

THE STANDARD

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MEDITATION

ROOM WITH GOD

" and yet there is room." Luke 14:22b

You may be certain that when the last of the Old Testament saints was shown his or her place in God's heaven, that their number was great and their beauty wonderful. From Adam to John the Baptist: what a glorious number of elect!

Shall we now begin to be merry? Shall we now destroy the old heaven and the old earth, so that out of the burning elements we may see the regeneration of new heavens and a new earth? Shall we set the judgment seat, O Almighty Judge? Shall we usher in the throngs of the godless and the throng of the redeemed to hear the contents of the books of remembrance? Shall we make an end of things, so that the blessed eternal dispensation of Thy Covenant may begin, never to end?

Listen: the servant of God speaketh: Lord, Thou hast commanded that from Adam to the end of the old dispensation I gather the poor, maimed, halt and blind from the streets and the lanes of the city. Well, it is done as Thou hast commanded, and yet there is room."

And the answer I would like to furnish through the mouth of the writer to the Hebrews in Chapter 11:40: "God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect."

And so it happened that the selfsame servant of God went out in the highways and hedges in order to compel the saints of the New Dispensation to also enter in through the portals into the banqueting halls of the Master Who made a great supper.

For there was yet room with God.

Beautiful thought: there is yet room with God.

* * * *

Man needs room.

Physically, mentally and spiritually, he needs room.

Some of the poor saints of God in olden times have found it out that man needs room physically. They were crushed and broken on the rack. Other things: knives, swords, instruments of torture have invaded the room they needed for their little bodies, which room was denied them for the sake of the testimony and the faith of Jesus. And they suffered.

It is not much, but a few cubic feet of room is necessary in order to live our physical life on earth. And God provided plenty of space. There is place to move for all. Crowding is not really necessary. Even if all men that ever lived should stand in the state of Texas, there would be room and to spare.

Also mentally there must be room for man. You see, all things that God has made have their speech and their ideas come crowding in unto us and clamour that we take them and harbour them. So that haply we may digest them and their wondrous beauty. So that we might haply meditate on them, understand them and enjoy them. If not, if there is no room for them, if we are straightened mentally we are in a sorry state. Then they, that is, created things of tree and grass, of animal and element, of mountain and ocean, they all speak to us, but we do not properly digest them, make a hodge-podge of them and suffer. When all these things do not find their proper place in our soul's mentality then we do not sing as we ought. Instead of the harmony they should produce in wondrous singing, they make us rave in the diseased mind of the pseudo-priest.

But above all there should be room spiritually for man, if he is to be happy.

After all is said and done, man ought to be in the arms of God. Unless he finds himself there, he can never rest in peace. We may talk of the arms of luxury, of gold and silver, of possessions and lands, of gifts and talents, of honor and praise—they cannot give us the room our spirits need. You need the room with God.

Now God has room.

The same word used in Luke 14:22b is translated *place* in the prophecy of Jesus in John 14: "I go to prepare a place for you."

God has room in His house.

Ah, that House of God: what wondrous room it has.

Room to the Glory of God. That is the purpose for the building that is made without hands.

You see, God dwells in that House of the Father of Jesus. He dwells there to the glory of His own Name. In that House the room, all the room, is used to reveal the life of God which is the life of perfect harmony in love and friendship. There Father sings of the good pleasure He finds in the Son; there the Son ever seeks the Father and answers in the chorus of Filial love; there the Spirit searches the depths of God and finds the ever vibrant chords of everlasting friendship.

And the roof of that House should be over your head if you are to be happy in eternal life.

It is to know God and in that knowledge to join in the song of everlasting friendship.

Listen: a few of the strains of that happy singing we have heard from the mouth of John: "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

Room for your singing spirit you need, my brother.

That is, room with God.

* * * *

It seems almost as though I hear the anxious quest: But how are we to enter the abode of the blest? What constitutes entrance through the gates into the House of God?

And the answer is indeed terrible. Because Father is very particular whom He invites.

You must be a man with clean hands, pure heart, a soul that doth not lift up itself unto vanity, neither swears deceitfully.

Only when the above perfectly fits you may stand in the Holy place. For such is the room with God.

But this is indeed terrible, for we are the very opposite. We have dirty and filthy hands, our hearts are deceitful and impure more than anything, who shall know it? Our soul is vain all the day long and we swear indeed, but it is the swearing of falsehood. Perjurer is the name that fits.

But more terrible is the *place* that fits the filthy, the impure, the vain and the perjurers. It is the place that is prepared for the devil and his fellows.

It is a place indeed, but there will be no room.

Physically, there will be no room: it will be "benauwd" there. The eternal fire and brimstone will invade your frame if die you must in your sin. They will invade your body and they shall burn but never annihilate.

Mentally, there will be no room: the soul shall be in "vertwijfeling" and "wanhoop." Of quiet reflection, of harmonious singing because of wondrous ideas, of beauteous images in the mind, there is not. There will be only passive suffering of the soul.

Spiritually, there will be no room: the spirit shall be companion to the devil and his fellows. These miserable

people would follow the pseudo-god and make a prudent covenant with hell: and they shall find the reward of their spirits for unto the wicked there is no peace.

* * * *

Yet there is room with God.

Ah, but how shall we, the impure, enter the abode of the blest?

It is through Jesus.

He is the King of Glory Who boldly commands the eternal doors: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in."

It is well; we have, we can have no objection for King of glory He is. But what means that throng of wonderful beings that follow Him up the steep hill of the Lord? How is it that they also follow and enter?

Ah, that is the Evangel of the ages.

He reserved room for countless thousands that could not enter because of their sin. And He earned the room by being straightened Himself.

Physically: there was no room for Him in the inn.

And throughout His life on earth, we begrudged Him the few cubic feet He needed for His holy body. A mere 33 years He walked in our midst and we sometimes threatened to throw Him from the cliff. At the end we hung Him on the Cross. There was no room for Him.

Mentally, He was distressed, amazed, grieved, troubled even unto death. For surely He bore our sorrows and He was acquainted with grief. So utterly straightened He was at times that the agony of His soul found expression in bloody sweat that fell from His brow.

Spiritually, there was no room for Him. Forsaken in His human consciousness from God, He cried: Oh, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" He suffered hell on earth. The torments of the damned were His portion.

And He did it, so that you might have room with God.

The fruit of all this indescribable suffering in the "benauwdheid" of Jesus is room in the banqueting halls of the Father for you and for me. Oh, the depth!

A few cubic feet we need. And there shall be an earth in which dwelleth righteousness. It is the earth that shall never grow old.

Worlds of thought, of song and rapturous meditation we need. And it shall be given you in the beauty of a recreated world that eye never saw nor ear heard and has never entered the heart of man. You shall walk along the shores of the river of God and the tree of life that giveth a harvest in every moon.

God you need, room in His bosom.

Listen, Jesus is speaking: I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved me.

Room with God. And yet there is room.

Are you entering, brother? If you are then you will confess that it is the ingathering of the sheep of Christ through His Word and Spirit.

There's a land that is fairer than day; and by faith we can see it afar; for the Father waits over the way, to prepare us a dwelling-place there. In the sweet by and by we shall meet on that beautiful shore!

G.V.

Feature Articles for The Standard Bearer in 1959

Date	Subject	Writer	Rubric replaced
January 1 —			
	Plays, Drama and Television	C. Hanko	Voice of our Fathers
February 1 —			
	The Meaning of Shiloh in Genesis 49:10	R. Veldman	Decency and Order
March 1 —			
	The Inner Man of Scripture as in Ephesians 3:16	H. Hanko	Contending for the Faith
April 1 —			
	The Deception of Ai in Joshua 8	G. Van Baren	In His Fear
May 1 —			
	Paul's Unbelief and Pure Conscience — I Tim. 1:13 and II Tim. 1:3	G. Lanting	All Around Us
June 1 —			
	God Giving Paul All That Sailed with him Acts 27:24	B. Woudenberg	From Holy Writ
July 1 —			
	The Christian And Sunday Labor	A. Mulder	Day of Shadows
August 1 —			
	Social Security for the Clergy	H. Hanko	Voice of our Fathers
September 1 —			
	Education Among Israel	R. Veldman	Decency and Order
October 1 —			
	The Reformation Prepared in Luther's Soul	C. Hanko	Contending for the Faith
November 1 —			
	The Influence of Modern Life upon the Home	G. Lanting	In His Fear
December 1 —			
	The Significance of the Nazareth	E. Emanuel	From Holy Writ

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EDITORIALS

The Declaration of Principles

The question we must still face is whether the conception that salvation and the promise of God are absolutely unconditional does not make men careless and profane.

We are often accused of this error.

Our accusers maintain that our view that the promise of God is unconditional implies that, in that case, man need do nothing at all. He does not have to convert himself. He does not have to walk in the way of God's precepts and live a life of sanctification. God saves him anyway. He must and does do it all and he has to do absolutely nothing. He has no responsibility. He can and may safely walk and live a careless and profane life.

But anyone who talks in this vein has never understood the true conception of the unconditional promise of God.

What is meant by this unconditional promise?

It implies:

1. That the promise of God is rooted in God's eternal counsel of election. In fact, we do not go wrong if, on the basis of He. 6:13-18, we claim that the promise and the counsel of election are virtually identical. They are the same essentially.

2. That, therefore, the promise of God is not for all men but only for the elect. It may be proclaimed to all to whom God in His good pleasure sends the gospel. In fact, it must be proclaimed to them all promiscuously. But although the proclamation is and must be promiscuous, in that proclamation the promise may never itself be presented as promiscuous. Always it must be clear somehow that the promise is only for the elect. We may never say in our proclamation of the gospel that God promises to every one of those that hear that they shall be saved on condition that they believe. That is not a general proclamation of a particular promise, but is the preaching to all of a general promise conditioned by something man must and can do.

3. That God also realizes His promise objectively and unconditionally in Christ. He died on the accursed tree for our sins, that is, for the sins of the elect only. By His atoning death He merited for us, that is, for those whom the Father gave Him before the foundation of the world, everlasting righteousness and life. He was raised from the dead, and entered into glory and received the Spirit that He might apply all the blessings of salvation to His own.

4. That God, through Christ also realizes all the blessings of salvation and thus fulfills His promise to all the elect subjectively. He regenerates them, calls them by His Word and Spirit, gives them the saving faith, justifies them, sanctifies and preserves them even unto the end, and ultimately re-

ceives them into eternal glory. And because this is all the work of God and His alone, so that we can have no part in it, also the subjective realization of the promise is absolutely sovereign and unconditional. There are no prerequisites, and it is a fundamental error to teach, as those that have left us do, that "our act of conversion is a prerequisite to enter into the kingdom of heaven."

5. That exactly because God performs this work of salvation in and for them sovereignly and unconditionally, it is impossible that they should become careless and profane. It is true that they sometimes walk in a sinful way. But this certainly is not because of the unconditionality of the promise of God but because of the remnants of their sinful nature, and they will surely come to repentance. For it is the fruit of the work of God that they earnestly desire and strive to walk in sanctification of life and to be pleasing to God Who hath called them out of darkness into His marvellous light. Just as inevitable as it is that God fulfills His promise for them and in them, so inevitable it is that they in and for whom God fulfills His promise walk in a new and holy life. God regenerates them and they are and live as new creatures; God calls them and they come; God implants the true and living faith in their hearts and they believe and walk in faith; God justifies them and they are and know that they are righteous before God; God sanctifies them and they walk in a new and holy life; God preserves them and they persevere and fight the battle of faith. God is always and unconditionally first and we follow. Our work is the fruit of His work, a fruit that is inevitable. Hence, it is impossible that faith in the unconditional promise of God should make men careless and profane.

This is also the teaching of Scripture.

He. 6:13-18 speaks of the sure and unconditional promise of God. I will quote this beautiful passage once more: "For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing to shew more abundantly to the heirs of the promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us."

This passage, as any one can see, teaches that the promise and the counsel of God are one and the same.

It teaches, moreover, that the promise, as is the counsel, is sovereign and unconditional.

But we must now call particular attention to the truth that this unconditional promise of God does not make men careless or profane, but, on the contrary incites them to spiritual activity.

That this is true, according to the text, I find in the con-

nection of this passage with the preceding. With the context the passage is connected by the conjunction "for".

The immutability of the promise and of the counsel of God is, therefore, presented as a reason and ground for what precedes. This is expressed in vss. 11 and 12: "And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence unto the full assurance of hope unto the end: That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

In other words, the sovereign and absolute unconditionality of the promise of God, far from making believers careless and profane, is an incentive to them to be spiritually diligent and to strive for the goal of eternal perfection in glory.

And thus it is always in the Word of God.

For in the epistle to the Romans, after the apostle had taught the doctrine of free and unconditional justification without works; and had, in chapter 8, the truth of unchangeable election and unconditional free grace; and developed in chapters 9-11, the doctrine of election and reprobation; he continues, in chapter 12, to teach about the sure and inevitable fruit that must result in believers from this doctrine of free and unconditional grace.

Writes he: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be ye not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewal of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."

Notice the conjunction "therefore."

This indicates that the apostle writes this admonition and all the exhortations that follow on the basis of all that he has written in the preceding about the free and unconditional grace and promise of God.

Far from making men careless and profane, therefore, the realization of the unconditional promise of God, and of His free grace, in the elect, produces in them the fruits of righteousness.

The same is true of the epistle to the Galatians.

In that epistle, likewise as every one knows, the apostle emphasizes that we are freely and unconditionally justified by God in Christ through faith, without the works of the law. For we are not servants under bondage but free sons, children of the promise. You will realize that this is the same as the doctrine of the unconditional promise. Does this mean that, if we are not circumcised and allow ourselves to be under the law, we must needs be careless and profane? The contrary is true. For the apostle continues in chapter 5: "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."

And what is this liberty? Is it the false freedom of walking in sin? The answer to this question is found in vs. 13ff.: "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve

one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself . . . Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revilings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."

There you have it.

It is impossible for those that live by the power of the absolutely free and unconditional promise of God to be careless and profane.

I could quote much more.

But I wish, in conclusion, still to refer to some passages of the Confessions to prove that they teach the same truth.

First of all, then, I refer to the Heidelberg Catechism, Qu. 64: "But doth not this doctrine make men careless and profane? By no means: for it is impossible that those, who are implanted into Christ by a true faith, should not bring forth fruits of thankfulness."

The Catechism had just explained the truth of absolutely free and unconditional justification by faith. It had also answered the objection that our good works surely must have something to do with our righteousness before God. It is in answer to this truth that the objection is raised in question form that such a doctrine of absolutely unconditional justification makes men careless and profane. And the Catechism answers that this is impossible. Why? God Himself makes this impossible. For the gift of justification is received by faith only; not on condition of faith, but by means of the God-given faith. By that faith they are implanted into Christ. It is all of God. There is nothing of man in it. And it is exactly because the realization of the promise is all of God, that it is impossible that believers should live a careless and profane life, and should not bring forth fruits of thankfulness.

Secondly, I must refer once more to the Canons of Dordrecht.

In the first head of doctrine the Canons, as we know, speak of the truth of election and reprobation.

After the Canons have explained this doctrine, and have emphasized that election is absolutely unconditional (Articles 9, 10) they explain in Art. 13:

"The sense and certainty of this election afford to the children of God additional matter for daily humiliation before him, for adoring the depth of his mercies, for cleansing themselves, and rendering grateful returns of ardent love to him, who first manifested so great love towards them. The consideration of this doctrine of election is so far from encouraging remissness in the observance of the divine com-

mands, or from sinking men in carnal security, that these, in the just judgment of God, are the usual effects of rash presumption, or of idle and wanton trifling with the grace of election, in those who refuse to walk in the ways of the elect."

Far from making men careless and profane, therefore, the grace of absolutely unconditional election and of the unconditional promise of God, is for the elect a matter of humiliation and cleansing themselves and living in true gratitude before God.

Once more, in the fifth head of doctrine, which speaks of the preservation and perseverance of the saints, the Canons, after having explained that the preservation of the believers is solely the work of God and that their perseverance is the fruit of their preservation, continue as follows:

"This certainty of perseverance, however, is so far from exciting in believers a spirit of pride, or of rendering them carnally secure, that on the contrary, it is the real source of humility, filial reverence, true piety, patience in every tribulation, fervent prayers, constancy in suffering, and in confessing the truth, and of solid rejoicing in God; so that the consideration of this benefit should serve as an incentive to the serious and constant practice of gratitude and good works, as appears from the testimony of Scripture, and the examples of the saints." Art. 12. See also Art. 13.

Here we may close.

The Declaration of Principles still stands as the correct expression of the Reformed truth on the basis of Scripture and the Confessions.

And all who allege that true unconditional theology has a tendency to make men careless and profane simply do not understand the Reformed truth. H.H.

NEWS OF OUR CHURCHES

September 22, 1958

May this column serve as a means to reach out to the far-off outposts of Redlands, Lynden and Loveland, drawing them into a closer circle with the rest of our churches, binding us closer in the bonds of love; yea, let it be a means to embrace one another in the communion of saints.

What is the news from our churches in which we all are interested? The number one news item today is Rev. Ophoff, of course. Our beloved G.M.O., whose signature under any *Standard Bearer* article guaranteed it to be worthwhile reading. His delvings into the nooks and crannies of the Old Testament have brought to our eyes the wonderful truths of God's dealings with His people—through types and shadows—in Jesus Christ our Lord.

G.M.O.'s pen is resting. The Lord told him to lay it down for a while. Our beloved Rev. Ophoff has suffered a stroke which has become a stroke for us all. You have heard, no doubt, that the Reverend had been confined to hospitals for some time, first in Blodgett hospital, and now in Pine Rest. At this writing he is quite comfortable, able to sleep,

and is getting a good rest. Sunday he was given the privilege to come home for a couple of hours. The paralysis of his left arm and leg has almost completely left him and he is able to walk about with a cane. We hope that he may again, in the Lord's time, take up his writing for *The Standard Bearer*.

The news from the local churches, for this issue, must remain meager. We expect the weekly bulletins from each church in the denomination in the future. Everyone is interested in all the activities of all our churches, so, if you want to be in the news, send us the news.

This is the time of the year when the consistories begin making nominations for the election of office bearers. Men who "hold the mystery of faith in a pure conscience" and "having a good report of them which are without" must be elected into the office to rule over the flock and help the indigent in the church of Christ.

The Southeast Prot. Ref. Church was host to the Sunday School Mass Meeting held Sept. 18 in the Adams St. School. It truly was an inspirational meeting with the Rev. McCollam as the speaker for the evening. He spoke on the peculiar place the Sunday School occupies in our churches, inspiring the teachers to continue their work with renewed vigor because their work is in the vineyard of the Lord. Representatives from Hope, Holland, Southwest, Southeast and First churches were there to enjoy the Rev. McCollam's speech, and to have fellowship around the Word of God that makes their first lesson story.

We see in the bulletin of First church that the catechisms are starting this week, two of which are to be held in the Adams St. School for the benefit of those children for whom it is difficult to come to the church. Societies have already begun; what bountiful opportunities are given us, children and adults, to thoroughly furnish the man of God by the study of His Word! It is deplorable that not everybody avails himself of these opportunities; at least we know that when we are delivered from this body of death it will not be that way. In Heaven we shall all be gathered around the Word of God, and that shall be bliss.

In First church the annual family visitation has been started. In a church of that size it is quite impossible to conduct those visitations before each communion service, as it had been intended. We live in such busy times! Rev. Hanko visits one half of the congregation each year, and the Elders visit the other half. "Receive these men as servants of God; count the elders that rule well worthy of double honor, giving yourselves willingly to their inspection and government."

Did you know—that the Mission Committee of our churches is broadcasting the Reformed Witness Hour in the Virgin Islands? They are doing so through the kind assistance and by the organization of the Radio Committee of First Church. If and when we get response from the Islanders we shall tell you about it in this column.

. . . . see you in church.

J.M.F.

OUR DOCTRINE

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

PART TWO

CHAPTER V

The First Four Trumpets

Revelation 8:7-12

If hail and fire may mean heresies, and may also mean political disturbances in the world of the Roman empire, why may they not refer to a thousand other things in the world? All certainty is thus removed, and Scripture becomes a source of speculation. Thirdly, I refuse to go along with this mode of interpretation because the reference to definite historical facts and periods, as is implied in such a method, has always led to disappointment, and still does. Perhaps you remember, — to mention just one example, — how the first World War in the early part of this century was explained as meaning that it referred to Revelation 13. The German Kaiser, so they had it, was the beast that is there pictured. And this war was to end in February, 1918, according to the exact calculation based upon the forty-two months that are mentioned in that chapter. Of course, that theory is now exploded. And I suppose that other theories of the same kind can be built up. For it seems impossible that people learn by experience in this respect. But we will not be seduced by any such methods to interpret Scripture in this wise. And therefore, I wish it to be understood from the outset that in general the text means just exactly what it expresses. Hail and fire mingled with blood refer to the destructive forces in nature with a view to the vegetable world. The sea is nothing else but the sea; and the creatures referred to are the inhabitants of that sea, while a ship means literally a ship. Rivers and fountains of water refer to inland waters in distinction from the oceans and seas; and their poisoning means exactly what it says. And sun and moon and stars are the heavenly luminaries with which we are acquainted, and not some mysterious reality either in the political or in the Roman world. We have here, in a word, a picture of the effects of the four trumpets on the physical universe in the history of the present dispensation.

However, if this be established, we still confront the further question: what do these trumpets mean? To what exactly do they refer? Our answer is, first of all, that they all refer to natural phenomena. If we see this, it will bring the vision much nearer home. As I have emphasized repeatedly, the seals and the trumpets principally all refer to events that take place throughout this dispensation. It is true, they will increase in force in an alarming measure as time goes on and as the completion of the kingdom draws

near. Some of the phenomena here mentioned, as, for instance, the blood with which the hail is mingled, are to be revealed in the future, perhaps, in the literal sense of the word. But for the rest, they all refer to mere natural phenomena that take place and may be observed in our own time. All the four trumpets, then, refer to phenomena in nature outside of man. This does not mean that man is not affected or involved. On the contrary, man is very plainly interested in all these natural phenomena. The individual as well as the nations is affected by these four trumpets. Man is dependent upon the world in which he lives. He is dependent upon the soil which he cultivates, upon the crops that are raised. He is dependent upon the condition of the climate, upon rain and sunshine. He is dependent upon the water which he drinks. And through it all he is dependent upon the condition of the heavenly luminaries. This also the text indicates very plainly. And of course, what is true of the individual is also true of the nations and the relation between them. By the influence of these four trumpets the history of the nations is controlled and directed. Never has this been more plainly understood than in our own time. I remember that in the war in the early part of the present century it was emphasized that food will win it. And by this expression a deep truth is expressed. If food will win a war, — and to large extent it will — then the further truth, which is most often overlooked, is also very evident, that Christ, Who rules over the elements, over sunshine and rain, over hail and fire, after all determines who will be victorious in any war. And what is true with regard to the land is also true in respect to the sea and to the inland waters and to the sun, moon, and stars. By these four trumpets the physical universe is affected, but through it all the world of men and the relation of nation over against nation is largely determined.

Let us also notice, in the second place, that these four trumpets have this in common, that they all refer to what we may call evil phenomena in nature. On the whole they picture destructive forces that become active and affect the whole of the natural world. Hail and fire from heaven are the representatives of all the destructive forces in nature with a view to the world of vegetation. As such I understand them. In the first trumpet we have the picture of a mighty thunderstorm bursting forth over the land and accompanied by the fall of heavy hail. That this can actually be a tremendous force we may plainly perceive when sometimes hailstones as large as hen eggs fall in great number in our own vicinity, destroying property and leaving large holes in the ground where they dropped. Thus it is in the vision. Tremendous thunder and hail storms are pictured, destroying trees and grass, in general the representatives of the vegetable world. Crops are therefore destroyed in a moment by this first trumpet. As far as the blood is concerned, I take it, in the first place, as having reference to the accompanying destruction. And we may take it in the literal sense of the

word. In fact, history speaks more than once of a bloody snow and hail that fell in various places. And with a view to the future, this blood mingled with the hail and fire will be so general and real that it becomes a sign to all that witness it. Thus it is also with the second trumpet. It pictures to us a destructive force upon the oceans and the seas. John does not tell us that a great burning mountain was cast into the sea, but that in the vision he saw *as it were* a great mountain burning with fire and cast into the sea. It matters little, evidently, what this particularly stands for. But in general it is plain that it simply represents a destructive force with regard to the sea. The sea is represented as becoming a pool of blood, so that the creatures that live in it die. And at the same time it is represented as being swept by a tempest, or at least as being greatly disturbed, so that the ships are destroyed and caught in the storm. The same is true of the third trumpet. The picture is either that of a star shattered to pieces and strewn over the waters outside of the ocean, or that of a comet leaving behind it poisonous gases and embittering the waters that must be drunk by men. Perhaps we may think in the literal sense of the word of a star. For it is not impossible that the stars influence our world far more than we know just now. However this may be, the main thing is that we remember that by this force of the third trumpet the waters and the fountains of waters are made bitter and poisonous, so that many die because they drink of them. Wormwood is, properly speaking, a plant that is noted because of its very bitter taste and because of the poisonous nature of its volatile oil. Here the name is given to the star because of its embittering and poisoning effect upon the waters. And finally, the same is also true of the last of these four trumpets. It speaks of a change of the heavenly luminaries. They are smitten for a third part, so the text speaks, so that they do not shine to that extent upon the earth. What this would mean with respect to the sun ought to be plain to us all. A third less sunshine than necessary to ripen the crops would be determinately detrimental to any land. And although we know less of the influence of the other heavenly bodies upon our planet, we may believe that they all affect us to a sufficient extent to become destructive when their relation to us is changed.

Now picture, if you can, the combined effect of these four forces, and you will understand the first four trumpets, and feel them rather near. A decided cooling down of the atmosphere and lack of sunshine, caused by the darkening of the sun, and added to that the less known effect of the darkening of the other luminaries at night; a poisoning of the rivers and lakes and fountains of waters, so that not only men die because they drink of them, but undoubtedly the creatures that live in them also die because of the poison; a great disturbance in the sea and the ocean, so that the fish of the sea die and the ships are destroyed; and, last but not least, tremendous thunderstorms and falling of hail, so that

the crops are destroyed and there is no grass for the cattle, nor any fruit. That is the meaning of the first four trumpets. It would mean that on the land there would be nothing to eat, neither for man nor beast, that when men turn to the waters to live on the creatures of the sea and rivers and lakes, they find them vacated, while at the same time they themselves die because of all kinds of epidemics caused by the poison waters. Surely, if this were universal there would be no creature left alive in all the universe. But evidently universal and absolute these trumpets are not yet. Only what aggravates the condition for the stricken lands is that one of the main means of transportation is also cut off, for the ships are destroyed, so that nothing can be transported from one nation to another.

It is, however, to the partial character of the trumpets and the forces they represent that we must call your attention finally. In fact, I consider this one of the chief elements in the explanation of the text itself. Very emphatically it tells us several times that only one-third of the elements are affected by these trumpets. The expression "a third part" occurs even as many as twelve times in this particular passage, surely indicating that the Lord would have us pay special attention to this particular feature. A third part of the earth, a third part of the trees is burnt up. And though it literally reads that all the green grass is burnt up, we take it to mean all the green grass that grows on the third part of the earth, as is most natural. The third part of the sea is turned into blood, and the third part of the creatures die, and the third part of the ships is destroyed. The third part of the waters and fountains of waters are smitten by the star called Wormwood and are made bitter. The third part of the sun, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars is smitten, so that they do not shine for the third part of the day and of the night. Surely, there is reason for the question: what is indicated by this "third part" occurring so often in the text? There are some that interpret this third part as meaning the smallest half. One-third is destroyed; two-thirds are still left intact. And then these interpreters have it that the judgments are not as yet absolute: there is still time left for repentance. The mercy and grace of God are still greater in their effects than His wrath. Soon, when the vials are poured out, there is an advance over the trumpets in this respect, that they are universal and absolute in their effect. They speak no more of a third part. Mercy is now still predominant. We do not deny that there is an element of truth in that interpretation. Surely, there is an advance in judgment. And gradually the tokens of God's general providence are withdrawn from the world. And as the power of that general providence of God is withdrawn, the judgments pictured in the words of our text will become more absolute and universal. In so far it is possible that also this idea is implied in the repeated mention of a third part.

H.H.

TRANSCRIPT OF ADDRESS AND QUESTION HOUR

held under the Auspices of the Committee for Protestant
Reformed Action, Hull, Iowa, July, 1954

Speaker : Rev. H. Hoeksema

(Continued)

The Rev. De Wolf not only assumes full responsibility for his erroneous statements, but in addition to this, and to defend himself, he defends the Barthian heresy that the kingdom of God is like the vertical line intersecting the horizontal line on the plane of our existence. I am very sorry for all this. My heart bleeds for our Prot. Ref. Churches. Nevertheless, I want the Consistory to know :

"1. That it is impossible for me to condone such preaching; that I will never leave the impression that I condone it officially by officially shaking hands, or by allowing anyone officially to shake hands with me that condones it.

"2. That therefore, if the Consistory nevertheless condones such preaching and teaching as they did, I will consider myself cast out by the Consistory, and the Consistory will have to take action accordingly.

"3. That as soon as possible, and necessary, I will publish this whole case, with all the documentary evidence, in order that our people may at least be able to take a conscious stand in the matter."

That was my answer to the Consistory after it approved of those questions. Then, of course, the matter came to the Classis.

I will be brief about that. The Classis, after a good deal of deliberation,—and don't mistake that; don't mistake that deliberation for hesitation. There was no hesitation on the part of the Classis. The Classis even finally adopted the following decision without a dissenting vote (there was no vote against it). O, there was a long deliberation. There was an attempt on the part of the majority of the committee to defend, not to defend, but to interpret the statements of the Rev. De Wolf in a good sense. But they couldn't. The committee, the majority of the committee itself, acknowledged that in the Classis later on. And the decision of the Classis, which the Classis finally took, reads as follows: "In our opinion, the statements which the protestants condemn are literally heretical, regardless of what the Rev. De Wolf meant by them, regardless of how he explains them, because: The first teaches a general promise of God unto salvation to all that externally hear the preaching of the gospel, head for head and soul for soul, limited by a condition which man must fulfill, while Scripture and the Confessions plainly teach: 1) That indeed the proclamation of the gospel comes to all to whom God in His good pleasure sends it. 2) That, however, in our proclamation of the gospel we may never say that God promises salvation to everyone of the hearers on condition of faith, for the promise itself is particular, unconditional, and only for the elect. For it is an oath of God,

which He in His everlasting mercy and grace swears by Himself to His beloved elect, which He by sovereign grace fulfills only to and in them, without any condition or prerequisite to be fulfilled by them, and which promise implies that by His Holy Spirit He causes them to receive and appropriate salvation by a true and living faith.

"The second teaches that our act of conversion is a prerequisite to enter into the kingdom of God, which means that we convert ourselves before we are translated from the power of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son; while Scripture and the Confessions plainly teach: 1) That the whole work of our conversion, regeneration in the narrower as well as in the wider sense, in virtue of which we humble ourselves, is sovereignly wrought by God by His Spirit and Word through the preaching of the gospel in His elect; 2) That this entire work of our conversion is our translation and entering into the kingdom of God. Hence, it is not and cannot be before, but through our conversion that we enter the kingdom. We humble ourselves in the light, never in darkness. We humble ourselves, whether initially or repeatedly, in the kingdom, never outside of the kingdom. Hence, our act of conversion is never antecedent to our entering in, but is always performed in the kingdom of God. And there are no prerequisites.

"Grounds:

"A. The protestants have clearly shown from Scripture and the Confessions that the literal statements are heretical.

"B. We believe this is necessary for us to state in the light of our past experiences and history with the Liberated Churches, who use these statements.

"II. Classis advises the Consistory of the First Church:

"A. To demand that the Rev. De Wolf make a public apology for having made these two statements in question.

"B. That the Consistory also publicly apologize for having supported the Rev. De Wolf.

"With respect to the grounds in re the first statement, . . . (and then the grounds are given).

"Grounds in re the second statement (grounds are given again from Scripture and the confessions).

"III. Classis further advises the Consistory of First Church that in case the Rev. De Wolf should refuse to apologize, which our God graciously forbid, the Consistory proceed to suspend him from the office of the ministry of the Word and the sacraments according to the pertinent articles of the D.K.O.

"B. That in case any elder, or elders, should refuse to submit to the proposed action as stipulated under II, B, which God graciously forbid, such elder or elders be disciplined according to the articles of the D.K.O. pertaining thereto.

"Grounds: Article 79 and 80 of the Church Order.

"IV. That Classis appoint a delegation of three ministers and two elders to personally acquaint the Consistory with the above decision and advice at the earliest possible Consistory meeting.

"Grounds:

"A. Almost all the elders of the First Church are absent from classis' meeting, and thus are not aware of the five days of deliberation which preceded the above advice.

"B. The matter is one of great magnitude and importance.

"C. We owe the mother church of our entire denomination such courtesy and respect.

"D. We should spare no efforts on our behalf, under the blessing of our covenant God, to serve (save?) our brethren involved."

That is the decision of Classis.

On June 1, — I'm almost through, — on June 1 the Consistory met with the committee of Classis. The Rev. Vos spoke. That speech is recorded. I have it here. It's too long to read. It may be published in the future. The Rev. Vos spoke. He begged the Consistory in terms of love and firm conviction to act according to the advice of the Classis. After he spoke the Consistory, that is, the opposing elders immediately tried to block the whole procedure. Let me tell you what happened. After the Rev. Vos spoke, one of the opposing elders made a motion to adjourn. That was supported. The politics was, of course, to save time, and to gain time, because still another elder had to be installed, and that elder was surely on their side. That's what they were looking for. A motion to adjourn while it was yet early, while the matter was important. But that motion was defeated. We still had the majority in the Consistory. Then a motion was made to adopt the advice of the Classis, and to act accordingly. That was supported. Then a motion was made again by one of the opposing elders to table the matter, — again for the same reason, for the same political reason, — to table the matter, — waiting, save time, gain time; that was the whole, sole reason. That too was defeated. Then the motion was adopted, the motion that the Consistory adopt the advice of the Classis and act accordingly. Now, mind you, it is very important that you understand this motion, because that motion meant that the whole thing was decided by the Consistory. Don't you forget it. That motion passed by the Consistory meant that if they did not apologize, they were suspended, and they were deposed. They certainly would be suspended and would be deposed, according to the decision of the Consistory in June 1. The matter was settled. They asked for time. We thought that they wanted time to consider the matter. They didn't. They asked for time nevertheless. We gave them time. Two weeks later, on June 15, we called another meeting, again in the presence of the classical committee. We thought it better to have the classical committee present, and witness all that happened in our Consistory. They can still testify to the whole procedure. At that meeting again the Rev. Vos spoke first. And then the question was asked whether they were ready to apologize. They said they were not ready. Two weeks' time; they were not ready to apologize. I then made a motion, — and that will also explain the strange fact that one elder was deposed after being in office 48 hours, — I made a motion to postpone

the installation of the new elder, on the grounds, in the first place, that he didn't know anything about the whole business. Brand new elder, had never sat in the Consistory at all, didn't know anything about the case, couldn't very well start to enter into the case again after the case had been pending for two years. So I made a motion first of all on that ground, that we postpone the installation of the new elder. And the second ground was that the elder that was to be installed was the brother-in-law of the Rev. De Wolf. We had already one brother-in-law of the Rev. De Wolf in the Consistory. And now a second one, for which there was no need at all. So I on those two grounds advised and made a motion to postpone the installation of the new elder. The remark was made that the decision to install the new elder had already been made, and that therefore it would require a two-thirds majority of the Consistory. And of course, a two-thirds majority I could never have. You understand that. And so that was dropped.

June 22. That was the next meeting of the Consistory. Then the new elder had been installed, and served. At that meeting, June 22, I asked the president, — I was present, — I asked the president to ask the Rev. De Wolf and to ask the elders that had been condemned by the Classis to apologize, whether they were ready to apologize. Immediately one of the opposing elders got up and said, "We must have a motion for that." I said, "We do not need a motion." It had been decided, had been decided on June 1, that we should act according to the advice of the Classis. It had been decided that we should ask them to apologize, or that they should be suspended and deposed. That was decided. No, we must have a motion. They felt, of course, as if they could defeat it. That stands to reason. They now had a new elder. Very well. I said: "It doesn't make any difference anyway, because you surely cannot vote in your own case." Well, the motion to ask the Rev. De Wolf to apologize was made and supported and it was defeated by 11 to 11. One elder on our side did not vote. Otherwise it would have been 12 to 11. And then at the same time, the Chairman ruled properly that they could not possibly vote in their own case. And the case of the Rev. De Wolf was also the case of the elders. They stood together. They supported him. Nevertheless, they by their illegal vote on June 22 had plainly expressed that they did not want the Rev. De Wolf to apologize. Now they say, — there's no truth in it, — now they say that they merely meant that he did not have to apologize according to the decision of Classis; he could make his own apology. There's no word of anything like that in the minutes. The motion was simply that the Rev. De Wolf should be asked to apologize. And they rejected that motion. They did. That is, by the illegal vote of those elders, they rejected that motion. They did not want the Rev. De Wolf to apologize. The same is true of the motion to ask the elders to apologize. That was carried, even when they voted, again illegally, in their own case by a vote of 12 to 11. But again in that meeting by voting illegally the elders very plainly

expressed that they did not want to apologize, that they did not want to abide by the decision of Classis, which the meeting of June 1 had decided. Mind you, June 1 is the basis of the whole business. June 1 we decided by the majority of the Consistory to abide by the decision of Classis, to adopt it and to act accordingly. June 22nd the elders plainly stated that they did not want to abide by this decision of Classis whatsoever. They were, therefore, virtually suspended and deposed.

Now it has been said that the Rev. De Wolf made an apology. I will acquaint you with that apology too. In the first place, let me say this. That apology of the Rev. De Wolf was first made on Sunday night, during the sermon of the Rev. De Wolf, — he was still preaching, — was made from the pulpit. Many thought that he had really apologized. But he didn't. In the consistory of June 22 we asked the Rev. De Wolf to produce the record of the apology he had made in his sermon on the previous Sunday. The sermon was recorded. And the Rev. De Wolf himself had the record. He could, of course, have simply produced the record to the Consistory, as he was asked. He refused. I was not there when that sermon was preached. I think I preached somewhere else. But many of our Consistory, including the Rev. Ophoff, claim that he said something entirely different from what he now offered at the Consistory. The Rev. De Wolf claims that this is the reproduction of his statement from the pulpit on June 21. But many claim it isn't. He did not want to produce the record. This could not stand in any court, in any worldly court. Nevertheless, I'll read it. This he offered nevertheless as his apology. Let me read it, and explain it, please.

"As far as those statements are concerned, I am ready to say that I'm sorry that they were not clear, and therefore left room for a wrong interpretation." I ask you: is that true? Can anyone of you say conscientiously that those statements were not clear? God promises everyone of you that if you believe, you shall be saved? Is there anything not clear in this statement? I deny it. Is there anything unclear in the statement, "Our act of conversion is a prerequisite to enter into the kingdom of God"? I say there is not. There was no room for misinterpretation. Those statements, — and the Classis had said, the Classis had declared, — those statements are heretical, regardless of what the Rev. De Wolf means, or how you explain them. They were heretical. They should simply have been retracted. He should simply have apologized. He did not. Listen: "As far as those statements are concerned, I am ready to say that I am sorry they were not clear, and therefore left room for misinterpretation. I would like to explain that by the first statement I had no intention at all to teach that God promises salvation to all men, and that it depends on man's own will whether or not he will be saved. I have never taught this, and could not have intended to teach this by this statement."

Nevertheless, he did teach that by that statement. That's the question. I offer you, and I'm willing to defend it any

time, that the statement, "God promises everyone of you, if you believe, you shall be saved," is simply a general promise on the part of God, limited by a condition of man. Nothing else. You can never explain it any other way. Especially if you remember the statement that he made too. Election and reprobation belittled . . . Protestant Reformed truth on the lapel of your coat some of you . . . and all those things. I cannot understand that a Prot. Ref. man will ever preach a thing like that through the pulpit. I can't understand that.

"As far as the second statement is concerned, I did not mean to teach that the natural man must convert himself while he is in the power of darkness, outside the kingdom of God." Didn't he teach that? Isn't that the same thing? "Our act of conversion is a prerequisite to enter into the kingdom of God"? I told him again and again that's exactly what he meant. He can never explain it either. We had this in the Consistory again and again. And I tried to explain. And he understood it too. He simply didn't want to apologize for it. And again I say: that's not a question of his simple statements. It's a question of the whole sermon. The whole sermon was bad, without any question. He even said, with an appeal to Luke 13: "If you don't convert yourself, you go to hell." Is that preaching to the church of Jesus Christ? Is that the act of conversion that must be a prerequisite to enter into the kingdom of God? If that's the case, we're lost, we're lost forever. Entirely lost. That's modernism, worse than modernism. I said that too in my protest. I maintain that that sermon was modernism. I'll publish that, when it's necessary. And also this, he says, is contrary to everything I ever preached. "If therefore I have offended anyone by not stating clearly what I meant, and thus gave him occasion for misinterpretation, I'm sorry." That's no apology. I did not misinterpret the statements. I certainly didn't. I understood them, and still understand them, and I interpreted them correctly, without any question. And Classis did the same thing.

Well, that's the end. Except that, of course, at that meeting I finally left. You couldn't do anything with that Consistory, that voted against the Classis, that had already virtually separated themselves from the churches? They did. That voted against that the Rev. De Wolf should apologize, voted against the decision of Classis that the elders should be deposed if they did not apologize? They had separated themselves. They had condemned themselves on June 22, when the whole Consistory was present, by voting against the decision of Classis. Hence, I left.

The next evening they had a meeting, not of the minority of the Consistory. We still have a majority of the Consistory, not a minority. If you count all the elders and ministers, — the deacons of course are never present in our Consistory in cases of discipline. They sometimes say, and they alleged also in this case that in 1924 nevertheless the deacons also were present. Also at that time the deacons were never present in any case of discipline. Never were. Besides, don't forget that this was a case where elders were deposed. In 1924 the

whole Consistory was deposed. This was a case where elders were deposed and a minister was suspended by the Consistory. In 1924 was a case where the Consistory and the minister were deposed by the Classis, something which we could never admit. And therefore, when on June 23 the Consistory came together once more, and with the advice of Fourth Church, suspended the Rev. De Wolf and deposed the elders, the case was settled. I also have the decision of Fourth Church, which, by the way, is itself weak. The decision of Fourth Church, I say, is weak. Listen. Nevertheless, on the advice of the consistory we certainly had the right to continue and to proceed. I'll read that decision: "It is clear to our Fourth Consistory 1) That neither the Rev. De Wolf nor the elders involved made the apology demanded by the consistory as advised by Classis. 2) That Classis advised the Consistory to proceed with suspension in case the Rev. De Wolf and the elders involved should refuse to apologize. 3) That in so far the Consistory has the right to proceed with suspension on the basis of the classical decision." And then: "However (notice, H.H.) we are not prepared to say (so that means nothing: we are not prepared to say. They don't say they aren't prepared to say anything): 1) That a consistory meeting can be called legal when half of its members were not notified that it would be held. (The consistory members knew very well on June 22 that that would be the case. The consistory members, the opposing consistory members, could not possibly do anything at that consistory meeting. The consistory members were already condemned by the decision of the Consistory June 1. All was done, all was finished.) 2) That a suspension can be called in order when the involved were not notified of the fact that the double consistory would be held and the suspension decided on." They were not prepared to say that. In the meantime they advise us to proceed with the suspension on the basis of the decision of Classis.

That happened in our history.

Therefore this is the situation. I am not heading a faction. I am representing first of all, the only First Prot. Ref. Church in Grand Rapids. If the elders and the Rev. De Wolf had objected against the decision of classis, and against the decision of the Consistory, they could have protested, and submit in the meantime. That's what they should have done. We could not do that in 1924 because we were deposed as a consistory. But they were deposed by the Consistory. They could have appealed to classis and protested, but they didn't. They're out. And I'm sure that the Classis at its next session will refuse to give them a place in the Classis. Of course they will. They cannot give them a place, and they won't either. I'm positive of that.

In the meantime, we have decided to leave the buildings. That was decided by the Consistory. They wanted to have the buildings. In 1924 we had enough trouble about the buildings. I did not desire any more of that trouble. I did not care about the buildings, although I do not voice the opinion of my Consistory when I say this. It's my personal conviction

that we should abide by the decision of the Consistory made on June 23, in which they decided that they would leave the buildings, not fight for the buildings, until the matter of the property was settled. In the meantime, the illegal opposition sent us a note that they intended to occupy the buildings. We decided not to fight about that. We have a place, a nice place, a very good place, in the Chr. High. And there we meet. We meet with between 550 and 600 people every service. I don't know with how many they meet. We enjoy it. We are immensely relieved that we are out. Immensely relieved. What will become of the buildings I don't know. We've had a meeting in our own church last Monday night, a meeting of this same nature as we're having now. We wrote a letter to all the members of the congregation, announcing such a meeting in the auditorium of our own church. In that meeting I said, "This is still our church, even though we do not meet in it on Sunday." I said, "Until the question of the property is settled, this is still our church, the church of the legal consistory." After that they put new locks on the building. They locked us out. They put new locks on the building, so that we cannot get in at all. I don't know what my Consistory does with it. We had a meeting last Monday, but of course I wasn't there. I came West and informed you of the whole business. What my consistory decided, I do not know. It may very well be that they after all will force to make some kind of a court case. I hope not. But it's not impossible. We don't like it. I don't like it. I don't care. I rather meet in a barn, as we did in 1924 once, or in the Community Building in the Franklin St. Park, when we were all united, than meeting in a nice big church, a palace of a church, with strife and contention and false doctrine.

We were glad, and we still are glad that we're out. I thank you.

I'm sorry I kept you up so long. But the story is long. I can't help that.

End of address.

Announcement

The Standard Bearer staff, in its last meeting decided to institute a new column, under the rubric, *News From Our Churches*. This decision is in response to the popular demand from many of our readers who have been desiring a closer unity between our churches, a unity wherein we can share one another's joys and sorrows, a unity which is based on one hope, one love, one Lord Jesus Christ. So in this issue you will find the introductory column devoted to church news as it affects each one of us. The ministers of each congregation, and the presidents of consistories of vacant churches, are requested to mail their bulletins and other important news directly to the editor of the column.

Please send your contributions to J. M. Faber, 1123 Cooper Ave., S. E., Grand Rapids 7, Michigan.

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of Matthew 24 and 25

VII.

(Matthew 24:29-31)

In our former essay we ended with some observations concerning the created design and purpose of sun, moon and stars. They are media of the revelation of God. They are set for signs and for seasons, and for days and for years. And the very speech of the heavenly luminaries is that all time ends. Each evening the sun sets, proclaiming to man and beast that the end has come of that particular day. And each new moon proclaims that another month has come, only to fade away after the zenith of its glory in the "last quarter" and then to be gone from sight entirely. They are the clock of God which measures the time of God in history!

Yet, when the Parousia of Jesus comes, when the sign of the Son of Man comes, then it is the end of time. Then shall the sun no more need give its light. Spring-time and harvest-time will no longer be needed, the moon will no longer need to give her light, proclaiming that the light still shineth, and the stars will no longer need to be the harbingers of the morning. For then the eternal morn shall have come. The Day-star from on high shall have arrived. The Sun of righteousness shall forever be the light and the glory of the new creation. For Immanuel, God-with-us, shall be with us. Parousia! He with us and we with Him, and together with God, the Father!

That the sun will *be darkened* must not be interpreted as simply a partial and temporary eclipse of the sun; such an eclipse as can be prognosticated by astronomers and demonstrated graphically by a planetarium. The text and entire context suggest rather a total darkening of the sun, so that the world returns to the darkness prior to creation. It is a prefiguration of "outer darkness," such as was seen in Egypt-land during the three days of the ninth plague, or as was seen "over the entire earth" when our Lord hung, as the "pierced one," upon the accursed tree! It is the ushering in of the "great and notable Day of the Lord." It is a day of destruction from the Almighty. Then shall the "tares" be removed from the "field of the world." It will be the day when the hearts of men, evil men, shall be faint! Isaiah 13:9. He shall destroy the sinners out of it. Isaiah 13:9. It will no longer "hurt" the wheat when the "tares" are pulled out! It is the final harvest day. And, therefore, let the sun no longer give its light. Let it be totally darkened.

And the "moon shall not give her light"! It will no longer be a silent companion in the night, riding softly and gently through the skies, casting her silvery rays upon a resting and sleeping world!

And the stars shall not be seen anymore, for they shall

fall from heaven. The whole constellation of the heavens shall collapse. The "powers of the heavens shall be shaken"! God will roll up the heavens as a scroll. All shall be changed. Not only shall the earth be shaken, but God shall also shake the heavens. Hebrews 1:11, 12; 12:26-28.

For in shaking the present world he indicates that he will bring in a world which cannot be shaken, the immovable heritage! There shall be no more earthquakes in the Parousia of the Lord, in the new heaven and new earth where righteousness shall dwell.

That is the "end." Thus we read in I Corinthians 15:23, 24. "Now each in his own order (rank). Christ the first-fruits, then they which are of Christ *in his Parousia*, and then the end, when he shall deliver the kingdom to the God and Father, when he shall have made void all principalities and authority and might." And that, too, "that God may be all (things) in all"! I Cor. 15:28b. There shall be "no more time" from this manifestation of the shaking of the heavens till the appearance of the "sign of the Son of Man" in the heavens. (Confer Rev. 10:6, 7, which speaks of the "end of the Mystery of God, as preached by his servants and prophets.")

"Then" will be the "time when" the sign of the Son of man will appear in the heavens!

The question is: what will this sign be?

There have been many answers given to this question. Lange gives a summary of these various answers. Hilory, Jerome speak of the sign of "a cross in heaven." Olshausen speaks of the "Star of the Messiah," referring to Numbers 24:17. Fritzsche and Ewald interpret this sign as "being the Messiah himself." Meyer speaks of "a luminous appearance, a forerunner of the glory of the Messiah." De Wette thinks this sign will be "a kind of Shekinah." Lange would have it the "glory of Christ" himself!

In our considered opinion the multitude of views on this particular matter shows that there is no *communis opinio* on this score amongst interpreters. Bearing in mind the peculiar force of the adverb "then" (tote—in Greek) referring to the "kind of time," it seems most natural to refer this "sign of the Son of Man" to the great phenomena of the "shaking of the powers of heaven," the "sign in the sun, moon and stars"! There is something univocal (having but one sense or meaning) about this phenomena in the heavens! It is a "sign" than which there is none greater! Nor could that "sign" be more clear! It is the sign of Christ's Parousia, of this coming to dwell forever with His people in glory. In it is very clearly seen what the church of the ages confesses in the *Apostolicum* "the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting" and also "From whence he shall come to judge the living and the dead"! And, therefore, we hold that the "sign" of the Son of Man is the "shaking of the powers of heaven"!

Our Lord further tells us of the effect that this "sign" will have upon the "tribes of the earth," upon the rich and the poor, world's great and small, rulers and principalities,

thrones and dominions. Theirs will be "wailing," that is, a ritual, a solemn and universal lamentation, as of deep mourning for the dead, a beating of the breast as was possibly prefigured in the conduct of the "centurion" at the Cross of Jesus, when he said, "Truly, this man was God's Son!" (was righteous!) It will be the beginning of the eternal and everlasting weeping and gnashing of teeth! Then will every knee bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is "Lord," unto the glory of God the Father. For they shall see the Son of Man coming in the "great glory" of His kingdom. The text says literally (verse 30) "with power and great glory." It was this power, (dunamis) ability of the Son which revealed Him to be the Son of God. Romans 1:4. Particularly, this great power will be manifested in that day. Then shall all things in heaven and earth be united under one Head, even under Christ. That He upheld all things by the Word of His power through the ages shall then be fully manifest. And that he will and does shake the universe and usher in the new heavens and the new earth will too be fully manifested. Hebrews 1:2-4. In this great shaking of all things, in this "sign" of the Son of Man, the "power" of the Christ is manifest, but, therefore, also at once His "great glory." He is higher than the angels, having so much more excellent name. To Him it was said, "Sit at my right hand, until I make thy enemies the footstool of thy feet." Heb. 1:13. When He was ushered into the world as the "First-Begotten of God" it was said, "Let all the angels of God worship Him." Behold, then the greatness of what the angels sing in Bethlehem-Ephratah "Glory to God in the highest, and peace among the men of His good-pleasure." Luke 2:14.

Yes, the shaking of the "powers" of the heaven are the "sign of the Son of Man," coming to take the kingdom and to give it to the "saints," subjecting all things unto God, even the Father.

Then there shall be no "peace" for the wicked. For, as Luke tells us, the nations shall be in "anguish," in great distress of mind and heart. They will know no way out of this perplexity and what has come upon them. They will be as those who have lost the way, (aporos) do not know whither to turn. There is no way out, when the "powers of heaven" are shaken. The deeps will call unto the deeps, the sea will echo and roar and will billow mightily. It will be a catastrophic shake-up of all things. Men will not any longer be able to "comfort themselves" with the delusion "all things remain as they were from the beginning," II Peter 3:4.

Men, the wicked, will simply die because of fear of the things coming upon the inhabited world of man. They will not simply faint. They shall die from fright and consternation. For the Son of God will terrify them with the Sign of His great power. And then every eye shall see Him, also they who have pierced him. See Luke 21:25, 26. All their laughter will be turned into mourning, their joy into sorrow. The tables will be turned. For the Lord will avenge Zion!

That is but one side of the power and great glory of the Son of Man. It is not even the positive and glorious side of

it. It is simply the removal of the wicked in order that Zion may be saved: that she may dwell in the city four-square, where the gates shall never be closed!

The other side is the "gathering the elect" from the four corners of the world.

We notice that this shall be done with the sound of the trumpet. It will be a call to the great "Feast of Trumpets"! And the trumpet shall be truly the "Trump of God"! It will signal that the time has come for the elect to enter with body and soul into the everlasting kingdom of God, to enter into the Parousia of the Lord! It will be the Feast of the Seventh Month, the Great Feast of the perfected Atonement! It will be the great year of Jubilee, in the land of Beulah. It will be the call to come to worship in God's temple day and night. We quote here with approval from "Fairbairn's Typology." And such was probably the more peculiar design of the blowing of the trumpets at the festivals generally, and especially at the festival of trumpets on the first day of the seventh month. That month was distinguished above all other months of the year, for the sacred services to be performed in it — it was emphatically a sacred month . . . In perfect accordance with this all, not only is the feast named the feast of trumpets, but a "memorial of blowing of trumpets," a bringing to remembrance, or putting God, as it were, in mind of the great things by which (symbolically) He was to distinguish the month that was thus introduced, precisely as when they went to war against the enemy that oppressed them, they were to blow the trumpet, and, it is added, "ye shall be remembered before the Lord your God, and ye shall be saved from your enemies" (Numbers 10:9).

It is remarkable that the wicked do not hear the sound of the trumpet. This is for the "elect of God." They hear the call to worship and to come to the eternal feast, in God's tabernacle with man! And they are thus gathered. They come willingly! They heed the call of the angels. It will be the "last trumpet"! No more need for the "trumpet" to sound the alarm to battle. The swords can now be beaten into plowshares. There need be no smith anymore in Israel. This is all of no account. Some trusted in chariots and some in horses. But those who trusted in the Lord, will come to the Feast of Trumpets, to forever remember the power and the glory of God in Christ! That shall be His *Parousia*!

G.L.

Deacons' Conference

A Deacons' Conference of the churches in Classis East will be held at Creston Church, Thursday evening, October 2, at 8 P. M.

All deacons, ministers and ex-deacons, being out of office for not more than one term, are invited to attend.

Rev. Bernard Woudenberg will introduce for discussion the topic, "Should we support or take collections for such institutions as the Bethany Home?"

IN HIS FEAR

Jehovah, The God of Arithmetic

(2)

As we remarked last time there is an inner harmony and beauty to be seen in the world of numbers. Note first of all that there is an unfailing pattern of odd and even numbers in alternating order. One, three, five, seven and nine are all odd numbers in that they cannot be equally divided into two parts without the result being a fraction of a number. Two, four, six, eight and ten are the even numbers which appear respectively between these odd numbers. They can be divided in two; and the result is always a full number. And it makes no difference by what you multiply these even numbers, the result always is again an even number. But when you take an odd number and multiply it with the numbers beginning with one through any series of consecutive numbers, you will always find an alternating pattern of odd and even numbers. Take the number three for an example. One times three gives you a sum that is odd, namely, three. But two times three gives you six which is an even number. Did this come about by some evolutionistic process? Was it at one time different? And did these numbers juggle themselves and jockey themselves into such a harmonious and beautiful pattern? Of course not! An all-wise God designed these numbers according to this beautiful scheme.

Take again, if you will, the inner harmony and unchangeable pattern of the number five. In this table again you have an alternating pattern of odd and even numbers. What is more you have also in unchangeable pattern numbers that end alternately in five or zero. And in the table of tens you have one series of even numbers that end each time unwaveringly with a zero.

But the number that is for us the most intriguing of them all and the most demonstrative of the wisdom of God is the number nine. There just is no number like it. For the child it may be one of the hardest of the tables to learn — perhaps because the sums are larger than of any of the other digits from one through eight. And yet this ought not be the case. In some respects it is the easiest to “figure out.” If you will take a piece of paper — unless you can hold these figures clearly in your mind — and write down under each other the numbers of the table of nines you will observe a very startling thing, yea more than one startling thing that speaks so loudly of God’s beauty, harmony and wisdom. We want you to note four things in this table and therefore will ask the printer to set up this table before your eyes thus:

09
18
27
36

45
54
63
72
81
90

Now if you will take the numbers in the right hand column only and follow them down the column, you will see that we have the numbers from nine down to 0 in the very order in which they precede each other in our system of numbers. If, then, you will take the numbers in the left hand column and follow them down the column, you will have the reverse. The numbers will appear one after the other in the order that they follow each other in our system of numbering. Now, if in the third place, you will look across the columns an even more astounding thing will be noted. Add up these numbers and each time you will get the number nine. One and eight is nine. Two and seven is nine. Three and six is nine. And in the fourth place notice that each time the result of your multiplication begins with a number that is one less than the number by which you are multiplying the number nine. Thus two times nine is eighteen. And eighteen begins with a one which is one less than the two by which you are multiplying nine. Again, three times nine is twenty-seven. Twenty-seven begins with a two which is one number less than the three by which you are multiplying nine. So it proceeds through the whole table of nine from one times nine through ten times nine. You find that nowhere but in this table of nines.

Nor is that the extent of it. When we pursue this intriguing number to the next degree and multiply it by the numbers eleven through twenty we get a similarly startling list of numbers. Let us line them up again and look carefully at the series of numbers. This is the result of our multiplication:

99
108
117
126
135
144
153
162
171
180

We will notice that the same thing obtains here as in the nine times table taken from one through ten when we go down the right hand column. Once again the numbers follow in the order that they precede each other in our way of counting from one through ten. And when we take the left hand column — considering that the numbers are nine, ten, eleven, etc., so that we have but two columns of numbers, we find that here the numbers follow each other in the usual pattern from nine through eighteen. But here is a new thing, when we look at the list of numbers above and go across the

column and consider each number to be composed of three separate numbers and then add these numbers up, we will each time, once again, get the number nine. This does not apply to the first number, namely ninety-nine, but to all that follow. Thus in the number one hundred eight above, if we add the one and the zero and the eight, we get nine. If we take the next number, one hundred seventeen, and add the numbers across, once again we get nine. For one and one and seven is nine. One other difference is that now the result of our multiplication is two less than the number by which we multiplied nine. Thus eleven times nine are ninety-nine. Nine, the first figure is two less than the eleven by which we multiplied nine. Twelve times nine is one hundred eight. Ten, the first part of this figure, is two less than the twelve by which we multiplied nine. And so we may continue with this. The reason why the number is now twice removed from the number by which we have multiplied nine is that we are now doing so beyond that first series of numbers from one to ten. In this series we were one behind. Now when we go on to the numbers eleven through twenty we are still this one behind plus the one of the new set of numbers. Then, too, considering once again that we have only two columns of numbers so that we add ten to eight, and eleven to seven, and twelve to six and so on down the line, our result will each time be eighteen. In the table when we multiply nine by the numbers one through ten, the result was nine; but now when we multiply nine by the numbers eleven through twenty, the result is just twice as much, or eighteen.

We can do that again. Multiply nine times the numbers twenty-one through thirty. The same underlying principle and pattern will be found. Now the left and right hand columns will proceed step by step up and down the series of numbers in their order. But now when we add the two columns across our result will be not nine, not eighteen, but the next step in the table of nines, namely, twenty-seven. Thus twenty-one times nine is 189. Take the 18 and the 9 and together they make twenty-seven. But take these numbers from twenty-three times nine on through thirty times nine and consider the sum to be three numbers, and unerringly again your result will be nine. Thus 23 times nine is 207. And 24 times 9 is 216. Add the two, the zero and the seven and you get nine. Likewise, add the two, the one and the six and you still get only nine. But did you note that now you get two numbers at the beginning that are exceptions? The sums of twenty-one times nine and twenty-two times nine when added up and across as three separate numbers total eighteen and not twenty-seven. Thus 189 and 198 added across — thus, one and eight and nine, or one and nine and eight — equal eighteen. When we multiplied nine times the second series of numbers, the numbers eleven through twenty, we got one exception. Now when we multiply nine times the third set of numbers, the numbers twenty-one through thirty, we get two exceptions. If we carry this on and multiply nine times a fourth set, the numbers thirty-

one through forty, we will find three exceptions. And so you may continue also with this.

How shall we explain all this to our children? That we should call it to their attention in the arithmetic class is not only beneficial for the child but will also catch his interest in what otherwise might be considered by him to be a dull and boring subject. But how shall we do that? Is any man so foolish as to believe that this harmony between numbers and this unique and intriguing pattern of numbers is there by the ingenuity of man? Did man invent so intricate and yet so beautiful a system of arithmetic? To be sure man works with it, and for ages, yea from the beginning, has been busy with these numbers. And was not the possibility of the atom bomb determined exactly and demonstrated by mathematical figures? Man uses them, and man has become very skilled in the use of them. But they were there before man appeared on the face of this globe. Water froze at its prescribed temperature and boiled at its prescribed degree of heat before man was created on the sixth day. And what will the evolutionist say of all this? When his man did not appear for billions and billions of years, the water of this creation was still after the same mathematical formula of H₂O as it is today. And there was no man to design this mathematical scheme.

This all belongs to the order of the creation which the ALL-wise God has made. And it all displays His infinite wisdom and beauty. Blessed is that child who may have the benefit of instruction that points this out to him and causes him to see how great his God is. That child will sing, "How Great Thou Art."

And remember that this is true of the number nine in its combination with other numbers because of the value of these other numbers. This beauty, this harmony, this infinite wisdom is seen in the number nine as we multiply it by other numbers; but without these other numbers the nine does not display this wisdom. And so really it is the wisdom of God in the whole series of numbers, in all arithmetic and all mathematics that is to be seen in the tables of the multiplication of the nine. Indeed, vanity of vanities these numbers are alone. But taught in His fear they take on meaning and have beauty. We plan, the Lord willing, to continue this consideration of Jehovah as the God of arithmetic next time. There are other truths to be seen than the truth of the wisdom of God in the world of numbers which He designed and uses.

J.A.H.

NOTICE: ACTS OF SYNOD

The Acts of the 1958 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches of America are now available. Obtain your copy either from the minister or clerk of your church or send your order to undersigned. The price is \$1.00.

Rev. G. Vanden Berg, Stated Clerk
9402 South 53rd Court
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THE LIVING CREATURES OF EZEKIEL 1 AND 10

Extremely interesting, but equally important for understanding the entire prophecy of Ezekiel is the vision of the living creatures mentioned in chapter 1, and referred to again later in the prophecy. Whenever we read the prophecy of Ezekiel, also in our family worship, a clear picture of the vision and its significance is most essential for all of us.

As is obvious from the first few verses of this prophecy, Ezekiel lived and prophesied among the exiles in Babylon. He was a contemporary of Daniel, with this difference, that Daniel lived and spoke in the king's court, while Ezekiel lived and prophesied among the people of Judah. Daniel spoke of the destruction of all the kingdoms of this world through the establishment of the kingdom of Christ in heavenly perfection. Ezekiel spoke of the destruction of the earthly temple in Jerusalem to prepare the way for the eternal temple of God in the heavens. That is the theme of the entire prophecy of Ezekiel, the destruction of the earthly temple in Jerusalem to open the way for its spiritual reality, the heavenly temple of God, where the promise of God will be realized in glorious perfection, "And ye shall be my people, and I will be your God." Ezek. 36:28.

It is important to bear in mind that we are dealing with a vision. The prophet mentions in the first verse that, "the heavens were opened, and I saw the visions of God." And again in the third verse that the hand of the Lord was upon him, evidently referring to the fact that it was the hand of God which enabled him to see the revelation of God in a vision. Coming at the very beginning of his labors, and appearing here already in the first chapter, this vision is closely related to the calling of the prophet, and somehow expresses the theme of all his prophecies.

Let us try, in as far as that is possible, to form a mental picture of the living creatures as seen by the prophet in the vision.

We are told that he sees a whirlwind coming out of the north. This whirlwind carries with it a great cloud, which comes rolling toward the prophet. This cloud contains in the center of its vortex a ball of fire, shining forth in glorious brilliancy. For out of the midst of the fire radiates in all directions a dazzling brightness like the color of amber, or better, like glistening, shining brass.

As this whirlwind approaches, the form of living creatures appear before the wondering gaze of Ezekiel. Since we are dealing with a vision, these are no real creatures, but rather a likeness, and have symbolical significance. They bear the appearance of living beings, or living creatures. From now on his attention is fixed upon this appearance.

The predominating likeness is that of a man. Evidently they have bodies that resemble human bodies, for they also have the hands of a man. Besides, one of the faces is a man's face. The creatures, four in number, all look in opposite directions, likely towards the four points of the compass. They also have four sets of wings. That is, each creature has two wings; two extended over their heads while

they are flying, and two used to cover their bodies. The wings of each touch the wings of the creature next to him.

In a more detailed description that follows of the faces, we find that these four faces each have their own peculiar likeness. The one, as has been said, is the likeness of a man. To the right, is the likeness of a lion. To the left, the face of an ox. And in the back, the face of an eagle.

Concerning the hands, we read that they are under the wings on the four sides. This must mean that there are eight hands in all.

There is also a peculiarity about the feet. We are told that the feet are straight. This is commonly taken to mean that the legs have no joints at the knee. It may mean, however, that the feet do not extend straight out from the body, as is the case with a human. Rather, the legs extend straight down, and end in the hoof of a calf. For we read, "And the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf's foot." And it should not escape us that also these feet glisten, even as the cloud, like polished brass.

So we have the appearance of living beings, yet with four faces, including the likeness of a lion, an ox, and an eagle, as well as that of a man. Besides, these creatures have the feet of a calf. And, what stands out most prominently, they have many wings, the wings of cherubim, even as the cherubim that were embroidered on the veil of the temple.

There is another element in the vision, and that is, that these creatures are living and active. They seem to be always on the move. And even their movement catches the attention of the prophet as being significant. They do not whirl about, even though they move in different directions. They always move in the direction of one of the faces, either to the right or to the left, either toward the prophet or away from him. Yet they do not move arbitrarily, as fancy might dictate. They always move as directed by the Spirit. The idea must be, that the Holy Spirit directs all their movements, causing them, each in particular, and all together, to serve the plan and purpose of the Most High, Who sits upon the throne. (Verse 26.)

Finally, mention is made of the fact, that a bright fire burns among them, like coals of fire or a burning lamp, causing light to radiate from them and sending forth flashes of lightning.

All this should aid us in forming a mental picture of the living beings as seen in the vision.

But now we should also turn to the tenth chapter of this prophecy, where these same creatures appear again. Rather than to enter into detail, we shall point out only the most important features of this new vision.

First, the prophet is now standing in the inner court of the temple in Jerusalem, as that temple had once been. He sees the dead who have been slain by the righteous judgment of God and whose bodies lie in heaps in the temple.

Secondly, he sees the likeness of a throne, which is the throne of God's sovereign majesty. The time has come when God not only visits the inhabitants of Jerusalem with His

judgments, but He also destroys the city and the temple. The man in white linen, who is obviously the Christ, is instructed to pour fiery coals upon the city. At the same time Jehovah prepares to depart from the earthly temple in His cloud of glory.

Thirdly, we note that again the living creatures of chapter 1 are present, standing to the south of the temple. In fact, the coals used to destroy the city are taken from the bright fire which is in the midst of them. These living creatures take an active part in the judgment of God upon that temple that is destroyed.

Finally, we notice that there are some outstanding differences between the creatures as they appear here, and as we have already met them in chapter 1. The four faces are described here as the face of the cherub, of a man, of a lion, and of an eagle. Here the cherub is on the foreground instead of the face of a man. In fact, the face of the cherub has replaced the face of an ox, which is not mentioned here. Moreover, their bodies, and their backs, and their hands, and their wings are full of eyes round about. As for the rest, the description is the same, and it is emphasized that these are the same creatures which were seen in the original vision, even though here they are referred to as cherubim.

Just one more remark about the vision, and that is that John sees a very similar appearance of living creatures in the fourth chapter of the book of Revelation, the verses 6 to 8. We urge you to read also that passage, and refer you to the interpretation given by the Rev. H. Hoeksema in *The Standard Bearer*, vol. 33, page 368 ff.

Considering now the various elements of the vision, we find that the cloud from the north evidently refers to Babylon, which came against the Holy City and the temple to destroy them. Both the cloud and the whirlwind symbolize the fact that they are instruments in God's hand to pour out His judgment upon Judah because of their abominations and idolatry. The fire also speaks of judgment, and generally includes the idea of purging, even as God will bring forth a new creation out of the old through the fire of His final judgment. That same idea we meet again in chapter ten, where the Lord through His Servant, the Christ, spreads coals of fire upon Jerusalem and the temple to destroy them. And at the same time, He withdraws Himself to dwell there no more.

It is in that light that we must regard the living creatures. As you can well imagine, there are many varied interpretations of this part of the vision. Some regard these creatures as heavenly spirits, cherubim. Others lay emphasis upon the fact that they are representatives of the earthly creation. Actually, of course, both ideas are included in the vision.

The four living creatures represent, first of all, the whole earthly creation. This is evident from the number four, which in Scripture always expresses the four ends of the earth, or the entire earthly creation. But this is also evident from the creatures themselves. Prominent among them, especially in the first chapter, is the appearance of a man, who was created as king of the earthly creation. Accompanying this face of a

man is the face of the mighty lion, commonly referred to as the king of the beasts. There is also the face of an ox, the powerful representative of the domesticated animals. And there is the stately eagle, which represents the whole bird kingdom. Obviously, all the animate creatures are symbolized in these likenesses.

But this plainly ignores a very important part of the vision. For in chapter 1 we noted that they had wings, the tip of each touching the tip of the wing next to it. In chapter 10 these creatures are referred to as cherubim. And there the prominent face is that of a cherub.

That points to the fact that these creatures belong to the heavenly creation. They are spiritual beings, like unto the angels of heaven, and are a part of the new creation. The prophet does not see these creatures as we see them now with our natural eye. As far as we are concerned, man and beast and birds are still a part of this present earthly creation. They are even subject to vanity, and thus they groan in hope, "because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God," Rom. 8:19-22. But the prophet sees them as they have been renewed and now belong to the heavenly creation. Actually they already exist as new creatures in the counsel of God, and therefore can appear in the vision. They take an active part, as it were, in the destruction of the earthly temple; for the new creation that is eternal in the heavens displaces the old.

That accounts for it that these creatures are full of eyes and constantly move about. That also accounts for it that a fire is in the midst of them and that their feet glow with the glory of God's holiness and majesty. These are *living* creatures, filled with the Spirit of God. They have their own nature and their own life, so that each in its own way serves the purpose of the Most High. This is expressed by the eyes that cover them. But this is also expressed by the power of the Spirit which pervades them, so that they move under the direction of the Spirit, to cause all things to serve toward the coming of God's kingdom and the eternal revelation of His glory.

That leaves us with the final question, what is the significance of these visions for the prophet and for us?

And then we answer, first of all, that they serve to point Ezekiel to his calling and his message in the midst of the people of Judah. It is his calling to point Judah to her idolatry, whereby she profaned the name of Jehovah among the heathen. But he must also speak to the remnant according to election concerning the faithfulness of God, Who saves His people in Christ for His Name's sake. God is jealous of His honor, and He will declare His glory among the heathen through the salvation of His people in Christ.

Therefore, in the second place, the prophet is given to see the destruction of the earthly temple in the presence of these living creatures. These creatures exist before God, even according to His eternal counsel and good pleasure. These

(Continued on page 22)

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 3. By reason of these remains of indwelling sin, and the temptations of sin and of the world, those who are converted could not persevere in a state of grace, if left to their own strength. But God is faithful, who having conferred grace, mercifully confirms, and powerfully preserves them therein, even to the end.

The above translation is not entirely correct; and because the article is brief, we will present a corrected version of the entire article:

On account of these remains of indwelling sin, and also the attacks of the world and of Satan, those who are converted would not be able to persevere (remain standing) in that grace, if they were left to their own strength. But God is faithful, who mercifully confirms them in the grace once conferred, and powerfully preserves them in the same, even to the end.

In this article we have the main proposition of the entire fifth chapter of the *Canons*, namely, that God mercifully confirms the saints in the grace once conferred, and powerfully preserves them in the same even unto the end. This, we say, is the main thought of this entire chapter. In the present article this truth is simply set forth, without being further explained. In the remaining articles the fathers speak of the relation between preservation and the sins and falls of the saints, the manner in which the grace of preservation operates, the assurance of preservation, and the means of preservation. All this remains to be discussed. But here the fundamental proposition of the Fifth Head of Doctrine is propounded, that God powerfully preserves His people to the very end.

We may add at once that this truth is presented by way of contrast, as the conjunction “but” indicates also. The contrast is between the powerful preservation of the faithful God and the utter inability of the saints to persevere if left to their own strength. This is noteworthy. God always reveals His grace against the background of and at the point of the utter inability of man, the sinner. He will give His glory to no other. He will not share the glory of His grace with the creature. When the wonder of grace is revealed, the Lord God always takes care that there is absolutely no room for the creature to boast of self, to take any credit for himself. Only then and there, when and where it becomes abundantly plain that things are impossible for man, does God reveal

that those human impossibilities are possible with Him. Such is our God!

At the same time we may observe that in this article is set forth the very *genus* of the Reformed faith in contrast with the *genus* of the Arminian heresy. It is no accident that the fathers present the truth of preservation by way of two contrasting statements here. We must remember that they are throughout the *Canons* consciously opposing the heresy of the Remonstrants. And stripped of all attempts to cloak it in pious and apparently Scriptural terminology, that heresy is that in spite of the remains of indwelling sin and the attacks of the world and of Satan, the converted, if left to their own strength, are able to persevere. The Arminians may call in divine grace as an assistant; they may even speak of God’s preservation of the saints. The fact remains that their doctrine leaves it entirely within the power and will of man to persevere to the end. That is Arminianism, plain and simple. And that the fathers deny, flatly and bluntly: the converted, if left to their own strength, could not persevere. And mark you well, this is a matter of *ability*! It is not the mere question whether they *do* or *do not* persevere, but the much more fundamental question whether they are *able* or *unable* to persevere. The Remonstrant grants, — he will have to grant, — that there are many that do not, in fact, persevere to the end. But to the Arminian this is not a matter of inability, but a matter of unwillingness on the part of a man who is endowed with a free will, which means that it also lies within the scope of that free will to persevere if a man so desires. On the other hand, stripped of all related questions as to the experience, the manner, the assurance of, and the means of this preserving grace, the plain and simple Reformed faith is: God powerfully preserves the converted in grace even unto the end.

With this in mind we may pay attention to some of the details of this article.

First of all, then, we must keep in mind what kind of men the article is speaking of, namely, *saints*. The question is not now: can a mere natural man, left to his own strength, obtain the grace of God and all the blessings of salvation implied therein? But the question is: granted that a man has once become a saint, has once obtained grace, can he, if left to his own strength, continue a saint? And the question is, in this article, stated in still more limited form when the article speaks of the *grace of conversion*. For this is indeed the intention: the article speaks of “those who are converted” and the possibility of their persevering “in that grace.” The latter expression refers undoubtedly therefore to the grace of conversion. Hence, the question is as follows: granted that the current of God’s converting grace has once begun to flow into a man, if that man is now left to his own strength, can he continue and persevere, endure to the very end, in that grace of conversion? Or, on the other hand, is it necessary, — granted once more that grace has once been given to a man, — that the current and energy of divine grace must con-

tinue to flow from God to him if ever that man is to continue a converted man?

In order to answer this question, we must next consider what is meant by a man's being *left to his own strength*. This certainly means that once a man has been converted, there is no further operation of grace upon him, no further flow of the current of grace from God through Christ into him, no further operation or influence of God whatsoever in him. He is simply regenerated, once made alive, receives a beginning of the new obedience, is delivered from the dominion and slavery of sin, but also left still in an imperfect state, that is not altogether delivered from the body of sin and the infirmities of the flesh. And from that point on he is "on his own." It is up to him to continue in Christ, to keep on believing in Him, to keep on fighting against sin, to see to it even that this beginning of the new obedience, this principle of regeneration, survives and is not snuffed out. God may probably help him, *if* he himself seeks that help. But God does not even operate within this man to cause him to seek divine help. This man is left entirely to his own strength, not, mark you, as a natural man, but as a man described in Article 1 of this chapter. Let us be very clear on this point. The question is: can a Christian, left to his own strength as a *Christian*, survive the battle and persevere to the end?

You will probably be very quick to answer negatively. Your reason will probably be that the life of regeneration can never exist in separation from Christ, no more than the branch can live in separation from the vine. There cannot be a multitude of independent living ones in separation from *the* Living One. There cannot exist a family of sons of God independent of *the* Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. If a saint is to continue a saint, then the bond, the connection, must be maintained between him and Christ: he must not only once be called into the fellowship of God's Son Jesus Christ, but he must also continue in that fellowship. Yes, but that is exactly the issue. The connection of faith must indeed be maintained between the saint and Christ. The saint must indeed continue in the fellowship of God's Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. If that connection, that fellowship, is broken, the life of regeneration must certainly perish. But now, cannot the Christian, by virtue of the fact that he is once regenerated and converted, himself continue in the fellowship of Christ? Cannot the Christian, by virtue of his first gift of grace even, from then on take the initiative and continue to draw the gifts of grace out of Christ and have fellowship with Christ? Or must God in Christ always take the initiative? Must God through the Spirit of Christ not only *establish* the connection between the sinner and Christ, but also constantly *maintain* that connection? Is there *never* any saving activity that originates purely with man, not even with the man that has once become a Christian?

We emphasize that this is the issue, in order that we may see clearly that the matter of salvation is from beginning to end solely a matter of sovereign grace. It is very easy, while

we may perhaps emphatically grant that the natural man can do nothing toward his own salvation, nevertheless to imagine that the Christian, once he has become a Christian, can, left to himself, do something. To put it rather crudely, if God gives him a start, he can keep going. But this is very definitely not the case. Suppose that it were possible that Christ would say to the saint: "I have established the connection of faith between you and Myself. And through that bond I have caused a supply of my life to flow into your heart. But I am going to give you no more. I will take no further action. I will not add to your supply of life. From now on I will remain completely passive. Or, at least, I will do nothing unless you seek My help. There is an ample supply of grace and of life in Me. But from now on you must come and take it out of me; I will not simply give it to you. I am certainly willing to lead you to life eternal, but I will not do so unless you put your hand in Mine and hold on to Me. Remember, I will not give you any more strength than you now have to hold My hand. It is entirely up to you. All the exertion, all the initiative must from now on come from you, the Christian." What would happen to such a Christian?

He would never persevere! He could never remain in the fellowship of Christ. The moment he would be left to his own strength, that is, the moment the life-giving current would cease to flow from Christ to him, at that moment he would be powerless to maintain the flow of that current. If it were really true that Christ gave us a small supply of the new life, delivered us from the dominion and slavery of sin, though not altogether from the body of sin and from the infirmities of the flesh, and then abandoned us to persevere in our own strength, we would inevitably fail most miserably. If this were true, not only would some men fail; all men would fail.

And this failure would be inevitable because it is rooted in an incapability. There is no question of it, according to the article under discussion, for "those who are converted *would not be able* to persevere in that grace, if left to their own strength."

Such is the negative side of the Reformed truth of perseverance.
H.C.H.

IN MEMORIAM

The Men's Society of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church hereby wishes to express its sincere sympathy to one of its members, Mr. Isaac Korhorn in the loss of his brother,

CORNELIUS KORHORN

May our God comfort the bereaved in their sorrow.

In the name of the Society,
Rev. H. Hanko, president
P. Petroelje, secretary

SAINTS OF OLD

The Birth of Isaac

"For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him. And Abraham called the name of his son . . . Isaac." — GEN. 21:2, 3

Miracles — Wonders of Grace.

Some call them supernatural events because, they say, they are wrought directly by the hand of God. What they have forgotten is that all things are wrought directly by God, for in his providence "as it were by his hand, he upholds and governs heaven, earth, and all creatures; . . . and all things come not by chance, but by his fatherly hand." Heid. Cat. Q. 27.

Miracles — Wonders of Grace.

They are events wrought by the hand of God whereby in reality or in type He raises His chosen creatures out of the curse of sin into the glory of His everlasting kingdom and covenant, when all human agency has failed.

Among the greatest of such wonders of grace recorded for us in the Scriptures was that which took place on the outskirts of Bethlehem when a virgin "Brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn." Luke 2:7. Then it was that all human agency had failed, for Mary had not known a man from the royal line of David through whom the promised line could be consummated or even continued. The royal line from every human point of view must needs come to its end. But with God all things are possible and He sent forth His Spirit with miraculous power so that the virgin Mary conceived and brought forth a son whose name is called "Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." Matt. 1:23. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." John 1:14. — A miracle of grace.

Not nearly so great, not nearly so rich, yet also beautiful with essentially the same beauty was another miraculous birth which had taken place many years before when "Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him." Gen. 21:2. It was a beautiful figure of the greater reality which was to come.

The birth of Isaac, like the virgin birth which it foreshadowed, was a birth utterly impossible from a human point of view. We all know how that in our modern age, dominated by the wise men of science, the virgin birth is one of the first truths of Scripture which would be discarded. With austere confidence the learned men of our day would say that after objective consideration and scientific examination the possibility of a virgin birth must be considered impossible. Surely, if the birth of Isaac were to be placed before the same panel of judges, it too would fall under their axe. Con-

sider only these facts: Sarah was an old woman 90 years of age who all of her life had been barren and had now passed the years of conception, Gen. 18:11; Abraham also was a man of many years and from the point of view of bringing forth a seed was to be considered "as good as dead," Heb. 11:12. Surely for Abraham and Sarah to bring forth a seed was more than human reason could expect.

Neither is this just a conclusion which is to be arrived at only from the point of view of those that follow later. Abraham and Sarah themselves had come to much the same conclusion. It was not a long time before the birth of Isaac that Sarah had stood hidden behind the door of the tent listening to the voice of the man that had come to visit them on the plains of Mamre. She had heard his voice speaking, "I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son," Gen. 18:10. But "Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?" Gen. 18:12. It was a cynical laugh, a laugh of unbelief. In earlier years it had been different. Then she had heard that same promise from the mouth of the Lord and laid hold upon it with the firmness of faith. Then in the strength of her younger years she had looked forward and anticipated the day when the Lord would open her womb so that she might bring forth a seed unto her husband Abraham even as the Lord had promised. But that was long before. Years and even decades had passed while the promise remained unfulfilled. Gradually the ugly head of unbelief had raised itself within her consciousness enveloping her in its snare. Wave after wave of doubt had filled her soul ever again with greater power. In desperation she had laid the plan to raise up a seed to her husband through Hagar her maid; but her plan even before the child was born brought discord to their home and ever after was cause for repeated trouble. Finally there came to her ears this repetition of the promise; but it was too much, too often she had heard it before, too many years had passed without its being fulfilled. There burst from her soul that cynical laugh. She did not believe it.

Again it was not just Sarah. Abraham too had known such unbelief. It was but a year before Isaac was born when God had come to him to institute the seal of circumcision. His heart had been strained through years of waiting without fulfillment, of hoping without realization. Then too the Lord had repeated that same promise as was later heard by Sarah, "As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be. And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her; yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her," Gen. 17:15, 16. Troubled in his heart, it was too much for Abraham to receive. "Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old bear?" Gen. 17:17. He had a plan that seemed more possible, "O that Ishmael might live before thee," he prayed. Gen. 17:18.

The fact of this unbelief God would perpetuate through the years to come, for he said, "Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac," Gen. 17:19. Isaac — meaning "laughter," a memorial to the doubts of both his parents.

Nonetheless the Word of God is power. The promise, once again repeated and met with laughter, was also a power unto repentance. Falling upon the ears of both Abraham and Sarah, the Word found place in their regenerated hearts. Under its influence unbelief died and faith again revived. Although they had no strength left in the flesh wherein to trust, they were brought to the point so beautifully described in Heb. 11:11, 12, "Through faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised. Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand by the sea shore innumerable."

One can almost imagine the joy that swelled within the bosoms of Abraham and Sarah as they gazed on their first-born son. A joy such as fills the heart of every mother when her firstborn child is placed within her arms. A joy such as reflects in the eyes of every father when he looks, even if it be through the thick glass window of a nursery, upon the face of his own son. Still it must have been much greater to them for the many years which they had spent waiting, hoping, longing for the promise of God to be made real. We find it echoed in the hymn of Sarah, "God hath made me laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me, . . . Who would have said unto Abraham, that Sarah should have given children suck? for I have born him a son in his old age," Gen. 21:6, 7. Yes, once again there was laughter, as memorialized in his name. But this was a different laughter from that which had first moved God to give him that name. Then it had been the cynical laugh of a doubter. Now it was a laugh of joy and gladness, a laughter of faith and trust, a laughter of praise and thanksgiving.

And still their joy was much deeper than that which comes from merely the birth of a normal son. This child was a very special child. God's promises to Abraham had been very rich. He had promised to give to Abraham the land of Canaan as an eternal inheritance for him and for his seed after him. Gen. 12:7 and 13:14-17. He promised to make of Abraham a great seed and a great nation as many as the stars in number. Gen. 12:2 and 15:4, 5. He promised to bless Abraham and make him a blessing unto all families of the earth. Gen. 12:2, 3. He promised to establish his covenant with Abraham and to be a God unto him and unto his seed through all generations. Gen. 17:1-8. These promises Abraham understood to be not merely material but essentially spiritual. He desired not just the earthly land of Canaan, but we read, "He looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God," Heb. 11:10. He sought, surely, not to be blessed merely with earthly riches and

numbers, but his heart was set on God that he might be received in favor by the Most High. Abraham knew, however, that these blessings could not come to him as he stood in his own right. He was a sinner and as such could never be received by a holy God. He understood full well as a spiritual man that he could never work out his own salvation. Hence, he looked to the promise of God that He would give to him a seed, trusting in hope that through that seed redemption would come. He wanted a son not just to perpetuate his name upon the earth. He needed a son that in his generations a Savior might be born. He looked to the promise for salvation from his sin that he might live as the friend of God eternally and forevermore.

The joy of Abraham and Sarah both in the birth of Isaac was a joy of spiritual thanksgiving. From the very first time God had given them the promise, it had been for them a source of spiritual peace. Believing the promise they had felt assured that God would prepare salvation and for them fulfill all righteousness. Thus the strength of their faith had been accounted for them and in them for righteousness and peace. At times indeed their faith had faltered and in the weakness of their flesh they had laughed. But the Word of God had been sufficient to restore them again unto faith. Through faith they received strength to bring forth the promised seed. Gazing upon their son they saw the fulfillment of all of the promises being realized in the seed which was to come, and they laughed a laugh of spiritual joy and thanksgiving for that seed is Christ, — a miracle — a wonder of grace.

B.W.

THE LIVING CREATURES OF EZEKIEL 1 AND 10

(Continued from page 18)

creatures, as a part of the new creation, are the instruments of God to destroy the earthly temple. God's temple in the heavens displaces, as it were, the temporal temple of Jerusalem. The old must give way that the new may appear.

And finally, believing Israel in exile is comforted with the hope of deliverance. Through these visions the prophet is able to point them to the coming of the Son of God in the flesh, to tabernacle among men. He can promise the victory of the cross, the resurrection from the dead, and the exaltation of Christ in heavenly glory. And through all this the eye of faith is fixed upon Pentecost, but beyond that, upon the new Jerusalem, where God will dwell with His people in heavenly perfection.

Thus, according to Revelation 4, the whole creation is always active to the glory of God. For we read in verses 8 and 9, "And the four beasts . . . rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. And . . . those beasts give glory and honor and thanks to him that sat upon the throne, who liveth forever and ever."

C.H.

ALL AROUND US

The Heidelberg On The Way Out?

In the September 5th issue of *The Banner*, in the rubric "Other Churches in the News," the Rev. Peter Van Tuinen writes the following under the title: "Blaming the Heidelberg."

"A Reformed preacher in The Netherlands seems to find symptoms of the disease described above in his own communion, and lays the blame on the Heidelberg Catechism. Dr. J. M. Van Minnen, minister of the Gereformeerde Kerk at Utrecht, writes in *Bezinning* to charge that the impoverishment of the spiritual life is to be charged to the well-known and honored instruction book in the Christian religion.

"The influence of the Catechism (I translate, VT) on the spiritual character of the Reformed Churches cannot easily be overestimated. This Catechism is memorized, has been taught in the schools for generations, is expounded and drilled in the Catechism classes. Half of our Sunday sermons are dedicated to the Catechism teaching, and that year after year. Indeed, the strong shadows of the Catechism, with which the minister is occupied so many hours of the week, fall clearly on his direct Bible preaching as well. Even from the Bible itself we constantly hear the trusted voice of the instruction book. The Catechism is the colored glass through which we read the Bible.

"We see only what is visible through the window of the Catechism, so that not only whole passages of the Bible, but especially certain of its accents remain outside our thinking.

"Could this not be the principal reason why man-in-the-world (the Christian in his everyday affairs) gets so little attention, even in the Calvinistic churches?

"Couldn't it be here, in the Catechism, that the reason lies for our weakness on the world-scene, and of our lack of responsible exercise of our Christianity in society? Might it be owing to the Catechism, because of its dominating position, that the salt of the earth has been left in the saltbin and threatens to become tasteless there?"

"This is likely the sharpest criticism of the Heidelberg Catechism and its place in our church life that has ever been uttered by a ministerial voice within the group. However much the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands and on this continent may recoil from it, it does remind us that the Catechism was written and its use in the churches determined in other times than these. It might lead us to reflect too, that the Catechism directs the attention of the learner to his own spiritual life, and the personal comfort that accrues to the believer. This approach can easily lead to a self-centered religion, and it may have had more of such an effect than we are aware of.

"On the other hand, there is much in the Catechism, especially in Part III, which may be used to direct attention to the moral and social implications of the gospel in the Christian life. While it is very easy for the preacher to ignore these elements, they are clearly there.

"For the rest, it must be observed that the Caetchism presents the Scriptures from one point of view. The very fact that we have two other doctrinal standards is an official admission of that fact.

"It will be useful if Dr. Van Minnen's article has the effect of stirring up a discussion on the values of the prominence given to the Heidelberg Catechism in our church life. The Reformed Church must be ever reforming."

It is difficult to know what Rev. Van Tuinen means by that last statement, "The Reformed Church must be ever reforming." By itself the statement is true, of course. It is a truth that the Reformed Church should always be in the process of reformation. But we fear when we read Rev. Van Tuinen's comments on Dr. Van Minnen's article that the statement in his mouth bears no good meaning. Reformation to him may mean that Article 68 of our Church Order should be eventually abolished, namely, "The ministers shall on Sunday explain briefly the sum of christian doctrine comprehended in the Heidelberg Catechism so that as much as possible the explanation shall be annually completed, according to the division of the Catechism itself, for that purpose." If this is what he and Dr. Van Minnen want, we may rest assured that this would be deformation rather than reformation. The church will rue the day when she considers the Heidelberg or the other Reformed Standards obsolete, valueless, a petrified mummy which belongs in an ancient crypt.

On the other hand, if by reformation the Rev. Van Tuinen means that he and Dr. Van Minnen and others of like sentiment should be reforming themselves as to their attitude toward the Heidelberg, and perhaps as to the manner in which they treat this Standard in their preaching, then we can see that there may indeed be much occasion for reformation. We receive the impression that when these men preach they preach on the Catechism rather than "the sum of christian doctrine comprehended in the Heidelberg Catechism." We contend that where the latter is faithfully practised, the complaint of these men will have no ground. If the material of the Catechism is found by them to be untimely, out of date, the reason lies only with them.

Concerning the Election of Elders and Deacons.

In *The Banner* of September 12th, Professor Martin Monsma writes a guest editorial on the timely subject designated above.

That it is "timely" is due to the fact that soon our consistories will be required to present to their respective congregations nominations for the offices of elder and deacon.

In our judgment Professor Monsma succeeds pretty well in stressing the importance of the consistorial and congregational calling to nominate and choose men whom the King of the Church has gifted and qualified to serve in these holy offices. Writes he, "Carelessness in the selection of nominees for the officers in our churches would not only be a sign of spiritual decline, but it would also accelerate that spiritual decline." He concludes, therefore, that "the question as to the specific task of elders and deacons is therefore doubtless very important when we consider the matter of nominations for these offices."

Professor Monsma builds his editorial around the thought expressed in the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day XII and Question and Answer 31, where specifically the three-fold office of Christ is taught. Christ is our chief Prophet, our only High Priest, and our eternal King. Mr. Monsma shows how He is pleased to govern His Church through these offices. The minister reflects the Prophetic office; the elder, the Kingly office; and the deacon, the High Priestly office.

The writer then proceeds to point up the qualifications of the elder and deacon. On the basis of I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 he concludes that "elders must be without reproach, blameless, of good testimony from them that are without, temperate, self-controlled, orderly, soberminded, not contentious and given to quarreling: gentle, not soon angry or self-willed, ruling their own houses well, holding to the faithful Word, apt to teach, able to exhort in the sound doctrine and to convict the gainsayers."

On the basis of I Timothy 3:8-12 and Acts 6:3, concerning the deacons he concludes: "Deacons must be men of good report, full of the Spirit, full of wisdom, grave, holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience, ruling their children and houses well, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, and not greedy of filthy lucre."

Professor Monsma further emphasizes the importance of the offices of elder and deacon by pointing up the facts that they who serve in them bear great responsibility, and requiring of them a measure of sacrifice and self-denial; and yet, offices in which God is highly favoring those who serve in them. The writer rebukes those who sometimes belittle and make humorous remarks concerning those who fill the offices. And he also points up the high privilege of those who serve in the government of the Church of Christ, and who are the special representatives in the dispensing of His merciful kindness, love and compassion toward His children in need and trouble.

The editorial further brings out "that not all of us are equally well qualified for these sacred offices." It also criticizes any mistaken assumptions one may have concerning the selection of brethren for the office of elder and deacon.

A very common assumption, according to Mr. Monsma, is that everyone in good and regular standing is suitable to serve in the offices, and therefore should be given a chance

to serve. Though the writer grants that consistory work does have a salutary effect on those engaged in it, yet he maintains that it will not do to call men to office because it will do them good and because they need experience. He feels that those who reason thus "do not reckon sufficiently with the fact that the Lord's work is sacred and that we should nominate only those concerning whom we may believe that they have received from God a measure of the necessary qualifications. And surely, a consistory may not by-pass well qualified men for those less qualified just because the latter need to have their spiritual life stimulated and built up."

Professor Monsma certainly does not go along with the very prevalent idea that almost anyone can serve in the office of deacon. Writes he, "In some churches almost any younger man of acceptable conduct and good judgment and with some bookkeeping ability is considered a good candidate for the deacon's office. And the majority of consistories find it much harder to settle on a slate of nominees for the elder's office than for the deacon's office." And he asks, "May not this experience be due in some instances to the fact that we have divested the deacon's office of its primary significance, namely that it is the office of Christ's mercy and compassion? The deacon's office, rightly conceived of and functioning according to God's will, certainly requires a large measure of spiritual knowledge and experience. And some older men; although they know nothing of good bookkeeping methods, make far better deacons than do their younger, inexperienced brethren, who are perhaps experts at bookkeeping."

The writer does not mean to discourage the nomination and calling to office of the younger men. For he concludes, "Many younger men are better qualified for both the elder's office and the deacon's office than certain older men." Nevertheless, he would warn consistories and congregations to consider and choose men who have the best qualifications for these holy offices. He closes his editorial with an exhortation to congregations to consider very seriously the nominations presented by the consistories, and make use of their right of approbation. It is both a privilege and a duty to approve or object to those of whom it is known that they are or are not qualified to serve.

We believe the thought expressed in the editorial should also be seriously taken to heart by all our own people as the time for nomination and election again approaches.

M.S.

Eastern Ladies' League

Ladies reserve the evening of October 23 for our Fall League meeting to be held at Southwest Protestant Reformed Church. Rev. B. Woudenberg will be the speaker.

Mrs. H. Velthouse
Vice-Secretary.