist rather than the Christ when he taught the sovereign election which Christ also taught when He said, "But ye believed not, because ye are not of my sheep," John 10:26. And again, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me will I in no wise cast out," John 6:37.

This lover of the lie would rather believe, according to his words that "a man must make himself a candidate for salvation so that God could choose him." After all, he argued, on election day men vote only for the candidates. So did he, on this day when across our land candidates for governor, senator and representative wait to see whether they have been chosen to serve, insult the Living God and oppose the Christ Who taught that before God regenerates a man he cannot see the kingdom, and surely, therefore, cannot put his name up as a candidate for citizenship in that kingdom. Jesus knew nothing of a God Who must wait for man to submit his name before God can and may even consider him for salvation. He spoke of a God and Father Who gave certain individuals to Him to save; and so definite is the number and the identity of these individuals that Jesus can say that they all shall come to Him.

Let us keep constantly in mind the fact that all heresies are antichristian. Every defense of false doctrine is antichristian. Every failure to confess Christ is the spirit of antichrist. As John also writes while speaking of the antichrists that are already in the world, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us," I John 2:19. How full, in that light, the world is with antichrists! How many of them are there not then in the day in which we live?

Indeed we must try the spirits whether they be of God. That belongs to a life in His fear. All cannot be right. He who ridicules the doctrine of election and cannot believe in a God who sends Jesus Christ in the flesh to save only those who were chosen from before the foundation of the world, and he who does believe in such a God and in such a Christ surely must constantly be opposing each other. They are not in agreement upon a very fundamental matter. And both cannot be right. One is the spirit of antichrist; the other is wrought by the Spirit of Christ. One must try the spirits lest the spirit of antichrist deceive him.

And so we come to the point which we set out to make at this time. Jesus said, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as Thou Father art in me, and I in Thee,

that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me," John 17:20, 21. Paul admonishes us to be "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," Ephesians 4:3. But all this craze for ecumenicity and bigness which advocates unity accomplished by failure to confess Christ is antichristian. And note that John says, "And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and now already is it in the world," I John 4:3. It is not always what one confesses that brands him as antichristian. It is also in what one fails to confess. And those who join, unite and amalgamate with other religious bodies wherein they must keep silence and not confess the Christ, Who came in our flesh to save those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life, are not walking according to Jesus' prayer "that they may all be one," nor are they heeding Paul's admonition that we endeavour "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Instead they are serving the cause of the antichrist! John teaches us clearly in this verse above that not to confess Christ is also opposing Him! Let God's people try the spirits; and then finding a spirit in a sect, denomination or religious society that does not confess the Christ of the Scriptures in any way and to any degree whatsoever let him know that the spirit of antichrist is there. Dare he then join with and support the antichrist? Look about you and you will see many, many antichrists. Do not join them and help them foster the Antichrist's appearance. Do not oppose the cause of Christ. Instead stand always opposed to the antichrists and their evil. That is a walk in His fear. And he who fears God cannot further the cause of the antichrist.

J.A.H.

HUMAN CORRUPTION

The God Who sits enthroned on high
The foolish in their heart deny;
Not one does good; corrupt in thought,
Unrighteous works their hands have wrought.

From heaven the Lord with searching eye
Looked down the sons of men to try,
To see if any understood
And sought for God, the only good.

Thy lowly servant they despise,
Because he on the Lord relies;
But they shall tremble yet in fear,
For to the righteous God is near.

O that from Zion His abode
Salvation were on us bestowed!
When God His exiles shall restore,
They shall in song His grace adore.

Psalm 14:1, 2, 5, 6

Contending For The Faith

The Church and the Sacraments

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

THE SEVEN SACRAMENTS.

We concluded our preceding article with a quotation of Hodge on the etymology and the classical and patristic usage (usage by the fathers) of the word "sacrament." Of interest in connection with this subject is the following quotation from the late Dr. H. Bavinck from his *Dogmatics*, IV, 217-218 (translation by the undersigned): "The widely propagated Greek mystery-essence exercised influence upon the Christian religion. The word *mysterion* in the New Testament is the word for words and acts of God which were formerly hidden but now have become manifest. But this word received in the Christian Church an entirely different meaning and became the expression of whatever was mysterious and incomprehensible. In the Latin this word was translated by sacraments, which had the meaning of an oath, especially which a soldier swore to a standard, or the sum of money which had to be set aside in the process of a case and would be forfeited to the gods in case of defeat, but which now had the meaning of a mysterious, holy treatment of a case. In this sense everything could be called a sacrament that was connected with God and His revelation in any sense of the word, the revelation itself and its content, the doctrine, the trinity, the incarnation, etc., as also various signs, as the sign of the cross, of the salt which was given to catechumens, and finally all holy transactions, marriage, exorcism, priest-dedication, celebration of the sabbath, circumcision, and other ceremonies; cf. . . . Although baptism and the Lord's Supper appear among these holy exercises with the name of sacrament, yet the vagueness of this name was the cause that the number of the sacraments remained undetermined for a long time. Also Augustine used the expression in the broader sense and proceeds in his definition from that significance of the term. It was Pseudodionysius who, in the sixth century, was the first to speak of six sacraments: baptism, confirmation, eucharist, priest-ordination (holy orders—H.V.), consecration of monks and customs at a funeral. But scholasticism joined Augustine in its determination of the concept sacrament and regarded it as referring to various holy matters and actions. Hugo of St. Victor, *de Sac.* I 9, 7 mentions not less than 30 sacraments and divides them into three classes: such as are necessary unto salvation (baptism, confirmation, eucharist, etc.), such which impart a higher grace (use of holy water, etc.), and such which serve unto the preparation for the other sacraments (consecration of holy tools or instruments). Abelard counts 5 sacraments: baptism, confirmation, eucha-

rist, extreme unction and matrimony, while Robert Pullus also names five, but he substitutes confession (*biecht*) and priest-ordination for the last two. It was Lombardus, *Sent.* IV dist: 2, who first spoke of seven sacraments, but also after him we find that theologians and synods continued to speak of sacraments in a broader sense. And this continues until the sentiments of Lombardus became a general manual for the study of theology and the council at Florence in 1439 established the number of seven sacraments. This limiting of the number of sacraments also affected the definition of the concept. The Church Fathers regarded many holy transactions very highly, especially baptism and the Lord's Supper. But a doctrine of the sacraments is lacking; the relation of the visible and spiritual elements is not clearly defined, and the manner of operation not clearly set forth. Augustine distinguishes two essential parts. At times he lays emphasis upon the word and for the operation of the sacrament upon the faith of the recipient to such an extent that the sign becomes merely a figure of that which is signified. But on the other hand, he gave such a broad definition of the concept, sacrament, that all kinds of church transactions could be included under the same."—end of quote.

The doctrine of the sacraments (Scripture does not use the word "sacrament" and does not contain, in the abstract, a doctrine over the sacraments) is really a product of the scholasticism of the Middle Ages. As a systematic development of doctrine it owes this development to the thinkers of the Middle Ages, in the period from 500 A. D. until the Reformation. It was Scholasticism which gave to this doctrine its detailed content. Concerning this development the late Dr. H. Bavinck writes in his *Dogmatics*, IV, 218-220, as follows (the translation again by the undersigned): "It (Scholasticism—H.V.) first conducted an exact and oftentimes hairsplitting (*splinterig*) examination, with respect to the concept, the institution, the administrator, the necessity, the purpose or suitability, the old and new testament, the mutual distinction of the seven sacraments, the physical or moral operation, the diverse grace, which they impart, the demands or requirements for the distribution and reception of the sacraments, Hugo Vict., etc. The result of this scholastic development was that, already in part upon earlier councils, but especially at the Council of Trent the following was established in connection with the doctrine of the sacraments in general. First, all the sacraments of the New Covenant have been instituted by Christ and are seven in number: baptism, confirmation, penance, eucharist, extreme unction, holy orders (*priesterwijding*) and marriage. Secondly, they are all true and proper sacraments, essentially to be distinguished from those of the Old Covenant, but yet differing in significance. Thirdly, they are necessary unto salvation, although it cannot be said that all are necessary for every man, so that without them or at least without the desire for them, as though through faith alone, the grace of justification is not obtainable (here the Council of Trent declares that one cannot obtain the grace of justification through faith

alone — H.V.). Fourthly, they do not merely symbolize grace, but they also contain grace and impart the same through their external operation. Fifthly, as far as the administrator (bedienaar) is concerned, the truthfulness of the sacrament demands at the least that he have the intention to do what the church does, but that it is for the rest wholly irrelevant whether he walks in deadly or mortal sin. Sixthly, lawful or legitimate distributors of the sacraments are only the ordained priests, but confirmation and the holy orders (priesterwijding — H.V.) take place only through the bishop, and baptism may be administered in the time of need also by the laity. Seventhly, as far as the recipients are concerned, of them it is only necessary that he have the intention to receive what the church gives and that he lay no obstruction in the way of grace. Eighthly, every sacrament imparts a special grace, and baptism, confirmation and ordination impart an indelible character.” — end of quote.

This development of the doctrine of the seven sacraments is certainly a clear indication of how far men had drifted from the teachings of Holy Writ. The Lord willing, we will call attention to each of these sacraments more in detail in subsequent articles. But we can already at this time point to fundamental deviations from the teachings of Holy Writ which characterize this doctrinal development by the scholastics. In the first place, Rome views the grace which is imparted through the sacraments merely as a sanctifying grace, as a power which is infused into man, and lifts him up to a higher, supernatural level, making him a partaker of the Divine nature. And this grace is inseparably connected with the outward elements and external operation of the sacraments. The grace of God is almost entirely divorced and separated from the guilt and the forgiveness of sin, and consists solely of a sanctifying nature. We do well to remember, in this connection, Rome’s conception of justification by works. By the power of an infused righteousness we are able to perform good works. And these good works are meritorious, and are worthy of eternal life. That this is the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church is evident from what that church decided at its Council of Trent. Quoting from The Canons and Dogmatic Decrees of the Council of Trent, 1563, and from the Sixth Session of that gathering, we read in Chapter VII: “This disposition or preparation, is followed by Justification itself, which is not remission of sins merely, but also the sanctification and renewal of the inward man, through the voluntary reception of the grace, and of the gifts, whereby man of unjust becomes just, and of an enemy a friend, that so he may be *an heir according to hope of life everlasting*.” Hence, justification is not merely the forgiveness of sins, but it also consists in sanctification and renewal of the inward man. This is further evident from Chapter VIII, which has for its topic: “In what manner it is to be understood, that the impious is justified by faith, and gratuitously,” and which we now quote: “And whereas the Apostle saith, that man is *justified by faith* and *freely*, those words are to be understood in that sense which the perpetual

consent of the Catholic Church hath held and expressed; to wit, that we are therefore said to be *justified by faith*, because faith is the beginning of human salvation, the foundation, and the root of all Justification; *without which it is impossible to please God*, and to come unto the fellowship of his sons: but we are therefore said to be justified *freely*, because that none of those things which precede justification — whether faith or works — merit the grace itself of justification. For, *if it be a grace, it is not now by works*, otherwise, as the same Apostle says, *grace is no more grace*.” And this is also plain from what the Council of Trent decided in Chapter XVI of this same Sixth Session which we now quote: “Before men, therefore, who have been justified in this manner, — whether they have preserved uninterruptedly the grace received, or whether they have recovered it when lost, — are to be set the words of the Apostle: *Abound in every good work, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord: for God is not unjust, that he should forget your work, and the love which you have shown in his name; and, do not lose your confidence, which hath a great reward*. And, for this cause, life eternal is to be proposed to those working well *unto the end*, and hoping in God, both as a grace mercifully promised to the sons of God through Jesus Christ, and as a reward which is according to the promise of God himself, to be faithfully rendered to their good works and merits. For this is that *crown of justice* which the Apostle declared was, after his *fight and course, laid up for him, to be rendered to him by the just Judge, and not only to him, but also to all that love his coming*. For, whereas Jesus Christ himself continually infuses his virtue into the said justified, — as the head into the members, and the vine into the branches, — and this virtue always precedes and accompanies and follows their good works, which without it could not in any wise be pleasing and meritorious before God, — we must believe that nothing further is wanting to the justified, to prevent their being accounted to have, by those very works which have been done in God, fully satisfied the divine law according to the state of this life, and to have truly merited eternal life, to be obtained also in its (due) time, if so be, however, that they depart in grace: seeing that Christ, our Saviour, saith: *If any one shall drink of the water that I will give him, he shall not thirst forever; but it shall become in him a fountain of water springing up unto life everlasting*.” We will pause here in this quotation from the sixteenth chapter of the Council of Trent and continue with it in our following article.

H.V.

Jehovah is my light,
 And my salvation near;
 Who shall my soul afright,
 Or cause my heart to fear?
 While God my strength, my life sustains,
 Secure from fear my soul remains.

The Voice of Our Fathers

The Canons of Dordrecht

PART TWO

EXPOSITION OF THE CANONS

FIFTH HEAD OF DOCTRINE

OF THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

Article 4 (continued)

That God deals *righteously* even then, when the actuating and influencing operation of His grace is such that it “permits” the saints to deviate from the guidance of grace and to be seduced into sin, so that they comply with the lusts of the flesh and actually fall, implies, in the first place, that the falls of the saints are not to be ascribed to the Lord God. On the contrary, the sins of the saints spring forth from their own sinful flesh and from their own carnal lusts and from the attacks of Satan and of the world. God is not the author of their sins, but they themselves are. When the saints walk in the path of sanctification and holiness, that is to be ascribed to God and His grace; but when they follow in the paths of sin, that is their own fault, and it is to be ascribed only to their own sinful nature. This the *Canons* emphasize here when they state that the saints “draw back, *by their own fault*, from the guidance of grace.” If this were not the case, it could not possibly be maintained that God deals righteously. And this fact should be clearly understood. To present the Reformed doctrine of perseverance as teaching that the sins and falls of the saints are the fault of God’s grace is to present a caricature of the Reformed faith. It is certainly of the very essence of the Reformed doctrine that it surely denies that God is in any sense the author of sin. The Reformed faith maintains this *a priori*. That is, whether the relationship between God’s sovereign counsel and the sin of man, between His sovereign, irresistible grace and the sin of the elect, between His sure preservation and the sin of those who are preserved,—whether that relationship can be understood and explained satisfactorily and in all its details, or whether this must remain a mystery ultimately, makes absolutely no difference. The Reformed faith maintains that it is blasphemy to charge God with sin. Mark you well, Reformed doctrine does not by this detract one iota from the truth that also the sins and falls of the saints are under the sovereign control of the Almighty, whether a “permissive” or a “directive” control. Reformed doctrine maintains both these truths. That it does so is entirely apart from the question whether it also explains at all the relationship between them. I now emphasize that it simply maintains both truths, and that it is an utterly false charge to force upon the Reformed faith the supposed consequence of its doctrine of sovereignty that it

makes God the author of sin. Reformed believers fling this consequence far from them and refuse to accept it. This is the plain teaching of this article, and is in harmony with all that the *Canons* teach elsewhere on this same subject. God is righteous in all His doings, and to charge Him with unrighteousness is nothing short of blasphemy. Unrighteousness in God is inconceivable. The Almighty is not even in need of defense on this score. He cannot be defended. He is God! Righteousness is His very Being.

In the second place, this *righteous* permission implies that God does not violate the nature of His own creature in sovereignly permitting him to fall, but deals with that creature entirely in harmony with the nature which He Himself has given it. The saints are rational-moral creatures, formed by the Almighty with a mind and a will of their own. As such He always deals with them, also in the work of His grace. To deal otherwise with them would be unrighteous. It would be a violation of God’s own ordinance. Hence, the operation of God’s grace is not upon the creature or in behalf of the creature merely, but it is an operation in and through the very nature of the rational-moral creature, and always in harmony with that nature. Now the saint whom God preserves by the power of His grace is such a rational-moral creature. That God preserves the saint means that He leads that saint inevitably to everlasting glory, and that nothing can ever prevent this. But how does God lead that saint? He does not treat him like a puppet, attach a string to him, and take him to glory *without* his own mind and will. Nor does he treat him like a wild animal, lasso him, and lead him to glory *against* his own mind and will. The Lord treats him like a thinking and willing creature, operates in and through his mind and will, and leads him inevitably to glory, but *in harmony with* the mind and will which He changes by the power of His grace.

But there is more to this aspect of the truth. That saint remains on this earth always imperfect. According to the new man, he has a renewed mind and will. According to the old man, the operations of sin are still busy in that same saint. And also in this regard God’s dealings with that saint are always righteous. In other words, God does not only deal with the saint in harmony with his rational and moral nature, but He also deals with that saint in harmony with the fact that in his rational-moral nature there are both the principle of regeneration and the operations of sin.

Various consequences follow from this fact. Some of these are mentioned and treated in the articles that follow, and we will enlarge on them at the proper time. But in the main, the truth is that within the framework of the operations of His grace whereby God leads His saints along the “ups and downs” of the path of sanctification inerrantly to glory, He always deals with them in perfect harmony with His own righteousness. The manner of His dealing with them is according to righteousness. The purpose of His dealings is according to righteousness. And He also vindicates

His own righteousness in the consciousness of the saints with whom He deals, causing them to experience and to acknowledge and to manifest that He is a righteous God.

Thus we may say, in the first place, that His purpose in "permitting" the saints to fall is always to reveal and to magnify ultimately the righteousness that is of God through Christ, the righteousness that is not in any sense of man, the righteousness which is by faith. This is fundamental. Certainly, in the consideration of this subject we must not limit our thoughts merely to the one little detail of the work of God whereby He "permits" the saint to fall. The work of God is one whole. And every detail of that work must be viewed in the light of the whole work. Now then, the sovereign Lord God so works and so uses the sins and falls of the saints that they must serve the revelation and magnification of the righteousness that is of God in Christ, in the meantime always working thus, that the sin of His saints is never His sin, but always theirs. Is not this purest righteousness then?

In the second place, the manner of God's dealings is according to righteousness. Does God simply ignore the operations of sin in the saint? When sin's activity in the saint becomes very strong, so that the saint wants to follow the inclinations of his old nature and comply with the lust of the flesh, and when he persists in this and does not want to find his strength in divine grace, does the Lord simply act as though nothing bad is taking place? Not at all; He deals righteously, and He lets the saint go temporarily into his own sin. When the saint, having the principle of the new life in him by grace, yet according to his flesh does not want to walk according to grace, does not want to depend on it, does not want to watch and pray, or perhaps does not want to find all his righteousness by faith in the blood of Christ only, does the Lord simply go on causing that sinner to experience all the blessings of salvation, to have all the joy of salvation by grace only, to have all the assurance of preservation to the end? By no means; if God did that, He would indeed impugn the righteousness and spotless holiness of His own grace. On the contrary, sometimes God lets His saints go in order to teach them to know their own weaknesses when they feel strong in themselves. In that respect God deals with the saints,—always, remember, within the framework of His grace,—according to their sins. When they feel strong in themselves and therefore neglect watching and prayer, they must be dealt with in harmony with their sin in order that they may learn their weakness in self. Sometimes God lets His saints go in order to bring them to a deeper knowledge of their sin, to a deeper awareness of their own utter worthlessness and helplessness, to a more conscious need of the perfect righteousness of Christ's atoning blood, and to a more heartfelt confession of sin and repentance. Sometimes the Lord lets His saints go and sovereignly lets them fall into very deep sin and into a most terrible and distressing experience of

sin's power in order to deliver them from a persistent sin of character. One terrible experience may serve sometimes to teach the saint a lesson of grace that he never forgets and to deliver him from a certain sin for the rest of his life by showing him the danger of that sin and the horror of it and by teaching him to be constantly watching and praying against it. Was it not thus with the deep fall of Peter in his denial of the Lord? And did not King David learn the lesson of grace in the same hard school of experience, according to Psalm 51?

In the third place, God always causes His people to experience and to acknowledge His perfect righteousness at these times when they fall so deeply. They certainly experience, as Article 5 has it, that by such enormous sins they very highly offend God, incur a deadly guilt, and grieve the Holy Spirit. God vindicates His own righteousness in the consciousness of the saints when they sin and fall deeply. They offend God, and they know that they offend God, and they experience the consequences of that offense, and, until by grace they find that offense covered by the perfect righteousness of Christ, they continue to experience that they have incurred a deadly guilt. In close connection with this, it also follows that the saints themselves cannot get rid of that "fault" of their sins on God. They never blame God for their own sin. That is spiritually impossible for them. They know that the guilt and blame of their sin is their own. And therefore also, the saints can never take the attitude: Let us sin that good may come out of it. On the contrary, they pray: "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,"—a prayer which does not mean to ask that the saints shall not be surrounded by temptations, but to ask that they shall not be led to experience all the horrible consequences of succumbing to temptation and of being overcome by it. Hence, humbly conscious of their own weaknesses, constantly seeking their strength in the Lord, being constant in watching and prayer, they are strong in the Lord and safe from these deep falls.

But in the meantime, in their deepest falls the people of God may ultimately rest in the assurance that God's grace is stronger than all their sin, that even their sins and falls must be subservient to the purpose of His grace, and that the Lord alone can and does preserve them even through their deepest falls even unto the end.

H.C.H.

SPECIAL MEETING

Reformed Free Publishing Association

THURSDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 4, 8 o'clock

FIRST CHURCH, GRAND RAPIDS

Speaker: REV. G. VOS

DECENCY and ORDER

The Report

*of the Committee of the Synod of 1924 on the Question
"Can A Classis Depose A Consistory?"*

(Concluded)

d) In the first volume of "*Politica Ecclesiastica*," Voetius answers thirty-four particular questions that relate to the matter of ecclesiastical power. Question 22 is: "As part of the ecclesiastical power, does it belong to the Synodical gathering of the churches to exercise the right of excommunication in the event of misgovernment or incurable evil?" (*atque ab ea exerceri*). The familiar answer is: "I do not see why this cannot be done in cases and events such as mentioned above."

Now there were in the days of Voetius, Reformers who were not free from independent tendencies. He calls them *recensiores* (novices?). And note then in the aforementioned question 22: "By some novices the right of excommunication is questioned but others, by distinguishing and reconciling the conflicts, viewed this in this way, that not the excommunication itself but the directive and preparation of the decision (to excommunicate) belongs with the Synod in the event of misgovernment, while the excommunication itself or, if you prefer, the execution of it must be left to the local church."

With the novices Voetius does not agree. The manner in which he speaks of "the others" indicates clearly what his position is. In the event that a congregation is not yet as corrupt as the consistory so that there remains a healthy and better element, Voetius says, "that the formal excommunication can be performed with and in the presence of this better element since the Synodical power (*potestas synodi*) has previously given the directive (guidance) and with her representatives supplied the deficiency of the local church (*defectum supplebit*).

The matter, however, is somewhat different in the event the consistory is hopelessly corrupt. In this case it naturally cannot proceed according to Article 79 of the Church Order and along the lines of the novices (*recensiores*). Voetius says, "Yet these distinctions (guiding, preparing, 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 (*Synodico corpori tribuendum*); 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."

The trend of Voetius' reasoning is clear. He means to

say: "In some cases it may be possible to act according to the principle of the novices (*recensiores*) but to carry this principle through cannot be maintained if a broader gathering has not the right of excommunication." He then concludes by saying: "We see this, that such doubtful cases . . . the limitation and application of a presbyterial Synodical Church right may not hinder (*constitutionem politiae non debere impedire*). When Voetius speaks of an action by which the curse is pronounced with warning, etc. (*opzegging*), this certainly means more than an admission (*aflegging*) of the interpretation that a consistory *eo facto* has broken the denominational bond and thus has *ipso facto* placed itself outside of the denomination."

Very significant in this connection is the answer that Voetius gives to Question 23. "Is this ruling power so adhered to the consistory that in the event necessitated by her laxity in ruling, it cannot be taken from her and given to another for the welfare and upbuilding of the congregation?" In four conclusions which we report here in brief, he gives this answer:

(1) This power does not have an *indelible character* (*character indelebilis*). This is evident from periodic retirement (of office bearers) and the difficulty of suspending and deposing them from the office.

(2) This ruling power is imparted to the ministers and elders by the congregation and, therefore, can, in case of necessity and for righteous causes, be taken away by her; at least the exercising and use of it for a time may be obstructed. (Final deposition from office must proceed along the lines of Article 79 of the Church Order and carried out with the help of the broader gatherings.) Whenever the broader gatherings either cannot or will not help a church in this, the church does it by herself in case it is necessary. If also this cannot happen because of lawful obstacles, she separates herself from the consistory, as in the time of the first Reformation and especially during the repeated disputes with the Remonstrants.

(3) This ruling power can be temporally or finally denied the usual office bearers and placed on the elders of the neighboring church or churches of the same denomination until order is restored and the consistory reinstated. Voetius does not see that there is a single reason why some new defenders (*promachoi*) of the Independency of the Churches assert that to no minister is given power to rule in a single instance in another church. (With calling on Art. 84 D.K.O.)

(4) A church that is destitute of neighboring ministers and of all help and assistance of the Synodical bond, does all it can to use not only the usual and in every case competent power of freedom but also the power of authority. They do not unlawfully take to themselves all power that belongs to the ministers and consistories, but that by which they can bring all the actions and parts into conformity until that which is lacking is restored. To these actions belong: gather-

ing together to discuss God's Word, the making of decisions concerning things which are necessary for that determined time, the right of protest, and when corruption is total, the right of a new church organization. These and similar things were proven by the pious in the time of the Waldenses and of the first Reformation in 1517 . . . by some churches which in England were deprived of faithful and orthodox ministers and to which were given corrupt and disorderly ministers. And that these things have happened in cases of necessity and in confused circumstances, we will defend in agreement with the things we have exposed against the Romish priests. Yet we do not want a misleading inference to be drawn from this for the usual and regular rule and for the peaceful time of the church.

By this last Voetius certainly means this: that when there is a regular Reformed Church Institute (*geregeld Geref. Kerkinrichting*), the churches simply act according to the accepted Church Order where especially in Articles 30, 31, 36, 79 and 84 is clearly given what the relation of the local church is to the denomination federation. And what it signifies that a Classis has jurisdiction over a local church and the consistory. Circumstances may arise that a church must protest, — that a church can get no help from a broader gathering, in which case she is compelled to use some rights inhering in the denominational federation and that according to "common accord" are stipulated in the Church Order, — but in a regular Reformed Church denomination these extraordinary things, by exception permitted, are not necessary.

(e) In the last volume of the *Politica Ecclesiasticus*, published in the year of his death, 1676, Voetius mentions a case wherein a consistory neglects or withholds applying excommunication upon a member. He says: "I think that the consistory does nothing absurd if she refers this whole case to the Classis and persuent thereto to the Synod, because by her advice or decision it will be determined whether the excommunication will be carried out or withdrawn (*differat aut absolvat*)." Voetius goes a step farther yet and judges that a consistory in this case conforms itself to the request of the Synod; that the Synod utters the sentence of excommunication and through her deputies or through the deputies of the Classis (in which the local church is incorporated) shall be (let) carried out. In this case Voetius thus gives to the broader gatherings the competency to handle a discipline case from the beginning to the end. And in this case a Reformed Classis (not a so-called Classis in the collegialistic Ned. Herv. Kerk) does what belongs to the consistory.

(2) The *practice* of the Reformed Churches in her most flourishing period. As it comes before us, Voetius gives to a Classis the right to depose a Consistory. And this right of deposition is according to *history* exercised.

(a) In Haarlem in 1618, during the difficulties there, there was a new consistory placed and functioning next to the old consistory. The Synod of North Holland made three

decisions: to thank the old consistory for their faithful service; — to depose the new consistory (*uit het ambt zetten*), — and to, according to the discretion of the deputies who had to execute the first two decisions, choose and install another Consistory. Therefore, the Synod itself carries out her decisions through her deputies and actually does what is Consistorial for the deputies take the place which according to Articles 22 and 24 of the Church Order belong to the Consistory. To be noted is that the old, *faithful*, Consistory simply is thanked and does not even remain to install their successors in office.

(b) The same Synod that met in Enkhuizen on October 9th, e.v.d. had to settle difficulties in the congregation of Hoorn and decided to send a committee (*deputaatschap*) "with full power and commission to treat the case in the name of this Synod as if Synod, as now gathered, was present thereabouts, and that accordingly the Synod will hold in effect whatever is done there by her committee.

The deputies gathered December 4, 1618, and the following days. Also here there were two consistories. The one was thanked for its faithful service (on their own request they stepped out of office) and the other was discharged from their service. A new consistory was "by the authority" of the deputies instituted. The old consistory, however, remained in active service until the time and while the new consistory "according to the proper order shall have been installed in her service."

(c) Soon after the adjournment of the Synod of Dordt, the Synod of South Holland gathered in Leiden from July 27 to August 17, 1619. A large number of Remonstrant preachers were "discharged and deposed."

It was decided further to compose a form to be read in the churches with two consistories and by which the *deposition* of the Remonstrant consistories would be carried out in the behalf of the Synod. Where the Remonstrants had everything in control, the consistory would be deposed by Classis.

(d) In order to prove that a broader gathering is impotent overagainst an obstinate consistory, Rutgers and Lohman in *Rechtsbevoegdheid der Plaatselijke Kerken*, point out the well-known case of Ds. F. Van Leenhof, minister of Zwolle. The Synod of Overijssel deposed him. The consistory, supported by the government of the State and Province, did not heed this sentence and maintained him. The Synod had not deposed the consistory but yet put them under the ban of excommunication ("*onder ban en censure gezet*"). Herewith spoke out the Synod, that she had jurisdiction (*zeggenschap*) and competency (*rechtsbevoegdheid*), but she is smitten with paralysis to proceed further because of the meddling of the government. Also apart from this and taking into account that this occurred in the beginning of the 18th century, that there was no deposition is no proof that the Synod did not have the competency.

(Continued on page 119)

ALL AROUND US

Dr. Klooster on the Decisions of 1924.

The reader will remember that in the preceding issue of this paper we reflected on an article appearing in the November issue of *Torch and Trumpet* in which Dr. Fred H. Klooster wrote on "The Synodical Decisions of 1924 on Common Grace." Because of our limited space, we promised to continue with this subject in this issue of our paper.

However, the reader will also have noticed in the last issue of *The Standard Bearer* that the editor-in-chief also promised to reflect on this article of Dr. Klooster in this issue. Had we known that he planned to do this, we would have remained silent, simply for the reason that we believe no one is more capable of answering Dr. Klooster or anyone else in the Christian Reformed Church than the Rev. H. Hoeksema who was personally involved in the controversy of 1924 on the common grace issue. For this reason also we refrain from writing more at this time on Dr. Klooster's article. We see no need to fill up *The Standard Bearer* on this subject when it can be ably disposed of in one article.

We do wish to say this, however, that we deplore the fact that the Rev. Hoeksema has to answer Dr. Klooster in *The Standard Bearer* which many subscribers to *Torch and Trumpet* do not read. We repeat what we suggested more than once before that *Torch and Trumpet* would regain our respect if it would allow the Rev. Hoeksema the space necessary to answer Dr. Klooster and therein also to present his views on the matter of common grace. We have not discussed this with the Rev. Hoeksema, and we are not even sure that he would accept an invitation from *Torch and Trumpet* to write in that paper after their previous refusal to publish an article on the subject of common grace sent in to them upon the request of the editorial staff of that paper. We could hardly blame him if he should refuse another such request. Nevertheless, we believe there are some Christian ethics involved here which demand that a man who is so universally acclaimed as a Reformed theologian and scholar, yet so continuously criticized and condemned without a hearing, should be given the opportunity to point out to the Christian Reformed constituency not only the error of their position on common grace, but also the grievous sin that was committed when they banished him and others from their communion.

Jehovah's Witnesses Make Resolutions.

The persistent religious sect known by a host of different names but especially as Jehovah's Witnesses, whose representatives are generally vanquished when they make their appearance at our door, have this time gained an audience through the assistance of a trusted servant of the government, our daily mail-man.

This time the strategy of this audacious sect worked. They evidently knew that we would be curious enough to

read *The Watchtower*, dated Nov. 1, 1958, a semi-monthly magazine in which they make a written pronouncement of a set of resolutions taken recently when an international convention was held in New York City. And that is exactly what we did. What we read also moved us to repeat these resolutions to our readers. That may also have been part of their strategy, which also has succeeded. The following is a quotation of the article they wanted us to read:

"We, Jehovah's Witnesses, assembled here in Yankee Stadium and the Polo Grounds, New York City, in the Divine Will International Assembly of Jehovah's Witnesses this first day of August, 1958, do unite in declaring that we are exclusively devoted to the divine Sovereign of the universe and to the interests of his promised new world now at hand;

"That we deplore the fact that the inspired written Word of the Universal Sovereign is ignored due to the delinquency of the religious leaders of Christendom, who have made the people forget the holy name of the sovereign God by various religious means, whereas we, His witnesses, take the greatest pleasure in honoring and vindicating that holy name and in confessing before all men that the name by which He alone is distinguished is Jehovah (Ps. 83:18, AV);

"That all nations today owe their life to Jehovah God as the great Creator and Fountain of life, inasmuch as all the nations have a common descent from the main survivor of the global flood, the patriarch Noah, who walked with Jehovah God to the preserving alive of our human race;

"That because of our common descent from Noah, who was the tenth in line of descent from the first man Adam, all the many nations, tribes and peoples of this modern day should recognize that we are one human family, one human race, for whom Jehovah God has made one common provision through his Son Jesus Christ for our everlasting life and happiness in His approaching new world;

"That, since the founding of the city of Babylon shortly after the great flood, a wicked world has been built up, of which the Holy Bible declares Satan the Devil to be the invisible god and ruler; and that under him and his demons the nations and languages of the earth have broken up the unity of the human race and have brought mankind to the dangerous situation today in which there is no peace and in which there is no loving family harmony;

"That, in love for his human creation, Jehovah God has willed that a righteous new world be introduced for all men of good will in his appointed time, for which reason he has numbered the days of this internationally split old world, and this old world is now far along in its 'appointed time of the end';

"That the Most High God of heaven has his own chosen government for all the earth, and that in the autumn of the year 1914 he installed his loyal Son, the glorified Jesus Christ, to be king in the heavens and to destroy all the enemies of God and of man and to reign over men of good will in the blessed new world, for which reason, at Jesus' installment in 1914, the 'appointed time of the end'

for all the nations of the old world began and is now nearing its climactic conclusion;

"That the only stable government in the universe is the established kingdom of God in the hands of his anointed Son, Jesus Christ; and that not a single government in Christendom has God's backing, inasmuch as He is backing his own government, the Messianic kingdom, and Christendom's governments are doomed to destruction by him at the universal war of Armageddon, in which his reigning King will fight them and all the rest of the Devil's organization, human and demonic;

"That, since A.D. 1914, the evidences have continued to multiply in proof that God's kingdom now reigns from the heavens; and not only do we have the prophecy of his Son Jesus Christ regarding these visible evidences on hand in the Holy Bible for consultation, but God has raised up his speaking witnesses to preach the good news of the reigning kingdom and to serve warning notice of the war of Armageddon by word of mouth, letting the people hear, that they may say: 'It is the truth';

"That in spite of the fulfilled prophecies of God's Word, with which the religious clergy should be acquainted, and in spite of the increasing testimony of His living, speaking witnesses, the religious leaders of all denominations of Christendom have refused to join in the Kingdom witness, in fulfillment of Matthew 24:14, and have opposed, even persecuted, Jehovah's witnesses and have rejected God's kingdom and have turned the peoples to man-made political remedies for human ills;

"That, in their fear of ungodly communism and of more world war the clergy have turned their backs on Jesus Christ the King and have endorsed the political organizations for perpetuating this old world, which is God's enemy, namely, the League of Nations and its successor, the United Nations; and they have led and encouraged the people in the idolizing of these human makeshifts for God's kingdom; and in their worldly-wise schemes to safeguard the people from further devastating world war by means of these incapable organizations, the clergy have failed to help the people to find refuge and security against the far more destructive universal war, 'the war of the great day of God the Almighty' (Rev. 16:14, 16); so that, in times of international peace, the clergy hypocritically encourage the nations not to fight one another, not to fight against men, but, by backing up the political schemes of men, they encourage the nations to fight against God, both now and in the coming war of Armageddon;

"That the nations are now on judgment before Jehovah God the Supreme Judge, and the clergy of Christendom stand as the most reprehensible and delinquent class on earth before Him, and at Armageddon he will give his judicial attention first to them, and all the blind peoples who follow these blind religious guides will suffer execution with them at God's hand;

"That, amid this most serious situation of the old world,

and in view of the failure of Christendom's clergy, we are most grateful to Jehovah for the privilege of being His witnesses to all the nations in this time of the end; and we deeply appreciate the heavy responsibility resting on us to uphold the honor of his name and to carry out the commission laid upon us;

"That, figuratively speaking, we have beaten our swords into plowshares and our spears into pruning shears and, although of so many nationalities, we will not lift up sword against one another because we are Christian brothers and members of the one family of God, neither will we learn to war against one another any more, but we will walk in God's paths in peace, unity and brotherly love;

"That what has made us one Christian people despite the fact that we come from so many diversified peoples is that we have separated ourselves from this world and its hateful conflicts and have dedicated ourselves through Jesus Christ to our one God and heavenly Father, and we sincerely pray to Him in unity: 'Let your will come to pass, as in heaven, also upon earth'; not the will of the worldly nations under the 'ruler of this world,' Satan the Devil;

"That our earthly organization is theocratic because it is ruled by God the Most High as Head over all, and our Leader under Him is no political dictator but is Jesus Christ our Right Shepherd, and God's holy spirit is the active force that moves us and accomplishes God's will through us, and the inspired Holy Scriptures are our book of law and instruction and higher education; . . .

"Accordingly, on this inspiring occasion, we call upon all lovers of life in happiness under righteous government, to whose attention this Resolution may come, to take to heart its import and to honor the name of the Creator of heaven and earth and to turn to His kingdom by Christ as the rightful government of the new world and to bring themselves into harmony with his perfect will, because 'he that does the will of God remains forever.'—I John 2:17."

The reader should observe that we omitted two paragraphs in this quotation only because of lack of space. Enough is quoted, however, to allow the reader to judge as to the anti-Scriptural and ungodly character of this anarchistic sect.

It is noteworthy that the "resolutions" contain repeated reference to "the inspired written Word of the Universal Sovereign," while it is well-known that Russellites destroy the supernatural character of the Bible. It is also striking that these "resolutions" refer again and again to Christ as the Son of God, while the truth is that, like its Arian brother, Russellism denies the divinity of Christ. True to form the "resolutions" mock with the Scriptural doctrine of an ordained clergy, and divine ordination of government. They recognize only a theocratic kingdom at the head of which they have placed Jesus Christ who began to realize his kingdom of which the Russellites only are the citizens in A.D. 1914. No doubt there will be many ignorant souls that will fall for these pernicious resolutions.

M.S.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Missionary Notes

We have, once and again, reflected upon the church political aspect of the Forbes-Isabel churches in their severing of relationship with the Eureka Classis.

That we spoke mostly about the Isabel church in this respect is due to the fact, that, when Rev. Mensch was deposed, Isabel was a congregational unit, recognized as a member church of the Eureka Classis, which the Forbes Church was a faithful minority-group with Rev. Mensch in the Oriens Reformed Church at Leola.

Now just a word about the Forbes congregation.

It should be understood by the reader that on or about November 28, 1956, the "Executive" issued their usurping decretal, declaring Rev. H. Mensch officially(?) no more a minister in the Leola church. Immediately thereupon the faithful brethren continued holding services in the large and commodious basement of the parsonage in Leola, where Rev. Mensch lived. They were about 28 souls. Since they felt that the entire matter was still pending with the coming session of Classis in May of 1957, and whereas they could not be without some organization in the meanwhile, they organized in such a way, that, should the Classis not undo the action of the "Executive," they could proceed to permanent organization. They elected as elder-elect, E. Hauck, and A. Rau, and as deacon-elect, W. Hauck. That was in December of 1956.

When the Classis gave its sanction to the decretal of the deposition of Rev. Mensch by an "Executive" committee, the brethren and sisters proceeded to permanent organization. This meant that, small as they were, they proceeded with faith in God. He, who had led them thus far, would be faithful in the future. And they named their little congregation "The Ebenezer Reformed Church" at Forbes, N.D. This is some 25 miles north and east from Leola. At first meetings were held in the farm home of E. Hauck, but soon a small, unused school-house was acquired in that vicinity. The place is now marked by a very tasteful sign "The Ebenezer Reformed Church."

Thus was born the Eben-ezer Reformed Church.

But why did this little band of men, women and children not abide by the decision of Eureka Classis concerning the Rev. Mensch?

This is a good and proper question and calls for an answer, and the answer is that they had vowed before the face of God that they would abide by the teaching and preaching of Rev. Mensch. It was a matter of confession of faith! It was not simply sentimental adherence to a mere man, whose breath is in his nostrils. The seed sown by Rev. Mensch had fallen into good ground! In a document titled "Re-affirmation Of Loyalty" we read the following noteworthy expression, which was signed by six male members

in the congregation. "We, the undersigned members of the Oriens Reformed Church, do solemnly attest, 1. That it is your duty, Rev. H. Mensch, to be faithful to us as minister 2. That it is our calling and privilege to support you, Rev. H. Mensch, with our gifts and prayers, and to be faithful members under your preaching. We set our seal of approval to the foregoing resolutions and reaffirmation of faithfulness by affixing our names, which do further appear as follows."

Such was their vow before the face of God!

It was no rash vow on the part of those who continued in the Name of God at Forbes!

The undersigned was present when this meeting was held, and these signatures were made, as above stipulated.

On September 15, 1957, the elder-elect E. Hauck and deacon-elect W. Hauck were installed into office in the morning service. That afternoon elder Hauck administered the sacrament of baptism to an infant child in the congregation. And two weeks later elder Hauck administered the Lord's Supper. Both times the Forms were read from the back of our Psalter.

The Consistory of the Leola church, which remained with Eureka Classis, were duly informed of the membership of the Eben-ezer Reformed Church, and they were requested to remove those names from their books, which incidentally, possibly were not even kept in that congregation!

It was truly a day of small beginning!

However, if it is of the Lord it will surely stand! We have abundant reason to believe that it shall.

Let us remember this small, but courageous church before the throne of grace. G.L.

QUESTION HOUR

Held after Address at Hull Mass Meeting

July, 1953

Questioner: Rev. H. C. Hoeksema

Answers by: Rev. H. Hoeksema

(Continued)

Question: Acts 19:39 speaks of "it shall be determined by a lawful assembly." Can an unannounced consistory meeting, which suspended Rev. De Wolf, stand the acid test of this passage?

Answer: Certainly. Consistory meetings do not always have to be announced. I should say not. All consistory meetings are not announced. There are plenty consistory meetings that are not announced. And if it's necessary that a meeting must be held, and that, for instance, as in this case, a meeting must be held immediately, that meeting does not have to be announced to the congregation. All consistory meetings do not have to be announced.

Question: Is it correct that a minority of 10 elders depose the majority of 11 elders? That same principle being applied, is it not also true that 2 elders could depose 19 elders?

Answer: Of course they can. Sure. One elder can depose 20 elders. How otherwise could you ever depose a consistory that's heretical? Certainly, one elder can depose 20 elders, or 24 elders, or 30 elders, with the help of the classis. But they do it. They do it. Certainly do. Suppose that a whole consistory becomes corrupt, the whole consistory without any exception becomes corrupt, who must then depose it? Who must depose a consistory that is entirely corrupt? What's your answer? I say: the congregation. The congregation can depose the consistory. The congregation called the consistory. And the congregation can depose it, and can with the help of the Classis call a new consistory. That's certainly church order. That was always the church order which the Rev. van Lonkhuizen in former years defended. He did not want any hierarchy. But that's certainly true. The congregation is called by the consistory, — I mean the consistory is called by the congregation, installed by the congregation; and the consistory can be deposed by the congregation. And if there's only one elder in the whole consistory, that elder can certainly depose the consistory. He must have help, of course, but he does it. Certainly can.

Question: Would you say that any person who doesn't agree with you in this matter, but takes the side of Rev. De Wolf, is not Prot. Ref.?

Answer: I've already answered that question, I think. If you will formulate that question again, as it should be: if any person is not agreed with the Prot. Ref. truth, expressed in the Three Forms of Unity, as interpreted in the Prot. Ref. church, then he is not Protestant Reformed. I do not count. You do not have to agree with me. If you think I'm wrong, protest. But don't talk.

Question: If you people were convinced that Rev. De Wolf and his supporting elders were in the wrong, why did you separate instead of appealing to Classis?

Answer: I did not separate. They separated. We deposed them. I did not separate. We appeal to Classis? The Classis decided to advise us to suspend and depose. That was already decided. You think we must appeal to Classis again? We must not appeal to Classis. We simply carried out the decision of Classis, the advice of Classis. That's all. Nothing more. No, they had to appeal to Classis, not we. But they didn't. They separated themselves. We didn't.

Question: Is the letter signed by Rev. De Wolf and Mr. S. De Young, of which we understand all our consistory members received a copy factually the truth, or are there lies in that letter?

Answer: I don't know what you mean by that letter. I

didn't receive a letter like that. I don't know what letter you refer to. O, I think I do in a way. I don't have the letter with me, otherwise I would read it. But I don't have it. But I think there is one statement in that letter which I recall. I think that's the letter you refer to. That letter states I think, that in the June 1st meeting, where the decision was made to suspend De Wolf and depose the consistory unless they apologized, that decision was taken under duress. That's not true. There was no duress. I explained to you all that happened at that consistory meeting. Nothing more. I explained to you the whole thing. Duress? Besides, the elders that were present, the opposing elders that were present certainly did not show any duress. They did not show any strain. They simply stayed where they were. They were not affected. So I think that's a story. No duress. Except, of course, we had the advice of the Classis. No more. We could not have influence, exert any duress, any stress upon any of the other consistory members. We didn't either.

Question: Why was this mass meeting necessary, and why not wait with any mass meetings here out West till the churches have spoken in their broader gatherings?

Answer: I already have answered that I think. This mass meeting was not called by me. I was asked to speak here. And the reason is also plain. We cannot, we cannot have a thing like this in our churches without doing harm to our Prot. Ref. cause. Unless the people are informed . . . they must be informed . . . And they are informed here, without any question. They have a right to know. Has nothing to do with the broader gatherings. The classis has spoken already. The only meeting that has to speak yet is synod. In the meantime, we have a right to tell you exactly what's happening. And you have a right to know.

Question: Is it not premature, and entirely out of order, if a local consistory at this stage expresses itself officially on the question as to which is the legal consistory of Fuller Avenue?

Answer: Of course not. That stands to reason. That's not only not premature, but that's necessary. How can you work otherwise? If there is no legal consistory at all, there's no congregation. Now, for the present the others claim too that they're a legal consistory, but they know better. I assure you that they know that they aren't. And I assure you, at any rate, that the classis will determine that they are not. The classis has spoken. But you cannot do anything else. What else can you do? You cannot wait to determine what's the legal consistory. We decide that for ourselves.

Question: We understand you claim that the Classis will justify your action of suspension and deposition. How do you know that the classis will not be satisfied with the apology which Rev. De Wolf tendered?

Answer: Because the Classis already has spoken. The

Classis said as to the statements that they are literally heretical, regardless of how the Rev. De Wolf explains them. On that basis he was deposed or suspended.

Question: Doesn't suspension and deposition principally imply that you excommunicate these men from the church of Christ in case they do not confess what you claim to be their sin?

Answer: I've answered that already.

Question: What do you think? Should the local consistory take an official stand at this time, and express themselves on the question as to what they consider to be the legal consistory of First Church in Grand Rapids?

Answer: That's a nice question. That may very well become necessary. Suppose that you stand before the question to allow the Rev. De Wolf to your pulpit? Then you have to take a stand. You have to take a stand. At least, you will have to take a stand, whether you judge right away or not, you will have to take a stand that until Classis has decided, you cannot allow him on the pulpit. You can do the same thing with me, if you want to. That stands to reason. Of course, I'm not suspended, and I'm not deposed. He was. According to the decision of Classis. That's the difference. But in thus far the Classis will have to take a stand, not only in regard to Rev. De Wolf, but also in regard to other ministers in our churches that have already separated themselves from us. You have to know that, and you have to take a stand. That's all.

Question: How could Classis East advise the entire course of action which the consistory was to follow in said case? De Wolf and his men claim in their letter that the course of action had not been requested by the consistory neither by the protestants. Is that correct?

Answer: It's not correct. We certainly asked advice in regard to the whole business. Besides, not only is that true. But the Classis certainly can give advice. The Classis didn't decide anything for the consistory. The Classis advised. And since the matter was important, the Classis had to advise. But I think if you read the whole business, you will find that nevertheless that was true: the Classis had to decide not only in regard to the doctrine, but also in regard to the action.

Question: Why was not the apology of De Wolf received by the Consistory? Who determines the form of a man's apology?

Answer: I've already answered that, I think.

Question: What is the difference between statement of De Wolf and Canons II, 5?

Answer: That's a nice question. Canons II, 5 states: The

promise of the gospel is that whosoever believeth in Christ shall be saved, which, with the command to repent — and that gospel must be preached with the command to repent and believe to all to whom God in His good pleasure sends the gospel. I think that is almost literally the Canons. Canons II, 5, therefore, teach that the promise of the gospel is for the believers. The promise of the gospel is that whosoever believeth shall have eternal life, shall be saved. The statement of the Rev. De Wolf was: "God promises to everyone of you that if you believe you shall be saved." The statement of Canons II, 5 is the particular promise to the believers, that is, the elect. The statement of the Rev. De Wolf is the general promise to all on condition of faith. That's the difference.

(To be continued)

DECENCY AND ORDER

(Continued from page 114)

(e) The same jurisdiction that the Classis has over the consistory, the Synod has over the Classis. That discipline had to be applied to a whole Classis has naturally only seldom occurred. Yet there is an example of this. But what men did was something other than to declare: "You have made yourselves worthy to be set outside of the denomination."

The "*Friesche Synode*" (1599 at Joure), because of all sorts of trouble, difficulty and disorder deprived Classis Zevenwouden of her authority so that she could be a Classis no more, but the ministers who till then were residing under her shall continue under the neighboring state where they formerly were for the preservation of good order. The Classis Zevenwouden was not set outside of the denominational federation for then she would remain a Classis; an independent Classis. "*Sal wezen geroeyeert ende te nyete*" involves much more. At the following Synod, (Sneek, May 20, e.v.d. 1600) it was called, "the deposition of the Classis Sylvanae." The Classis Bolsward served a gravamen (protest) against the decision of 1599 but the Synod of Bolsward, July 1601, decided because of reasons of the Classis: "Classis Zevenwouden is not to be restored to good standing." Here was then a *disciplinary* action by which this Classis ceased as Classis to exist even as by the deposition of a Consistory, the Consistory ceases to exist as a Consistory.

Yet one other example is that of the action of the National French Synod of Montpellier, 1598. It resolved in consideration of three Classes that as these were opposed to the ruling of the Prov. Synod against which they should have tendered appeals, they, by sending no delegates, shall be removed and deprived of their rights. Also here we must not be deceived with the "setting outside the church federation" for this is disciplinary action of *depriving (ontneming)* of official ecclesiastical rights, thus with deposition." — F. M. Ten Hoor and G. D. DeJong.

G.V.D.B.

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

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

November 20, 1958

The Eastern League of Men's Societies met Nov. 13 at Southwest Church. This was a Silver Anniversary since it was twenty-five years ago that they held their first meeting. Rev. Vos presided and introduced Rev. H. Hanko as the speaker of the evening. The speaker's topic was, "The Relation Between God's Sovereignty And Man's Responsibility (Accountability)." The speaker pointed out that there is no conflict between the two, for man's accountability is that of a creature to his creator; that while God is sovereignly free, man is only creaturely free, always dependent upon the good pleasure of his Sovereign God. The ninety-eight men present enjoyed this reiteration of basic truth so often denied and universally misunderstood.

Redlands has made a trio from which they will choose one whom they will call to labor in their congregation. It consists of the Revs. C. Hanko, G. Lubbers and R. Veldman. Due to physical disability the Rev. Kuiper was not able to give his farewell sermon until the 16th—the date originally planned for his installation at Loveland.

The month of December will find Rev. H. Hoeksema back on the Reformed Witness Hour. He is scheduled to remain on the program until Easter Sunday. His plan is to finish the series on Hebrews that he started last year, and to begin a new series on the Creation story in Genesis. The Rev. R. Veldman follows in April; Rev. Schipper in May; Rev. H. Hanko in June and Rev. McCollam in July.

The recent Deficit Drive for Adams St. School brought in over \$5,000.00 in cash and pledges, with late returns still coming in.

Rev. Ophoff is still advised not to attend public worship services and continues to listen in on them in the parsonage next door.

First's Ladies' Aid Society held their annual bazaar Nov. 20 at Adams St. School. This offered opportunity to sell the articles previously made or donated, and to raise the funds to support our various charities.

Revs. R. Veldman and H. Hanko exchanged pulpits Nov. 16. Rev. C. Hanko filled in for Rev. McCollam in the evening because of an attack of laryngitis suffered by Holland's pastor.

Kalamazoo marches forward! They have decided to inaugurate, and have already begun a New Building Fund. Another step—a newly organized Young People's Society.

Hudsonville bid Godspeed to Lambert Schut upon his departure to France where he must complete his army service.

In Redlands, as in some of our other "churchless" con-

gregations, the society meetings are held in the living rooms of various homes of the members, with comestibles and potables issuing from the kitchens, we presume.

South Holland society members have jointly agreed to buy a new tape recorder to enable the shut-ins to hear the recorded services. The young men of the church attend to the "pickup and delivery" connected with it.

Through "exchanges" the Southwest pulpit was occupied Nov. 9 by Revs. R. Veldman and J. A. McCollam.

The Open House held at Adams School featured a speech by the Rev. H. Hanko entitled "Christian Discipline in Home and School." His observations were that basically discipline is instruction in the way of the Lord in respecting those in authority over us; that corporal punishment must be a reflection of God's chastisement upon our sins.

The Mothers' Club of Adams St. School sponsored a Dutch Psalm Sing in First Church Nov. 16. Truly, a nostalgic reaching back into the past, but enjoyable, nevertheless.

Rev. Heys will reciprocate the kindness of the Rev. Van Baren noted in our last column. He will conduct evening services in Doon while their pastor fills a classical appointment in Pella.

Browsing through the bulletins we find a wealth of Scriptural material under discussion in the various societies. The following Books are under prayerful scrutiny: Genesis, Joshua, Isaiah, Mark, John, Acts, Romans, Philippians, John's Epistle, 1st Peter and Revelation. Besides these Scripture passages, the Doctrine of the Last Things is being treated in Rev. H. Hoeksema's adult Bible Class. Are any of you eligible men, women or young people missing the golden opportunities offered by your societies?

Ministers and society secretaries, take note! This column cannot survive on grapevine news. To get in the news you must send it in; especially the Western activities, which do not have an open pipeline to this page.

An excerpt from Creston's bulletin quoting the Westminster Shorter Catechism: "Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God, for things agreeable to His Will, in the Name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgement of His mercies.

Membership papers received recently: Creston received from Hope a mother and son; Hudsonville from Doon: parents with four children, and from Forest Grove Chr. Ref. an individual; Kalamazoo from a Grand Rapids Chr. Ref. church one individual; Southwest a family with four children from Grandville Chr. Ref. church, and a family with two children from Southeast; and Southeast an individual from Cutlerville Chr. Ref. Church.

Although all the members of our South Holland church received a "Philadelphian" letter recently, we have now been informed that a Bill of Complaint (mostly against their pastor) has been filed against them by the group who left them.

. . . see you in church.

J.M.F.