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MEDITATION

SUPPLICATION FOR CONSOLATION

"Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work."

II Thess. 2:16, 17

The main thrust of Paul's prayer here is that the Thessalonians may be consoled.

And well he might, for they were in awful straits. He speaks of "all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure"; verse 4 of chapter 1. Also in verse 5 "for which ye also suffer," and in verse 6 "that trouble you." And in chapter 2 "that ye be not soon shaken in mind and troubled."

Hence, Paul supplicates Christ and God our Father that the Thessalonians may be consoled in their hearts and set firm on the only foundation unto all good words and work.

* * * *

Let us look at the word order first. That is lost in our translation where we read simply: Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, etc. However, here is the order of words as the Holy Ghost expressed it: Himself now our Lord Jesus Christ, etc. That is important, because in many languages the emphasis falls on either the first or the last word in the sentence, mostly the first. Stresses the fact in this instance that Jesus Christ our Lord is, in fact, the Lord and Ruler of the Christian Church. And that thought is in complete harmony with Scripture. See, f.i., Ephes. 1:20-23: "Which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places. Far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named not only in this world but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all

things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."

That Lord now, Paul addresses first of all. He is the first and the high tribunal.

That raises a question: why Christ first in this petition and then God? The petition reads: Now our Lord Jesus Christ and God even our Father! Is that not strange? Should not God come first?

And the answer: no, that is not strange. Christ comes first, not because He is greater than the Triune God: the thought is blasphemy. But that is the established order: "No one cometh to the Father but by Me!"

See II Cor. 13:13: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all, Amen!" Note the same order as in my text.

* * * *

And so Paul addresses the Mediator between God and man in behalf of these poor and yet so rich Thessalonians that He may console their troubled hearts and minds.

And what is the ground of that petition?

This: "which hath loved us."

Refers first of all to the Thessalonians. God had shown that love clearly. He had sent Paul to them and they were called from darkness to light. And through the power of both Word and Spirit they had been formed into the church that was at Thessalonica.

Second, God had shown that love to them by the sending of His Son into the world *for them*. Certainly a proof that God loved us. For He came and went to the Cross of Golgotha, there to pay for all our sins and guilt and to merit eternal salvation for us.

Third, it refers to all Christ's and God's word and work from the very beginning of time. Listen to this: God who at sundry times and diverse manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets . . ." All that revelation was a token of His eternal love for us.

But, finally, it refers to the depths of love of God from everlasting to everlasting. Attend to this: "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee!" Jeremiah 31:3.

And here is the second ground for Paul's prayer. "Hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace."

Everlasting consolation, what is it?

The word *consolation* means to call someone alongside one's self in order to dry his tears and to fold such a one into one's bosom.

And note that this consolation is called everlasting.

From all eternity, as old as God is, before this world was created, God's thoughts were all for your and my consolation. From all eternity it was God's plan to call you alongside Him in order to speak to you His comfortable words of consolation. You can see that clearly when Jesus came to earth. Remember His comfortable words: Be of good courage, my son, all your sins are forgiven you? That is the expression in time of that which is in God from everlasting.

That consolation for God's own is further shown in the incarnation of the Son of God. Still further in the gift of the Holy Ghost on Pentecost. Then further in our own regeneration, and finally it will be shown to angels and devils, to the good and to the wicked in the day of Christ. Then the whole Universe will see how God always planned to call the poor church alongside Him in order to dry their tears and to speak eternal words of comfort to them, words that will make heaven musical forever.

* * * *

And this also is given to the Thessalonians: good hope in grace. Yes, your English Bible says *through* grace, but that is not correct. The original has it: *in* grace.

Hope, and good hope, what is it?

Ah, but there is a beautiful story.

Hope is the yearning love of God which is spread abroad in our hearts through the Holy Ghost that is given unto us.

Hope is essentially longing for God! Oh, I can understand that Jesus calls heaven the simple seeing of God! Attend to the beatitudes: Blessed are the pure in heart for *they shall see God!*

And God gives that to us: He gives us good hope. Ah yes, that hope of the Christian is good hope indeed.

And that good hope you experience *in grace!*

You know, grace, the grace of God is the very fountain of all salvation with all its blessings. Everything lovely and beautiful and attractive in the entire economy of salvation springs from that grace as from a fountain.

Grace is the lovely Godhead Himself. And out of the

depth of that Godhead comes the Water of the river of Life, and that is Christ Jesus our Lord.

Grace is that atmosphere of salvation.

When you have read your Bible with a believing heart and you close its covers, then the grace of the good hope steals into your heart. Then you look towards the heavens and meditate on the coming of the Savior from heaven. Then the good hope in the atmosphere of God Himself causes you to whisper: Come quickly, Lord Jesus!

* * * *

Now then, what is the content of this petition?

Comfort your hearts!

That is the same word as consolation, that is, the calling alongside one's self in order to whisper good words of encouragement and comfort.

Paul means to say: O Thessalonians! that Christ Himself and our Father in heaven may call you alongside of Himself in order to comfort your hearts that are now so troubled because of afflictions and tribulations you endure for His name's sake!

Your hearts!

That is important. The heart is you in the very depth of your being. When you are troubled in your heart you are at a complete loss what to think or to do.

And it is the fervent prayer of Paul that these troubled hearts may be enwrapped in the bosom of Christ and of God our Father!

And that is good!

I can imagine that your fathers and my fathers so went to the stake and the scaffolds of the persecutors, and died singing the Psalms of David!

When you rest in the bosom of God you are not afraid of anything or anyone. Then your tears are dried and you experience heaven in principle.

And that is what Paul wants for them.

And for us all.

* * * *

But he prays for more than that.

Stablish you in every good word and work.

Stablish you means that you are founded, that your feet are set on a rock, and the Rock is Christ Himself.

If that happens you are able to stand, and to stand firmly against all the onslaughts of the devil and of the world and the flesh. Then nothing can unsettle you or trouble you. Then you stand and say with the prophets: I shall not be moved even though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.

In every good word and work.

That's next. And that is beautiful.

I can imagine that Stephen was so stablished.

While they aimed the rocks and the stones at his poor head, he stood on the Rock that is Christ. And all we see and hear are good works and words.

While he bleeds and while he is mortally bruised by the stones of the cruel persecutors, he speaks his good words, and what wonderful words they were: "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge!"

When you rest in the bosom of God and stand on the Rock, which is Christ, you can pray for your persecutors, then you can reward good for evil. Then you are worthy followers of Jesus who did not scold again when He was scolded.

Then you are worthy followers of God.

Then your life is an echo of Him who said through the prophets: They have given Me hatred for My love!

Then you have good works too. Then you echo Christ's good works: "Then I restored that which I did not take away!"

Then God is pleased with you, for He saw His own image! Amen. G.V.

A SALVATION FOR THE WORLD

Unto God our Saviour
Sing a joyful song;
Wondrous are His doings,
For His arm is strong.
He has wrought salvation,
He has made it known,
And before the nations
Is His justice shown.

Joyful, all ye people,
Sing before the Lord;
Shout and sing His praises
Now in glad accord;
With the harp and trumpet
Joyful praises bring,
Come, rejoice before Him,
God, the Lord your King.

Waves of mighty ocean,
Earth with fulness stored,
Floods and fields and mountains,
Sing before the Lord;
For He comes with justice,
Evil to redress,
And to judge the nations
In His righteousness.

Psalm 98

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CONTENTS

MEDITATION —

Supplication for Consolation.....409
Rev. G. Vos

EDITORIALS —

The Hymn Question Before Our Synod.....412
Rev. H. Hoeksema

OUR DOCTRINE —

The Book of Revelation.....414
Rev. H. Hoeksema

A CLOUD OF WITNESSES —

Led Through the Sea.....417
Rev. B. Woudenberg

FROM HOLY WRIT —

Exposition of I Timothy.....419
Rev. G. Lubbers

IN HIS FEAR —

God's Royal Priesthood (7).....421
Rev. J. A. Heys

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH —

The Church and the Sacraments.....423
Rev. H. Veldman

SPECIAL ARTICLE —

An Evaluation of the Modern Educational Process (cont.) 425
Rev. R. C. Harbach

DECENCY AND ORDER —

Confessing the Reformed Religion.....427
Rev. G. Vanden Berg

ALL AROUND US —

Synod of 1961429
Rev. H. Hanko

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES.....432

Mr. J. M. Faber

EDITORIALS

The Hymn Question Before Our Synod

The Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches, 1961, is again a matter of history.

After a prayer service, on Tuesday evening, June 6, in the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Mich., which was conducted by the Rev. C. Hanko, the Synod opened its sessions the following morning, June 7. A "moderamen" was chosen consisting of the Rev. M. Schipper, president, the Rev. H. H. Kuiper, vice president, the Rev. J. A. Heys, clerk, and the Rev. H. Veldman, assistant clerk. Under the very able leadership of the chairman, the Rev. M. Schipper, the business of Synod was conducted in an orderly way and on Friday, June 16, the Synod was closed with prayer and thanksgiving.

During the entire Synod it was very evident that the Lord our God heard our prayers and His blessing rested upon us. To be sure, not all thought and expressed their opinion in the same way on the different matters that were brought to the attention of Synod. But the love of God in Christ and the love of the brethren reigned in our hearts. Personally, I am of the opinion that the Synod of 1961 was one of the most harmonious synods we ever had.

It is not my purpose to discuss in this editorial the various matters that were decided. Perhaps, I may do so in some future article, the Lord willing, after the Acts of Synod have been published, which, of course, will be available to all our people. But there is one item, that was tabled by Synod for the very purpose that the matter involved may be publicly discussed by all our people before a final decision is taken. That is the matter of the "hymn question." This question I will now introduce in the hope that as many as possible will express their opinion *pro* and *con* and will take part in the discussion.

The matter of the hymn question first of all concerns a proposed change in Art. 69 of the Church Order which reads as follows:

"In the churches only the 150 Psalms of David, the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Twelve Articles of Faith, the Song of Mary, Zacharias, and Simeon, the morning and evening Hymns, and the Hymn of Prayer before the service shall be sung."

This matter was brought to Synod, first of all, in 1959 when a committee was appointed to study the matter of the revision of article 69 especially with a view to the hymn question. This committee reported to Synod in 1960. Then, at the Synod of 1960, a motion was made and carried to refer this matter back to the Study Committee to furnish the grounds and report to the next Synod.

This the committee did, and they reported as follows:

"The Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches convened in First Church, Grand Rapids, Mich., June 7, 1961.

"Esteemed Brethren:

"Our committee originally appointed to study the proposed change of Article 69 of the Church Order was given the following mandate by the Synod of 1960: 'A motion is made to refer this matter back to the Study Committee to furnish grounds, and report to the next Synod. Carried.' Art. 85.

"Our original report can be found in Supplement XXIV of the Acts of Synod of 1960 and we will not return to it here.

"I. We would however, propose one change in the proposed revision we advised last year. That change is to make the word 'hymns' to read 'songs.' Our reasons for this change are:

"1. There is some misunderstanding regarding the use of the word 'hymns.' Although the word can, no doubt, be used for versification of Scripture, it has come to mean much more in our day. And although the word is clearly defined in the article itself, we wish to leave no room for misinterpretation.

"2. There is, by the change of this word, no fundamental change in the article itself.

"II. With respect to the grounds we were asked to draw up in support of this change of Article 69, we advise Synod to adopt the following:

"1. It is the express purpose of this revision to keep from our worship services the hymns commonly in use in other churches which are not faithful versifications of Scripture. Our reasons for this can be found under 'B' of our original report, and there is no need to quote them here.

"2. The grounds for including versification of Scripture are the following:

"a) We are already singing them in our churches contrary to the original Article 69. Examples: 'Praise God from whom all blessings flow'; 'The Lord's Prayer.'

"b) There are other parts of Scripture which are written in poetry and which are suitable for versification. Examples: 1) The song of Moses. 2) Habakkuk. 3) The songs of Mary and Zacharias. 4) Parts of I Corinthians 15. 5) Parts of Romans 8. 6) Parts of the book of Revelation.

"c) The Psalms speak of the revelation of God from the viewpoint of the types and shadows of the Old Dispensation. The New Testament Scriptures, written after the fulfillment of the promise, speak more clearly and directly of that promise since the shadows fell away. While it is not impossible to interpret the Psalms in the light of the New Dispensation, there cannot possibly be anything wrong with using other parts of Scripture including the New Testament

Scriptures as a basis for the versifications to be used in the church.

"d) It is evidently a legitimate occupation of the church organism to provide the church here on earth with songs to sing even in its worship services. This task ought not to be discouraged by limitations binding the church to the Psalms.

"3. Our grounds for the phrase '*in each case the general synod being the judge*' are:

"a) No individual congregation should introduce additional songs by itself.

"b) The Synod must have the authority to determine the worth of any particular song.

"c. This will safe-guard the introduction of unsavory songs into the church.

"4. As far as the original redaction of Article 69 is concerned, we point Synod to the following:

"a) The '150 Psalms of David' evidently refers to the Dutch Psalm Book.

"b) The other songs mentioned are not available to the English-speaking church.

"c) We have not adhered to the literal reading of Article 69 since the beginning of our existence as Protestant Reformed Churches.

"5. The Psalms of David are mentioned specifically in the proposed revision of this article because the emphasis should fall on them in all our singing.

"6. Finally, we hope that the clarification of this article through the proposed revision will:

"a) Keep our churches and our people from bringing into the church the hymns in common use in the American church world.

"b) Inspire and encourage talented people within our fellowship to add to the songs we already have.

"May God's richest blessing rest upon your Synod, and may you be guided by the Spirit of truth in all your decisions."

Thus far the report.

On the advice of the Committee of Pre-advice this report was virtually entirely adopted. The only exception is that Synod preferred to retain the term "hymn" instead of the word "songs" as the original committee advised.

But a rather long discussion ensued when the original motion proposed by the committee to the Synod of 1960 was being debated. This proposed motion may be found in Article 85 of the Acts of Synod, 1960. It reads as follows: "A motion is made to adopt the advice to change Article 69 of the Church Order to read: 'In the churches only the 150 Psalms of David shall be sung, as also such Hymns which are faithful versifications of the Holy Scriptures, in each case the General Synod being the judge, on the basis of the grounds proposed by the committee'."

Now, one would think that if the grounds which the committee proposed to substantiate the motion were valid and true and were adopted by Synod, as they were, the motion must necessarily be adopted. If not, the Synod merely adopted grounds without a motion. Yet, this was not the case: while the grounds were adopted as valid and true, more than one argued against the motion proper. And the grounds on which they argued certainly could not possibly be against the motion as such. How could one possibly be against the singing of songs in the worship of the church which are: 1. faithful versifications of Scripture, and 2. the correctness and validity of which are to be judged by the Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches? This is, evidently, impossible. But the grounds, as far as I remember, were twofold, namely, 1. There is sufficient material in the 150 Psalms of David, so that there is no need of other songs or hymns, and, 2. The peace of the churches: if hymns should be introduced by our Synod even though they were faithful versifications of Holy Scripture, and although in each case the approval of Synod would be required, the churches and the people would, nevertheless, be disturbed and afraid that heresy would be introduced into our Protestant Reformed Churches.

As the first ground, it was admitted that in our Psalter nothing can be found on the resurrection of Christ that can be sung on Easter Sunday, nor can anything be found on the Holy Spirit that can properly be sung on the day of Pentecost. But for the rest our present Psalter is entirely sufficient. Now, let us suppose for a moment that this is true (which it is not), would not this be sufficient ground to compose some hymns that must be approved by the Synod of our Churches that may be sung in our public worship? Is not the resurrection of Christ, Who "was raised for our justification," one of the most fundamental doctrines of all Scripture? Does it not occur as such in our Confessions? The Heidelberg Catechism has this to say on the resurrection of Christ: "What does the resurrection of Christ profit us? First, by his resurrection he has overcome death, that he might make us partakers of that righteousness which he had purchased for us by his death; secondly, we are also by his power raised up to a new life; and lastly, the resurrection of Christ is a sure pledge of our blessed resurrection." And also in the Netherland or Belgic Confession we read of the resurrection of Christ in article 20: "God therefore manifested his justice against his Son, when he laid our iniquities upon him; and poured forth his mercy and goodness on us, who were guilty and worthy of damnation, out of mere and perfect love, giving his Son unto death for us, and raising him for our justification, that through him we might obtain immortality and eternal life."

We hope to continue this in the next *Standard Bearer*, D.V.

H.H.

OUR DOCTRINE

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

PART TWO

CHAPTER XIX

The Binding of Satan With a View to Gog and Magog

Revelation 20:1-10

f) That fire from God out of heaven destroys them is evident and clearly stated in the text. We must also in this connection confer chapter sixteen, verse 21. There we read: "And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great." Moreover, we can refer also to chapter nineteen, verse 21: "And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh." All these passages refer to the same end although the presentation differs. In 16:21 it is the great hail that destroys them. In 19:21 it is the sword that proceeds out of the mouth of Christ that slays them. Here it is fire from God out of heaven. The idea is that all the wicked shall be killed in that last day in order to pass through the resurrection of damnation and to appear before the judgment seat of God in Christ.

Finally, in verse 10 of this chapter we have the judgment of Satan recorded: "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." We may note here, in the first place, that by deceiving the nations that live on the four corners of the earth Satan performs his last act of wicked deception and rebellion against the Most High, and thereby fills the measure of iniquity, thus becoming ripe for judgment. In the second place, we must note too that, like the beast and the false prophet, he is here presented as being unworthy even of any public and formal judgment. He is immediately cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, that is, into hell. Cf. 19:20. This is true not of his fellow devils, but of Satan himself, as the prince of devils, alone, even as it is not true of the followers and worshippers of the beast and his image, but of the beast and the false prophet only. In the third place, we may also note that this punishment consists in continuous torment, day and night, and that too, without end, forever and ever. Those who teach that the agents of darkness will ultimately be annihilated and who deny eternal punishment may base their view on falsely conceived humane considerations; but Scripture everywhere contradicts this doctrine. The justice of divine retribution rendered to the wicked can-

not be gaged by man's finite existence, but must be viewed in the light of the terrible nature of sin as committed against the infinite majesty of the ever blessed and glorious God. In that light we can somewhat understand that Satan and all his subjects, the beast and his worshippers, shall be tormented night and day forever and ever.

CHAPTER XX

The Final Judgment

Revelation 20:11-15

11. And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

12. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

13. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

14. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

15. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

John now records here a new vision, as is evident from the introductory "And I saw . . ." History has been brought to a close in every respect, and now follows the vision of the final judgment of the world, before the description of the New Jerusalem and the new creation in the following chapters. The throne here is not the same as the one mentioned in Revelation 4:2. It is here a throne of judgment. It is described as "great," indicating the magnitude of the judgment that is to take place. And besides, it is described as "white," symbolic of the glory and holiness and righteousness of the Judge. He that sits on this throne is evidently God: for He is not further described, but we read that from His countenance the heaven and the earth flee away. And in verse 12 we read that the dead stand before God. This is not in conflict with the teaching of Scripture that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ and that Christ shall appear as the Judge of the whole world. For God judges the world in and through Christ, Who is His revelation and representative also in the hour of judgment. Then we read, as I already quoted: "from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them." The last clause explains the first. It tells us that the earth and heaven so "fled away" from the face of God that they completely pass away and completely disappear. The fashion of this present universe must pass away, according to Scripture. It will be consumed in the final world-fire, to make room for the new heavens and the new earth, in which

righteousness shall dwell. This we may also read in II Peter 3:10-14: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless." The fashion of this present universe, therefore, must pass away. Thus it is presented in the vision, namely, as a fleeing away of the earth and heaven before the face of God. There was no place for them. Further, we read of the resurrection of the dead in this same passage: "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God." John saw the dead, all the dead, small and great, rich and poor, righteous and wicked. He beholds the dead and beholds them as dead, that is, as those who passed through physical death. From this and from the fact that the judgment is described before the resurrection we may not conclude, of course, that the judgment will actually take place first. It is evident from the last part of verse 13 that this is not the case. The order, therefore, is rather thus, that the dead before the throne of God and the judgment are described first, and then it is explained whence these dead here appear before the throne of God, namely, as out of the resurrection. "Small and great" may mean children and adults, but it may also refer to the different stations and positions they occupied in this present life. Or at all events, the description is derived from their earthly position and relative difference in this world.

Then we read: "And the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life." Here we may find proof that indeed all the dead appear here before the throne of God — righteous and wicked, the godly and the ungodly. That the books were opened is a symbolic representation of the truth that all men must be revealed in their true ethical character, in their right moral value. All must be made manifest before the judgment seat of God in Christ. Our works must be exposed before our own consciousness, as well as before all the world, in their proper light. The reason is, of course, that God must be justified when He judges. The "book of life" is God's own record of His elect saints. They were redeemed by the blood of their Lord and Savior. Through that blood they were justified; and they were also sanctified in Christ Jesus. This book is also opened. For when men are judged according to their works, the work of Christ for, in, and through the saints, the elect whom God hath given to Christ from before the foundation of the world, must also be exposed. Therefore they can never perish in the judgment. And they shall see themselves

in Christ as God sees them, as perfectly righteous in Him. Further we read: "And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." In their works the true, ethical worth of all becomes manifest. This is not only true of the works of the wicked; but it also includes the works of the saints in Christ, the works of faith, of repentance, of sorrow over sin, the work of sanctification, in order that it may be manifest that the saints, although their own works were wicked, nevertheless were perfectly righteous and judged as righteous before the throne of God in Christ.

In verse 13 we read of the "second resurrection." In this verse, therefore, we have an explanation of the fact that the dead could appear before the judgment seat of God. They were first raised from the dead. From this it should be evident that all the dead — not only the wicked — are here presented as raised, and that the bodily resurrection is the "second resurrection," in distinction from that mentioned in verses 5 and 6. Further we read: "And the sea gave up the dead which were in it," etc. The idea is that all the dead, no matter how they died, whether they were drowned in the sea or burned in the fire or buried, were raised. That is why we read in this verse that death and hades were cast into the lake of fire, and that this is the second death. And all that were raised were judged. For so we read: "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." This, therefore, is the final punishment. Death and hell are here personified. They have done their work, and they are now completely overcome by Christ, consigned to their proper place, hell. Cf. I Corinthians 15:26. This, then, is the second death. And that second death implies eternal desolation in hell. For "whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." The wicked too are cast into hell. Of the reward of glory of the righteous, whose names are in the book of life, we do not read here, but will read of it in the following chapter.

CHAPTER XXI

The Blessedness of the New Jerusalem

Revelation 21:1-4

1. And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.
2. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.
3. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them and be their God.
4. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor

crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

The description of the judgment upon the powers of darkness, the devil, the beast, the false prophet, and all their host of wickedness, is now complete. However, with this negative result the book of Revelation could not be complete. It must needs end with a description of the glorious realization of all the promises of God, the final and everlasting reward of the righteous. This is presented in chapter 21, verse 1, to chapter 22, verse 5, which speak of the new creation, the new Jerusalem, and the tabernacle of God with men.

In verses 1 and 2 we read of the new creation and the new Jerusalem. In verse 1 we read: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth." The new creation is the end of all prophecy that is revealed in Scripture. Thus we read already in Isaiah 65:17: "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind." And also in Isaiah 66:22: "For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain." And in II Peter 3:13 we read: "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." Concerning this new creation we may briefly remark, in the first place, that it will be a new heaven and a new earth. This is emphatically stated in the text here and in other passages of Scripture. The heaven and the earth constitute the two main parts of the original creation as mentioned in Genesis 1:1. Both are affected by sin. Both will be renewed and united in a higher unity than before. Secondly, it will be radically new. For "the first heaven and the first earth were passed away." Isaiah 65:17; II Peter 3:10, 11. This does not mean that it will be a new creation out of nothing. For although the present world will be destroyed by fire, nevertheless it will not be annihilated. Even as the resurrection of the body is not a new creation, so the renewal of the universe is not a creation out of nothing. Yet nothing of the present world will enter into that new creation. Old things are passed away. In the third place, we notice that in this new creation heaven and earth and all things contained in them will be united in one, namely, in Christ. For thus we read in Ephesians 1:9-11: "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." And thus also in Colossians 1:10, ff.: "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; Giving

thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." And then follows the passage which we have particularly in mind in this connection: "Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven."

H.H.

Announcement

Classis East of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet Wednesday, July 5, at 9 A.M. in the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church. Delegates to this classis will please take note of the time and place.

REV. M. SCHIPPER, *Stated Clerk*

IN MEMORIAM

The Ladies' Aid Society "Ruth" of Hope Protestant Reformed Church expresses heartfelt sympathy to Mrs. T. Kievit and Mrs. J. Kamps, in the loss of their husband and father,

MR. TED KIEVIT

Ps. 116:15, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints."

Rev. H. Hanko, President
Mrs. Jay Bomers, Secretary

O who will lead our hosts
To triumph o'er the foe,
If Thou shalt cast us off, O God,
Nor with our armies go?

The help of man is vain,
Be Thou our helper, Lord;
Through Thee we shall do valiantly
If Thou Thy aid afford.

A CLOUD OF WITNESSES

Led Through The Sea

And the Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward:

But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea. — Exodus 14:15, 16

As a great tidal wave of humanity the children of Israel gathered themselves together and moved toward the borders of Egypt. They numbered in the millions: 600,000 men plus women and children. An aura of joy and confidence shone from their faces. From bondage they had been delivered by the power of their God. They were bound for the promised land, the covenant inheritance of their fathers. Behind they left their cruel task masters, terror-stricken and silent. The dominion of Egypt over Israel was broken.

With the children of Israel there went a great, although silent testimony of the faith in which they went. They carried the bones of Joseph. It was he who had brought the children of Israel into Egypt to save them from the famine in Canaan; but always his testimony had been that to Canaan they must return. Even in his death he had assured them, "God will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you." Over 400 years had passed, and still his bones remained waiting, a testimony of faith that Israel belonged in Canaan. Now finally the bones of Joseph were being carried to their final resting place.

From Rameses to Succoth the Israelites traveled and then on to Etham at the edge of the wilderness. It was as they made this journey that a marvelous reality did appear. Against the azure sky there loomed a great, white cloud stretched as a pillar from heaven to earth. As the people moved, the cloud went before them guiding them on the way. When darkness fell the cloud was transformed and began to glisten with the radiance of a heavenly light. In the cloud was Jehovah, or, more specifically, the Angel of Jehovah. Through it Jesus Christ functioned in His Old Dispensation form. The Shekinah, as it has come to be called, was to be the constant manifestation of Jehovah's presence to the children of Israel throughout their wilderness journey. It was to be the source of continual blessings. Not only did it serve to guide Israel through the trackless wastes of the wilderness and provide them with light in the dark hours of the night, but it would serve as a shield to protect them from their enemies and a shade to shelter them from the burning rays of the desert sun. Before it the believing children of Israel would learn to know the blessedness of dwelling in the presence of their God. Only through the power of God in the cloud would Israel be able to endure the hardships of the journey in months and years to come.

It was after the departure from Etham that Jehovah commanded a very amazing thing. He commanded Moses to turn from the road leading to Canaan and travel to the south. At another time many of Israel might have objected to this move, but faith in Jehovah was high and without murmuring the people followed the guidance of the cloud. Little did the people realize the hardships that this would imply. The route on which they were being taken was long, and it led through hot and barren deserts. Months and years would pass in which they would find nothing on which to survive except the sustaining power of their God. Complete trust and confidence in Jehovah would be the only source of strength. That was exactly the divine wisdom of this way. Jehovah was not to be misled by the apparent enthusiasm of the moment. He knew the hearts of men and was able to discern the weaknesses of Israel. Only by passing through the hardships of the wilderness, could the children of God grow sufficiently in faith to inherit the promised land. Only by tasting of the barrenness of this earth and of their own strength, could they come to rely solely upon their God. The way of hardship was for them the way of grace.

Besides this there was also another reason why the Lord led Israel in the way He did. Yet one more judgment was to be brought upon the Egyptians. As Israel was starting on its journey, Egypt was just beginning to recover from the stunning effects of the last plague. Egypt had been humbled but it had not been brought to repentance. It had acknowledged the greatness of Jehovah God, but it had not come to conversion of heart. In fear Pharaoh had pleaded for a blessing, but he despised the very God of whom he asked it. No sooner did Pharaoh hear of the strange, southerly route that Israel followed, than he eagerly laid hold upon it as proof that the wisdom of Israel's God was foolishness. Ignoring the humiliating defeats of the past, his pride was only too ready to believe again that it could gain a final victory over Israel's God. With arrogant glee Pharaoh concluded of this latest move, "They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in. Why have we done this, that we have left Israel go from serving us?" With bitter enthusiasm Pharaoh prepared his chariots to follow after Israel, determined to justify himself of his greatest enemy. It was of the Lord. Finally and fatally He had hardened Pharaoh's heart. Not Pharaoh but Jehovah was to be conclusively justified.

Only gradually did the implications of the route they were traveling dawn upon the children of Israel. At first they were perplexed, but this soon turned to dismay. As they proceeded there emerged on the left the shores of the Red Sea, and as they looked ahead, they saw the looming peaks of an impassable mountain range reaching out also to cut them off on the right. It was then that they turned their heads and saw to their astonishment the distant glint of sunlight on steel. Soon they were able to discern the chariots of Pharaoh coming upon them in hot pursuit. In a matter of moments

all of the former enthusiasm had died. Conviction and confidence gave way to the same carnal reasoning that had tempted Pharaoh. Only the cloud of God's presence continued to proceed steadily on the way, but the people were confused and troubled, refusing to follow. In a faithless prayer of complaint, they began to cry out unto the Lord, but the heavens remained unmoved and silent. Finally they turned to Moses laying upon him all of the blame. "Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness." Here it was suddenly manifested how strong Israel really was. On the tide of victory the people had counted themselves strong, exclaiming the praises of their God. But now in the face of difficulty where only faith could conquer, they revealed how weak they still were. They were willing to exchange the way of faith for the former bondage of sin. No wonder they could not go directly to Canaan. Israel had yet much to learn.

Even Moses had begun to waver. He had only one duty to perform, to lead the people on, following the cloud. Distracted by the complaints of the people, he had yielded and stopped. The cloud went on alone until it hovered over the sea. This was the way of salvation, a way impossible to the eyes of the flesh, a way that only the strongest faith could follow. But even Moses did not have that. Rather he turned to the people and said, "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace." Words of faith? At certain times and in certain places they might have been. Moses was correct in that he looked to Jehovah for deliverance, but one thing he neglected, he forgot the guidance of the Lord in the cloud. The answer of God was a reprimand, "Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward." This was the way of salvation, to follow the guidance of the Lord even when it led into the very depths of the sea. The Lord would provide salvation for His people but only through the way that He had determined, not by bringing them along an easy road as the fleshly desires of Israel wanted, not by engaging the Egyptians in open battle as Moses had evidently expected, but by leading them through the depths of the sea. That way, we are told in the New Testament (I Cor. 10:1, 2), was a symbol of baptism in the blood of Jesus Christ. In the cloud was the Angel of Jehovah, Jesus Christ in His Old Testament form. Israel must follow the cloud in faith, and following it must pass under it even by passing through the depths of the sea, which sea was a symbol of death. The Gospel was being unfolded that the believing children of Israel might see and learn of the only way of salvation. Although in the shadow of Old Testament type, the chosen people of God had to learn the same truth that was later set forth by the apostle Paul when

he said, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection" (Rom. 6:3-5).

That Moses and the people might more clearly understand, God commanded Moses, "Lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea." This Moses did and immediately there arose a strong east wind forcing back the waters of the sea and making the ground underneath dry. With walls of water on each side, a dry path was made through the bottom of the sea. Meanwhile the Angel of Jehovah in the cloud removed and went behind the camp of Israel dividing them from the armies of Egypt.

Night was falling as Israel began to pass through the depths of the sea. The enemy was close behind them, yet could not approach because the cloud was to the Egyptians an impassable wall of darkness. The sky grew dark above Israel but the very cloud which was darkness to the Egyptians was to them a glowing column of light shining behind and above them to guide their feet so that not one foot was made to stumble. There was humble wonderment in the hearts of the children of God as they made this amazing passage in their journey. They had marveled at the power of God as He had revealed Himself in Egypt, and now even more wonderful works than those they were experiencing. They had doubted the possibility of salvation as they stood by the shore of the sea, and now they knew how foolish they had been, for nothing could withstand the hand of the Lord. As Israel passed through the sea, they worshipped.

Through the hours of the night only the Egyptians were apprehensive. Did they perhaps hear through the darkness the sounds of Israel's passage? Anxiously they sought to pierce the blackness with their eyes. Not until morning dawned and all of Israel had left the shore did God lift the cloud and allow them to see. In complete amazement they beheld the last of the Israelites passing between the waters. But God had hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not hesitate in his determination even at the sight of so evident a miracle. With reckless abandonment he led his army into the depths of the sea in pursuit of his enemy. It was when the last Israelite had reached the shore and the Egyptians were pursuing wildly through the depths of the sea that God commanded Moses again to stretch forth his hand. The wind subsided and slowly the waters began to settle again into their place. Before the eyes of all Israel the chariots were stopped, the horses were covered, all of the host of Pharaoh were devoured by the closing sea. Finally and forever Jehovah was justified of a nation that before His very presence had hardened its heart.

B.W.

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of I Timothy

(I Timothy 1:18, 19)

Continued

We were going to discuss the matter of what happened to "some" in the church at Ephesus, who had cast away a good conscience, and who as a result, and that, too, as the just judgment of God suffered shipwreck in the faith!

What happened to these "some" in the church, among whom are particularly Hymeneus and Alexander, must serve to underscore for Timothy the urgency of this matter, that no other doctrine be taught than what had been given them by Paul, the apostle. This underscores the majesty of the gospel of the glory of the blessed God.

Writes Paul concerning Hymeneus and Alexander, "whom I have delivered unto Satan, in order that they may learn not to blaspheme."

When I read this sentence I shudder; it is truly a terrible reality which is here uttered by Paul. It sobers one to think that one would be "delivered to Satan." None can sin in God's church with impunity. God is not mocked. One puts off the shoes from his feet here; the ground is truly holy and the place is terrible; it is the house of God!

Just who this Hymeneus and Alexander were we do not know. That Hymeneus is mentioned twice by Paul in the New Testament Scriptures, and both times is mentioned first, seems to point to the fact that he was the leader. He and Alexander are, according to the text, guilty of blasphemy. In II Tim. 2:18 Hymeneus is mentioned together with Phil-etus. Here the sin of Hymeneus is that he teaches that "the resurrection is already past"! That was a casting away of a good conscience and of the truth in Jesus! And the result is that his teaching did eat like a cancer in the church. It would be like a little leaven which leaveneth the entire lump. Instead of a godly walk, in hope of the blessed resurrection, men would be induced to walk according to the slogan, "Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die" (I Cor. 15:32). Instead of a godly walk of thankfulness of Christian deliverance men would walk according to the idle dream of Epicureanism.

Now it had not gone well with this Hymeneus and Alexander, and with "some" others in the church. They had not heeded the work of Paul to walk as children of light, and to reprove the unfruitful works of darkness (Eph. 5:11). Not heeding the warnings of putting off the old man and putting on the new man, they had not walked as children of the light. Instead they cast away a good conscience! The wrath of God, which comes upon the children of disobedience, came upon them. They suffered shipwreck in the faith. This

was not only true of Hymeneus and Alexander, but this is also true of "some" others in the congregation at Ephesus!

The term to "cast away" is a very strong one. It means to deliberately reject and cast off. Thus the Israelite who did his neighbor wrong *thrust off* Moses, saying, who made thee a ruler and judge over us. Acts 7:27. And in Romans 11:1, 2 the question is asked: Hath God *cast away* his people? And in Acts 13:46 Paul says to the Jews: "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye *put it from you*, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." From these passages it is evident that the term in our text "cast away" is a very strong term indicating a deliberate act. The text employs the aorist tense. It refers to the definite act of putting away a good conscience and the faith. And in that very act they suffered "shipwreck" as to the faith.

Now the idea of "suffering shipwreck" is certainly that of irreparable loss — not arriving at the destination, the harbor to which sail was originally set. The anchor, safe and sure within the holy place, does not hold. They are drift-wood under the wrath of God. The assurance of the forgiveness of sins is gone. Faith is interrupted. There is nothing left. The thing that they lost in the "ship-wreck" is *faith*. They lost it in the objective sense of the truth of the gospel. That Christ was delivered for our offenses and raised for our justification they no longer hold and believe. And the result is that when they try to find some stability they are simply cast from one error and demoniacal lie to the other. Never finding rest for their souls, they go from bad to worse.

Such was the lot of "some" in Ephesus.

But this was in a marked degree the case with the two mentioned men, Hymeneus and Alexander!

These latter two Paul had "given over to Satan in order that they might learn not to blaspheme."

The question is: what does Paul have in mind when he says that he has given these over to Satan?

In the main there are two different interpretations of this matter.

On the one hand there is the interpretation which holds that the apostle is here speaking an extraordinary chastisement; a miraculous subjection to the power of Satan, such as involved special evils, and which could only be effected by apostolic authority, and, therefore, peculiar only to the age of the apostles. This is the view held by the Romish Church from earliest times, and it was much used to enhance the terrors of the priestly excommunication, and to justify the deliverance of ecclesiastical offenders into the hands of the civil authorities for punishment. Such an exegete as Meyer advocates this view of this passage, of course, without falling into the error of the Romanists. He takes the stand that Paul is here speaking of special authority which is his by virtue of his apostolic office to deliver an erring and

recalcitrant sinner over to the power and torment of Satan. Writes he: "[it is] the characteristic designation of the higher grade of excommunication with which there is essentially joined the ordaining in the power of the apostolic office — that Satan should plague the person delivered over to him with corporal inflictions."

On the other hand there is the opposite view of Calvin, Beza, Turretin and others who hold that the formula "to deliver a person to Satan" is only a more solemn mode of stating the fact of excommunication as expressed by our Lord in Matth. 18:17 where we read: "and if he heed not the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen and a publican."

Such are, in the main, the two interpretations of this passage under consideration.

What are we to say about them?

Dr. Kling in the *Lange Series* holds to the position that Paul is here speaking in the formula "delivered over to Satan" concerning the special apostolic deliverance to Satan. He reasons as follows:

1. Taking his starting point in I Cor. 5:5 he reasons that on the one hand Paul is speaking of excommunication from the church. The "giving over to Satan" refers to the "removal from among you" of the incestuous person (I Cor. 5:2) and also to the "putting away the wicked one from among your own selves" (I Cor. 5:13). Hence, so Dr. Kling, it must refer to the category of excommunication when Paul speaks about delivering over to Satan.

2. On the other hand what Paul has in mind in "giving over to Satan" is more than regular excommunication as exercised by the church. Meyer gives the following reasons for this view:

a. The peculiar phrase itself. It is affirmed that the formula "Deliver over to Satan" cannot refer to the common and regular excommunication as performed by the church according to Matthew 18.

b. That the phrase "for the destruction of the flesh" in I Cor. 5:5 must refer to some affliction, sickness which was afflicted by Satan, so that through the sickness such an one would have the "flesh" destroyed, that is, the fleshly lusts.

c. And that Satan would then, in spite of his own evil designs, need to be a willing tool to terrorize his victim, that God's design of Messianic salvation be his ultimate portion.

Those who hold such a position on the matter in I Cor. 5:5 also hold that Paul is speaking in I Tim. 1:20 of such an apostolic and special form of excommunication. For it cannot be denied that Paul had apostolic authority. For such penal power reference is then made to Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1) and the case of Elymas (Acts 13:9ff.). Here, so it is reasoned, we do not have simply excommunication, but the intensified form reserved for Paul in the power of Christ.

There is much in this presentation which sounds correct

and true. It is, of course, not to be denied that Paul had power of excommunication. All the elements mentioned above are correct. However, to make this also a bodily affliction is not necessarily true in light of the text in I Cor. 5:5, nor in I Tim. 1:20. It should not be forgotten that even what is called the "less severe form of excommunication" performed by the congregation is really not less severe. When a man is "accounted to be a heathen and publican" by the church, what is "bound upon earth is bound in heaven"! The key-power of Paul is no different in its meaning and intention than that performed by the church through her regular offices. In either case a man is put outside of the kingdom of heaven and is thereby placed in the realm of the dominion of Satan. Compare Col. 1:13. A man who is excommunicated goes from the church to where the gates of hell prevail upon him. Let that not be forgotten! And therefore it is rather dangerous to speak of a severe excommunication in distinction from a milder form of it. Excommunication is *ex*-communication. It is putting outside of the kingdom of God and of Christ upon God's command and injunction.

Since the text does not necessarily imply bodily afflictions but simply be given over to Satan's terrorizing, accusing of those who have "cast away" faith and a good conscience, I rather believe that Paul states here the awful implication of "excommunication"!

For let it not be overlooked that Paul speaks here of the purpose of this excommunication. It is that "they learn not to blaspheme." Their evil "flesh" must be destroyed. They must learn to humble themselves before God. Whether Hymeneus and Alexander actually learned this we are not told. We do know from II Cor. 2:5 that the incestuous person spoken of in I Cor. 5 did repent with a godly repentance not to be repented of. But here we are left in the dark. However this may be, fact is that such is the intent of "excommunication." It is the last remedy. It is very severe; it is exceedingly painful and humiliating.

However, these men blasphemed Christ, the gospel and all the truth in Jesus. We are told that they preached a "different doctrine." They did not desire the doctrine of free and sovereign grace. That Christ came into the world to save sinners they would not believe or teach. They lie about the Cross of Christ and scoff at it. And that they will learn *not to do*, either in heartfelt repentance or in their going down under the wrath of God.

If Paul has given such over to Satan how much more must Timothy command certain in the congregation not to teach a different doctrine.

Mockers and scoffers take notice! See what happened to these two men. A similar fate will befall you, should you not beware.

Our God is a consuming fire!

G.L.

IN HIS FEAR

God's Royal Priesthood

(7)

The promise, Peter says on the day of Pentecost, is to us and to our children, to all who are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. God gathers His covenant children in the line of continued generations. He is pleased to gather His children out of our children. And as a result there are also little prophets among us. Attend to the Word of God in Psalm 45:16, 17, "Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth. I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever."

We go the way of all flesh. Our fathers and mothers have been called out of the earthly prophetic sphere, out of all the preparatory stages of that office into the glory of the kingdom, to praise this God from Whom all blessings flow unhindered by the flesh and its motions of sin. That has been left behind in the grave. But there is no void. They taught us God's praises. To us they handed down the glories of the kingdom of God. Faithful they were to their calling. And what they saw on the mountain-top of revelation, what they learned from the Word of God during their earthly pilgrimage, that they shared with us. And by God's grace we have received that truth. We know it, and it has become precious to us. From that generation it has been handed down to our generation. And, according to the truth of Psalm 78 it may, by God's grace be sung:

*"Instructing our sons we gladly record
The praises, the works, the might of the Lord,
For He hath commanded that what He hath done
Be passed in tradition from father to son.*

*Let children thus learn from history's light
To hope in our God and walk in His sight,
The God of their fathers to fear and obey,
And ne'er like their fathers to turn from His way.*

*The story be told, to warn and restrain,
Of hearts that were hard, rebellious and vain,
Of soldiers who faltered when battle was near,
Who kept not God's covenant nor walked in His fear."*

That, by God's grace we have done. And, as we said above, There is no void. The mighty princes, the pillars of the truth, the staunch men and women of faith, not only our natural fathers and mothers but also our spiritual fathers and mothers, those mighty men who penned down our beautiful confessions, those faithful soldiers of the truth who

dared to oppose the forces of darkness and to maintain the cause of Christ against overwhelming odds, they are gone. We stood side by side with some of them for a time, till God called them out of this life. We could literally for a time gather at their feet and listen to the words of their mouths as Israel gathered before Moses, before Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and the minor prophets of the Old Testament times.

And, lo! the wonder of God's grace, when we look back we see that they are taken away; and when we look forward we see our children springing up as little prophets beside us to carry on that truth and that praise to God which we received and passed on to them. Instead of our fathers — who have departed and gone the way of all flesh — now stand before us our children, God's royal priesthood. Budding prophets they are, of whom Jesus says that these least in the kingdom of heaven are greater than John the Baptist. As we pointed out, they are not greater in glory than John in the kingdom. Jesus does not mean to declare that John is not in the kingdom today. He surely is and is a mighty prophet in that kingdom. Though he is with those whose souls are under the altar and cry to God for vindication, John the Baptist in the glory of heaven sings loudly the praises of the God from Whom all blessings flow. Of that you may be sure. Our children, however, budding little prophets that they are, have a richer revelation of the God of our salvation in Christ than John had when he stood by the River Jordan preparing the way before Christ. John must send to Jesus out of prison and ask whether He is the coming one or whether they must look for another yet after Him. Your and my children KNOW that He is the coming one and that in Him all our salvation is realized. John was disturbed because he saw no earthly kingdom of David restored. Your and my children look not for such an earthly kingdom, but now they see Jesus crowned with glory and honor at God's right hand, and they expect Him to come from heaven for a heavenly kingdom at the end of time.

How faithful our Covenant God is!

He takes away out of this life and unto Himself His saints after a pilgrimage of some seventy or eighty years. He gathers His Church in the glory of heaven. But He also continues to gather His Church here below, regenerating those whom we have generated, blessing our prophetic toil with children who also prophesy to the glory of His name. John says in III John 4, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." And that joy He gives us in the children who are our own flesh and blood. Again, how faithful is our covenant God!

But how faithful are you and I?

Is it really true of us? that,

*"Instructing our sons we gladly record
The praises, the works, the might of the Lord."*

Do we instruct them as faithful prophets always do? Do we gladly record these things, or do we do it grudgingly and under silent protest? Do we with resentment pay the financial cost of what it requires to train them in their prophetic office? Surely we dare not give them over unto the world, do we? To save a few pennies, to have more of this world's goods and pleasures we do not deny our children this covenant training which they need and it is our calling to provide, do we? If you do, do not be surprised if this word of God is not fulfilled in your children and grandchildren. Do not find fault with God when He does not instead of your fathers give *your* children to be princes, His princes in the earth, heirs of the new creation and of the salvation that is in the Prince of Peace! This promise of God is for those who say in the next verse, "I will make Thy name to be remembered in all generations, therefore shall the people praise Thee for ever and ever." If you fail in your prophetic office over against your own children, do not find fault with them either for not proclaiming God's praises. It does not depend upon our work. God can and will save His elect children and make them prophets and princes even when we are so very unfaithful. But if we do not provide them with the truth and instruction based upon His Word, we have no right to expect that His promise will be fulfilled in our children, and we certainly will have nothing on which to base our hope that they will be princes of God on the earth.

The world in its schools cannot possibly prepare your children for their prophetic calling. That world does not itself see the praises of God, and what it sees of Him it hates. That world has not the beginning of wisdom, which is the fear of the Lord, and cannot possibly teach your children the wisdom that they as prophets must know. And not only is the world not able to give your children anything that they require, not only is that world in absolutely no position to train your child as a prophet of God; but what is far worse, that world can only oppose you in such training and oppose the child in his office of prophet of the living God. Opposing him in his office as prophet it will also oppose him in his office as priest and king. Of this we will have more to say, D.V., when we consider these two offices somewhat later. But be wise in the fear of the Lord yourselves, parents, and understand that the ungodly can never train God's royal priesthood. The Roman Catholic priest cannot teach your Protestant child to partake properly of the sacrament of Holy Communion. The Communistic leaders cannot teach your child to respect a democratic president. The blind cannot teach you how to see. The spiritually depraved cannot teach your children to be *God's* royal priesthood. But they surely will oppose your child in his calling as God's prophet, priest and king.

There is no such thing as spiritual neutrality. Jesus says, "He that is not with me is against me." Matthew 12:30. What is more He adds, "And he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." How dare we entrust our children to

those that scatter abroad? And how can we seriously expect God to make our children princes in the earth and gather His children out of our children when we give them whose only activity can be that of scattering abroad instead of gathering with Christ? But "God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he reap." Galatians 6:7. Let the prophet of God provide then for his children the instruction that will train them for their prophetic office.

And we make bold to state that any prophet who will go up the mountain of God's revelation, that prophet who listens to God and runs to Him to have his mind filled with knowledge and wisdom, will come down from that mountain-top of revelation with nothing less than a firm conviction that the world is not fit to teach his child and that, cost what it may, he has no choice but to provide, to the utmost of his power, instruction for his child in harmony with the doctrine taught in God's Church. Still more, that parent who with an open mind and a willing heart comes to stand before God and asks, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do," that parent is going to provide not only instruction in harmony with the truth taught in God's Church but instruction that *is* the truth taught in that Church.

We said at the outset that the prophetic office is expressed in I Peter 2:9 in the phrase, "that ye should show forth the praises of Him Who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light." The parent who is faithful in his own prophetic office of teaching his own children — either personally or through the teachers he hires — will realize this and want the praises of God taught his child. The Psalmist says, "Unto Thee, O God, do we give thanks, unto Thee do we give thanks: for that Thy name is near Thy wondrous works declare." Psalm 75:1. God's name is near in all His works. Shall we not provide the budding little prophets, our own flesh and blood, the children whom we love, with instruction day after day wherein they see that name of God in geography, history, civics and science but also in the world of numbers, of letters and words? It is there for us to see. The believing teacher sees it and can transmit it to your children. The world that hates that name cannot provide your children with such instruction.

Prophets! Teach your children and provide for their teaching in His fear. And remember that you do teach them also when you send them to the world for instruction. But what you teach them then is not God's praise. You have served your children in that respect as a false prophet. For here too you have not gathered with Christ but scattered abroad.

J.A.H.

They that trust in treasured gold,
Though they boast of wealth untold,
None can bid his brother live,
None to God a ransom give.

Contending For The Faith

The Church and the Sacraments

THE TIME OF THE REFORMATION

VIEWS ON THE CHURCH

MATERIAL PRINCIPLE

(continued)

In our preceding article we concluded our quotations from the Decrees of the Council of Trent as setting forth the Roman Catholic position of "Justification by Works." We also quoted from John Calvin, in which he emphasized that we are justified solely by faith and not by works. We will now quote from our Reformed Symbols in connection with the truth of Justification.

In Lord's Day 7 of our Heidelberg Catechism, in answer to the question, "What is true faith?", we read that "True faith is not only a certain knowledge . . . , but also an assured confidence, which the Holy Ghost works by the gospel, in my heart; that not only to others, but to me also, remission of sin, everlasting righteousness and salvation, are freely given by God, merely of grace, only for the sake of Christ's merits." Notice, please, that EVERLASTING RIGHTEOUSNESS AND SALVATION ARE FREELY GIVEN BY GOD, MERELY OF GRACE, ONLY FOR THE SAKE OF CHRIST'S MERITS.

In Lord's Day 23 the truth of our justification by faith is beautifully set forth in one of the beautiful Lord's Days of our Catechism. In answer to Question 60: How art thou righteous before God?, we read: "Only by a true faith in Jesus Christ; so that, though my conscience accuse me, that I have grossly transgressed all the commandments of God, and kept none of them, and am still inclined to all evil; notwithstanding, God, without any merit of mine, but only of mere grace, grants and imputes to me, the perfect satisfaction, righteousness and holiness of Christ; even so, as if I never had had, nor committed any sin: yea, as if I had fully accomplished all that obedience which Christ has accomplished for me: inasmuch as I embrace such benefit with a believing heart." And, then, to emphasize the truth that we are justified solely by faith, without any merit on our part, the Heidelberg asks Question 61: Why sayest thou, that thou art righteous by faith only? And the answer reads: "Not that I am acceptable to God, on account of the worthiness of my faith: but because only the satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ, is my righteousness before God: and that I cannot receive and apply the same to myself any other way than by faith only."

In Lord's Day 24 the same truth is set forth by the Heidelberg Catechism. Question 62 reads: But why cannot our good works be the whole, or part of our righteousness before God? And the answer reads: "Because, that the

righteousness, which can be approved of before the tribunal of God, must be absolutely perfect, and in all respects conformable to the divine law; and also, that our best works in this life are all imperfect and defiled with sin" (it is this truth, namely that our best works are all imperfect and defiled with sin, which is condemned by Rome — H.V.). Then, we read in Question 63: What! do not our good works merit, which yet God will reward in this and in a future life? And the answer reads: This reward is not of merit, but of grace. And this Lord's Day concluded with Question 64: But doth not this doctrine make men careless and profane? And the answer reads: 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.

Also Lord's Day 26 has something to tell us about this subject. Question 70 reads: What is it to be washed with the blood and Spirit of Christ? And the answer reads: "It is to receive of God the remission of sins, freely, for the sake of Christ's blood, which He shed for us by His sacrifice upon the cross; and also, to be renewed by the Holy Ghost, and sanctified to be members of Christ, that so we may more and more die unto sin, and lead holy and unblamable lives." Also in this answer the Catechism emphasizes that we receive freely the remission of sins, only for the sake of the blood of Christ.

Finally, as far as the Heidelberg Catechism is concerned, Question 86 reads: Since then we are delivered from our misery, merely of grace, through Christ, without any merit of ours, why must we still do good works? This concludes our quotations from the Heidelberg Catechism.

Our Confession of Faith, the Thirty-Seven Articles, has also much to say on this subject, in Articles 22-24. Article 22, entitled: "Of Faith In Jesus Christ," reads as follows: "We believe that, to attain the true knowledge of this great mystery, the Holy Ghost kindleth in our hearts an upright faith, which embraces Jesus Christ, with all His merits, appropriates Him, and seeks nothing more besides Him. For it must needs follow, either that all things, which are requisite to our salvation, are not in Jesus Christ, or if all things are in Him, that then those, who possess Jesus Christ through faith, have complete salvation in Him. Therefore, for any to assert, that Christ is not sufficient, but that something more is required besides Him, would be too gross a blasphemy: for hence it would follow, that Christ was but half a Savior. Therefore we justly say with Paul, that we are justified by faith alone, or by faith without works. However, to speak more clearly, we do not mean, that faith itself justifies us, for it is only an instrument with which we embrace Christ our Righteousness. But Jesus Christ, imputing to us all His merits, and so many holy works which He has done for us, and in our stead, is our Righteousness. And faith is an instrument that keeps us in communion with Him in all His benefits, which, when become ours, are more than sufficient to acquit us of our sins."

Article 23 of our Confession of Faith, entitled: "Of Justification," reads as follows: "We believe that our salvation consists in the remission of our sins for Jesus Christ's sake, and that therein our righteousness before God is implied: as David and Paul teach us, declaring this to be the happiness of man, that God imputes righteousness to him without works. And the same apostle saith, that we are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ. And therefore we always hold fast this foundation, ascribing all the glory to God, humbling ourselves before him, and acknowledging ourselves to be such as we really are, without presuming to trust in any thing in ourselves, or in any merit of ours, relying and resting upon the obedience of Christ crucified alone, which becomes ours, when we believe in him. This is sufficient to cover all our iniquities, and to give us confidence in approaching to God; freeing the conscience of fear, terror and dread, without following the example of our first father, who, trembling, attempted to cover himself with fig-leaves. And verily if we should appear before, relying on ourselves, or on any other creature, though ever so little, we should, alas! be consumed. And therefore every one must pray with David: O Lord, enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." In this article our fathers again declare that we are justified freely by God's grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, quoting in these words the words of the apostle Paul in Romans 3:24. And they also state that our only trust and confidence is not in anything in ourselves, does not rest upon any merit of our own, but solely in the obedience of the crucified Lamb of Calvary.

Article 24 of our Confession of Faith treats the subject: "Of Man's Sanctification And Good Works." In this article our fathers declare, literally, that our good works are of no account toward our justification. But let us quote this article: "We believe that this true faith being wrought in man by the hearing of the Word of God, and the operation of the Holy Ghost, doth regenerate and make him a new man, causing him to live a new life, and freeing him from the bondage of sin. Therefore it is so far from being true, that this justifying faith makes men remiss in a pious and holy life, that on the contrary without it they would never do anything out of love to God, but only out of self-love or fear of damnation. Therefore it is impossible that this holy faith can be unfruitful in man: for we do not speak of a vain faith, but of such a faith, which is called in Scripture, a faith that worketh by love, which excites man to the practice of those works, which God has commanded in his Word. Which works, as they proceed from the good root of faith, are good and acceptable in the sight of God, forasmuch as they are all sanctified by his grace; howbeit they are of no account towards our justification. For it is by faith in Christ that we are justified, even before we do good works; otherwise they could not be good works, any more than the fruit of a tree can be good, before the tree itself is good. Therefore we

do good works, but not to merit by them, (for what can we merit?) nay, we are beholden to God for the good works we do, and not he to us, since it is he that worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Let us therefore attend to what is written: when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do. In the meantime, we do not deny that God rewards our good works, but it is through his grace that he crowns his gifts. Moreover, though we do good works, we do not found our salvation upon them; for we can do no work but what is polluted by our flesh, and also punishable; and although we could perform such works, still the remembrance of one sin is sufficient to make God reject them. Thus then we would always be in doubt, tossed to and fro without any certainty, and our poor consciences continually vexed, if they relied not on the merits of the suffering and death of our Savior." In this article of our Confession of Faith it is surely clearly stated that our good works are never meritorious, that they are never of any account toward our justification. That they are of no account toward our justification is because our good works are exclusively the fruit of faith in Christ Jesus, and this faith is the gift of God, so that all our good works are nothing else than the fruit of that which was merited for us by Jesus Christ. Indeed, the fathers do not deny that the Scriptures also speak of rewards, that the Lord rewards our good works, but all this is through the grace of God, and it is the Lord Who crowns His gifts.

The position of the Reformers on this subject of our justification and good works is therefore clear. Protestantism does not deny the necessity of good works. It does not submit to a "rocking chair" theology. Neither does it deny that God rewards our good works. It understands very well that the Word of God speaks repeatedly of everlasting life and glory as a reward. The parable of the talents is a strong Scriptural passage to this effect. However, the Reformers emphatically deny that our good works contribute anything to our justification. They emphatically deny that our good works are meritorious. They maintain that we are justified by faith. And when it is maintained that we are justified by faith, then this faith is not presented as another work, as something we must do prior to the work of God. Faith is a gift of God, unites us with Christ. Faith and works are connected, according to our Reformed Symbols, as are a tree and its fruit. We owe everything to grace, the sovereign grace of our covenant God. Our good works are therefore never meritorious. For it is given unto us of grace, not only to believe in Christ, but also to suffer for His sake. The only merits which we possess are the merits of Christ, Who was eternally anointed as our Mediator, and it is only through Him that we have access to the living God and are heirs of everlasting life and glory.

H.V.

AN EVALUATION OF THE MODERN EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

(Continued)

But there is more that we may learn from Dewey, especially when he advocates the teacher's forming a proper attitude in the pupil to the subject under study, and to all of life in general. The most important attitude, he says, is the desire to go on studying. We agree that this is a very important attitude, but it certainly is not the most important. The most important attitude is that whether we eat or drink or study or whatever we do, we do all to the glory of God; that we seek first God's kingdom and God's righteousness in all of life. However, there is a proper attitude toward study, viz., to go on studying, always to learn all through life. This attitude we must strengthen, intensify and use to enlarge our capacities, so that we are fitted to serve God in the place He gives us in His kingdom.

To develop this proper attitude toward study, we must avoid extremes in the educational process. Dewey urges that we avoid such fanatic devotion to a leader or to a system that there is no room for thinking the issues through for ourselves, but merely swallow down whole the regurgitations of another without rumination or assimilation. A man of originality and unusual power may have such influence on others that they may blindly and slavishly adhere to his cause or party. Such extreme devotion to a man and his work may hinder intellectual progress. "Those influenced by him often show a one-sided interest; they tend to form schools, and to become impervious to other problems and truths; they incline to swear by the words of their master and go on repeating his thoughts after him, and often without the spirit and insight that originally made them significant" (p. 634). This Dewey-an criticism is not without justification. We do not want our pupils or any of our brethren to take what we teach them, or what our ministers believe, and automatically acquiesce to that teaching merely because it is our teaching, or the doctrine of one of our founding fathers. Rather we would instill the attitude of the noble Bereans who "received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11).

However, there is an opposite extreme to be avoided, which Dewey does not mention. It is either to depart from the teaching of our founding fathers, or to take their teaching and pervert it, or carry it to an extreme. Suppose the former were done with respect to the principles of our American Constitution. That could open the doors to Communism and the worst anarchy. Suppose the latter were done with respect to it! That could make such a totalitarian god of democracy that the most democratic would be regarded as enemies of the state. In our churches we have suffered the results of these two extremes. For some repudiated the teaching of our founding fathers, and went to the extreme of "conditional theology," while others perverted the teaching of our found-

ing fathers, and carried it to the unwarrantable, untenable extreme of "antinomianism." It is one thing to flatly and groundlessly reject the testimony of a credible witness. It is another thing to so interpret his testimony as to make it suit our own ulterior ends. But it is perfectly legitimate to examine the valid testimony of the accredited witness, search out its basis, seek to comprehend its depths and make it our own as a result of personal, individual, intelligent investigation.

Another extreme to avoid, as Reformed believers, is that too much education, or too much reading has a tendency to lead one to stray off into the mazes of false doctrine. It is probably true that some who became voracious readers found this intensive contact to be a springboard which threw them into heresy. But that avid reading leads to false doctrine is a *non sequitur*: it does not follow. "Children who read omnivorously" may develop into book-worms; and that is an extreme to be avoided. For the book-worms fail to develop their "social and executive abilities and skills" (p. 649). The pupil must be taught to read well, be encouraged to a wide range of reading out of an insatiable hunger for knowledge and an unflagging interest in the mysteries of God's creation. He must also learn to study to show himself approved unto God, a *workman* (not a mere book-worm) that needs not to be ashamed. The workman must realize a sense of *accomplishment* in the kingdom of God, which he does, in part, by judicious reading, as proper reading *is work*; but this accomplishment is produced by much more than mere reading — by willing the will of God! by learning to will and to work for His good pleasure!

We must now say a word about traditional versus progressive education. Dewey is definitely not of the traditional school system. But neither will he have anything of the idiosyncracies of the progressive system. From Dewey we may learn of certain weaknesses in the traditional system. The traditional school continued for years without a consistently developed philosophy of education. It continued with the implied presupposition that it could get along just as well without a well worked out view of education. About all that it had was a smattering of abstract terminology like "culture," "discipline," and "our great American heritage," etc. This paucity was furthered by failure to develop these concepts; and so educational guidance was provided not from them, but from worn out custom and stereotyped routines (p. 661). But progressive education, on the contrary, "requires . . . a philosophy of education based upon a philosophy of experience" (p. 662). We believe that education ought to be based not on philosophy, or a philosophy of education, but upon a Christian world and life view. We want a truly Reformed view of education — a Protestant Reformed view of education. This being so, we do not for a moment believe that such Reformed principles of education are based upon human experience. This would place our system of education upon the level of trial-and-error, and

would mean that we must proceed from the false to the less false in a continual attempt to approximate if not actually reach the truth. Our principles would then not be based on the truth, but upon results in search for truth. This implies that truth is purely relative, and amounts to that which a man finds, as a result of experiment, to work and obtain results for today. But Reformed principles of education are based on the revelation of God as found in the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments. Here we have the truth and the foundation of all truth. "If they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa. 8:20).

Many educators, with Dewey, would today agree with his criticism of traditional education that it does not approach by half the democratic ideal of American life that the progressive movement does. Traditional education is too encrusted with an autocratic spirit (p. 662f). Traditional education may be contrasted with progressive education in that the former is dictatorial and harsh, while the latter is democratic and humane. It would appear a distinct advantage if progressive education be really democratic and so wonderfully humane! But we are reminded that the spirit of democracy which pervades progressive education is one which, although it is not against religion (which, by the way, should not at all be taught in the public schools), but against organized and institutional religion. Democracy is against the multiplication of rival and competing religions (p. 713). We ask, Where then is the guarantee of the American Constitution that men may come to this land and worship according to the religion of their choice? According to the principles of democracy, is it not the will of the people, at present at least, that multiplied and competing religions exist? Is democracy a vacillating, weather-vane genius? Or does democracy, if truly followed, lead to a merger of all religions to form the one-world Religion of Man? If this is the proper concept of democracy, it is certainly viciously subversive of Christianity. For this understanding of democracy makes "instituted religion" a segregation movement which thrives on social division and renders impossible the promotion of social unity (p. 713). This is a latent if not blatant attack on the Church of Jesus Christ, which God has instituted on earth under the headship of His Son. It is particularly a blow directed against the divinely instituted religion of the Reformed Faith. Modern education brands Christianity and Christians as most offensively *un*-democratic, and intolerable enemies of the American State. Deweyan thought may be neither traditional nor progressive, but it is also neither constitutional nor humane.

What is this modern view with respect to the schools and religion? It is not only contemptuous of Modernism and inimical to Romanism, but, because of its purely Atheistic spirit, also opposed to supernatural religion in any form. It is particularly hostile to consistent Calvinism as advocated in the Reformed Truth. To disparage the truth, it claims that supernatural religion has been emptied of meaningful

content by modern scientific thought. In scientific thought we reach intellectual advance. This advance may cause a certain amount of loss of joy and inspiration, together with an increase of widespread uncertainty. But there is no profit in going back to religious views which have become incredible, and only lead to confusion. This criticism is also applied to so called liberals, the Modernists, for their views tend to emotional hypocrisy, phrase-mongering, and the use of terms which say one thing, but mean the opposite (p. 706). We agree with this last remark so accurately describing Modernism, but disagree with the thought that science has voided Christianity. True science does not have this effect. It is not science, but some philosophy which stands in conflict with the Christian religion. It is the spirit of "Seek ye first the kingdom of democracy and of modern science, and all these things — including the best in education — will be added unto you!" To make this our primary quest, religion must not be taught in the public schools. For to do so is, under the guise of culture, to form habits which are at variance with the spirit of democracy and science. In fact religion ought not to be taught in any (of the private) schools, for religion is unscientific, and all modern science has shown religion to be empty. Religion does not belong in the schools, and this "is not laziness nor cynicism which calls for this policy; it is honesty, courage, sobriety and faith" (p. 706). Is this not a note of emotional hypocrisy and phrase mongering struck here in the use of terms such as "honesty," "courage," "sobriety" and "faith" which "really" import the opposite from that of Scripture terminology and that of the Reformed Faith!

Why is the American tradition so strong against any connection of state and church? Not because of the Reformed principle of "sphere sovereignty," namely that the home, church and state are separate spheres of life, each with its own authority and calling. But this practice stems from the Greek idea that the state is of more importance than the success of any segment of life, or any class. For this reason, religion was not permitted to interfere with the state. The converse was not considered — that the state must not interfere with religion. Thus the American tradition is not based on the Scriptural principle of the authority of these three divinely appointed spheres of life, but upon the heathen Greek conception of all of life sacrificed to a democratic state.

But if religion is not to be taught in the schools on the ground that to do so would be neither democratic nor scientific, then may not, at least, virtue be there taught? But Dewey, like Plato, does not know what virtue is, nor whether it may be taught (p. 708). "Virtue" is another abstraction which the traditional public schools invented to slow up education into a routine existence. Furthermore, and it is wisely queried, If religion is to be taught by the state schools, *which* religion is to be taught? the Jewish religion? Many schools are predominantly Jewish, and are supported by Jewish taxes. Also the Jews are among the loudest an-

(Continued on page 431)

DECENCY and ORDER

Confessing the Reformed Religion

One of the requirements, according to Article 61 of our Church Order, for admission to the Table of the Lord is that the participants shall make a confession of the Reformed Religion. This refers first of all to those who are members of the church by baptism although it applies also to those who come from churches other than those of Reformed persuasion. Confessing the Reformed Religion applies to the practice that is commonly denoted in our circles as making confession of faith. The expression that is found in the Church Order has preference in this case because it is more specific and implies that one who makes confession expresses agreement with the particular creed of their church. Confessing faith in the Reformed Churches involves more than assenting to the broad and general principles of Christianity. It involves agreement with the particular creed of the church as well as the promise to ward off any heretical or contrary teaching.

Rev. Ophoff in his *Church Right* makes the observation that our churches should have a definite set of questions that are to be asked of one making confession and also a "form" to be used upon the occasion when that confession is made publicly in the assembly of the church. His reasoning is that, "We have forms for the administration of the sacraments but not for this solemnity." In this judgment we do not concur. If such a set of questions were officially adopted for use in our churches, the matter of making confession of faith would be in danger of becoming too mechanical. One would then merely memorize the answers to these questions and be prepared to appear before the consistory to make his confession. It is, in our opinion, far better if the applicant does not know what questions are going to be asked. The consistory, by open interrogation, can determine much better not only how well versed one is in the doctrines taught by the church but also the individual's sincerity. It is no doubt true that this procedure makes it more difficult for the one making confession of faith but a matter of such importance should not be made too easy.

A few things might also be said in this connection about the custom of conducting pre-confession classes for those who express a desire to make confession of faith. These classes are conducted for a period of several weeks for the purpose of preparing those who will make confession of faith for that time when they shall appear before the consistory for interrogation. Some things may be said both for and against this practice. In favor of it may be said that such classes are useful in impressing upon the confessors the seriousness and solemnity of the occasion. It may also be helpful in building up confidence in those that are timid. And it may

also be said that a brief refresher course in the fundamental doctrines of the Reformed Faith is always beneficial. In that respect it might be well to have all the members of the church take such a course every four or five years. However, we would also point out that if the pre-confession class serves only the purpose of informing those who are about to make confession of their faith of the questions which they will be asked when they appear before the consistory, it would be better to omit them altogether. Then our same objections hold which we raised against adopting a definite set of questions which are to be used for this purpose. Confessing faith must be a free and spontaneous act—an outpouring of the soul—and those practices that tend to make it a mere mechanical act are to be avoided.

In our churches three questions are asked when confession of faith is made publicly before the church. The first deals with acknowledging the doctrine of the church; the second with a promise to adhere to this doctrine and to reject all heresy; and, finally, a question in which it is promised to submit to the government of the church in case of delinquency. When a favorable answer has been given to these questions the minister will exhort and encourage from the Word of God those who have made their confession to adhere, by the grace of God, to the way of truth and to be faithful even unto death. No form is read.

In the Christian Reformed Church a form for the public profession of faith has been adopted. It reads as follows:

"Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ:

"We thank our God concerning you for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, that you were made desirous of professing your faith publicly, here in the presence of God and His holy church, and of obtaining the privileges of full communion with the people of God.

"You are now requested to answer sincerely the following questions:

"First: Do you heartily believe the doctrine contained in the Old and New Testament, and in the articles of the Christian faith, and taught in this Christian church, to be the true and complete doctrine of salvation, and do you promise by the grace of God stedfastly to continue in this profession?

"Second: Do you openly accept God's covenant promise, which has been signified and sealed unto you in your baptism, and do you confess that you abhor and humble yourselves before God because of your sins, and that you seek your life not in yourselves, but only in Jesus Christ your Savior?

"Third: Do you declare that you love the Lord, and that it is your heartfelt desire to serve Him according to His Word, to forsake the world, to mortify your old nature, and to lead a godly life?

"Fourth: Do you promise to submit to the government of the church and also, if you should become delinquent either

in doctrine or in life, to submit to its admonition and discipline?

"I charge you, then, beloved, that you, by the diligent use of the means of grace and with the assistance of your God continue in the profession which you have just made. In the Name of Christ Jesus our Lord I now welcome you to full communion with the people of God. Rest assured that all the privileges of such communion are now yours. And the God of all grace, who called you unto his eternal glory in Christ, after that ye have suffered a little while, shall himself perfect, establish, strengthen you. To him be the dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

The questions that are asked in this form are a revision of those formerly used and still used in our churches. In connection with this we would call attention to just two things. First of all, the question dealing with the promise to reject all heresies repugnant to the true doctrine is no longer asked. This can only mean that in the Christian Reformed Church those who make confession of faith are no longer required to do this. The reason for this is also obvious from these revised questions for, in the second place, we must notice that a new question is inserted which in part reads, "Do you openly accept God's covenant promise . . . ?" This question indicates that their conception of the promise of God is that it is a conditional offer, an offer on the part of God that becomes valid only upon our acceptance. This itself is heresy for it is in direct conflict with the Word of God which teaches us that the promise of God is His oath-bound word to His people (Hebrews 6:14-18). Hence, it is quite impossible to ask of those who make confession of faith that they will reject all heresy when at the same time they are requested to embrace heresy. Consistency demands that the former question be dropped as it has also been.

There is one phrase in Article 61 that has led to some misconception. It is the part which we italicize. "None shall be admitted to the Lord's Supper except those who according to the usage of *the church with which they unite themselves . . .*" This phrase has led some to think that making confession of faith is equivalent to "joining the church." We frequently hear people speak this way. Young people ask each other when they are going to join the church. This is incorrect and stems from a thoroughly non-Reformed conception of the covenant of grace. According to our Reformed views, believers and their seed are members of the church. The children of believing parents are members of the church by virtue of their baptism for the question is asked of the parents whether their children, though conceived and born in sin, ought, as members of Christ's church, to be baptized? They do not become members of the church when they make confession of faith any more than natural born citizens of the United States become citizens of this country when they reach the age of twenty-one years. In the latter case they simply receive their rights and privileges of citizenship when

they become of age. In the church of Christ the children of believers are members even though they do not exercise their rights and privileges as members. This they do when they attain spiritual maturity and confess their Lord and Savior. Doing this they seek admission to His table and to all the privileges of the communion of saints.

In *The Church Order Commentary* the authors suggest that, "If ever Article 61 should be revised it might be well to make it read somewhat as follows: 'None shall be admitted to the Lord's Supper except those who, according to the usage of the church with which they stand connected by reason of their baptism, shall have made confession' " We would favor such a revision although it is doubtful whether that alone would eradicate the misconception from the minds of many who think that confessing faith is equivalent to joining the church. To accomplish this will require more than the revision of an article in the Church Order. The church must be instructed in the truth with regard to the covenant, church membership, baptism, and similar doctrines. Where these are understood, we will refrain from speaking of joining the church as though it were only a society or some other organization in which membership is a voluntary thing. God Himself places us in His church and makes us members of the same when He causes us to be born in the generations of His people. The obligations and seriousness of that membership must be impressed upon us from childhood in order that when we come to years we may know our duty to confess His Name and seek our place in the communion of His church where we may enjoy the privileges and blessings of the means of grace.

G.v.d.B.

THE BELIEVER'S ONLY COMFORT

Substantial comfort will not grow
In nature's barren soil;
All we can boast, till Christ we know,
Is vanity and toil.

But where the Lord has planted grace,
And made his glories known;
There fruits of heav'nly joy and peace,
Are found, and there alone.

A bleeding Savior seen by faith;
A sense of pard'ning love;
A hope that triumphs over death,
Give joys like those above.

To take a glimpse within the veil;
To know that God is mine;
Are springs of joy that never fail,
Unspeakable! divine!

ALL AROUND US

SYNOD OF 1961

INTRODUCTION

The Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches of 1961 is now part of the archives of our denomination. The decisions however are not dead statutes destined to collect dust in some obscure filing cabinet; they will live on in the life of the churches. No doubt our people are vitally interested in the matters that concerned them as a whole as these matters were treated by our highest ecclesiastical body. The detailed report of all that Synod did will, of course, appear in the "Acts" that will be off the presses sometime later this summer or the early part of next fall. But a brief report by way of summary and comment will not be out of order.

Before we turn our attention to particular matters that occupied Synod's attention, I would like to make a few general comments.

The pre-synodical prayer service was held in First Church on Tuesday evening, June 6. Rev. C. Hanko preached on the text Phil. 2:5. He spoke of the fact that the mind of Christ to which this text refers was the utter humility of our Lord and His perfect obedience which was revealed in His suffering and death for us. He applied this to Synod by calling the attention of the delegates to the fact that they were not at the Synod to serve themselves or their own cause and personal desires, but they were called to deliberate and decide on the problems and matters confronting our churches in the consciousness that they serve God, Christ's church and one another. I mention briefly this sermon because this was indeed the spirit that prevailed at Synod. Anyone who had the privilege of attending any of the sessions could not help but be struck with the fact that, as far as it is possible for sinful men endowed with the grace of God, our delegates sought the welfare of the church of Jesus Christ. This was especially evident because there were many difficult and worrisome problems confronting the churches which required a considerable amount of wisdom and humility. But the evidence of the mind of Christ was clear — most, if not all, of the decisions were made by unanimous or nearly unanimous vote. Our churches can rest assured that the Lord will certainly bless what has been done.

In the second place, it was striking that the committees of pre-advice did exceptionally fine work. These committees are indispensable to the work of Synod. They prepare the way for concentrated deliberation on the matters for decision; they formulate possible decisions to be made; they are instrumental in seeing that the work is done with the proper measure of dispatch and care. In years gone by this has not always been the case. The result was that Synod's work was made tedious and difficult. This cannot be said of the committees of this year's Synod.

The fact that the work was done carefully was evident in the first place from the time the committees took to do their work. Only one committee was prepared to report Thursday morning when Synod began its deliberations. Besides, Synod had to adjourn all day Monday to give the committees opportunity to finish the work assigned to them. While this may seem to some as a needless delay and an inexcusable prolongation of Synod's sessions, it is nevertheless this fact that made Synod's work easier and its decisions more exact and definite. One could not help but be impressed with the fact that Synod did its work thoroughly and carefully and made the best possible decisions because of the preparatory work of the committees of pre-advice.

That these committees did their work well was evident in the second place from the fact that, on the whole, their work was adopted and their advice accepted. Synod seldom had to overthrow the work of the committees and never felt the need to instruct them to re-study a matter and report later.

In the third place, there was on the Synod what can perhaps be called "an evident spirit of progress." Our churches are moving forward. This is especially emphasized by the fact that those who left us in 1953 are rapidly disintegrating as churches and returning to the Christian Reformed Church from whence they came out. We may be assured that God is richly blessing us in the cause of the Reformed faith and the truth of His Word. Our churches are not looking backward and retracing footsteps that once have been taken. We are looking ahead and moving ahead. This is abundantly evident from many of the things that transpired at Synod to which I will call your attention in a moment. But, let our people not forget that they have abundant reason for daily gratitude to our covenant God Who has so singularly blessed us and given us the privilege of manifesting His cause and truth in the midst of the world. But may this also be a further incentive to move forward in faith, developing the truth and fulfilling ever more our obligations as members of the eternal church of Jesus Christ.

MATTERS OF OUR THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL

With regard to the particular matters that were before Synod, we may turn our attention to our Theological School first of all. That our school has had a fruitful year is evident to our churches in Michigan, Illinois, and Wisconsin, for they have had the services of our student, Dave Engelsma, on various Sundays since the first of February. The seminary is now located in a very agreeable room in the basement of First Church especially prepared by First Church for our school. Several cabinets, besides the bookcases the school already owned, were built for our library. This is probably the opportunity to inform our people of the fact that our library has been carefully catalogued, all the mimeographed notes have been bound with plastic bindings, and a catalogue of all the notes is being prepared so that they may

be sold to our ministers and people should they desire to purchase any of them. Many of these notes are of our beloved Rev. Ophoff whom the Lord has taken out of our school. He is at present back in the hospital, although he expects to return home again soon. May God bless him in the evening of his life as well as the professors that carry on this important work.

The first books have also been purchased for the Memorial Library, a fund for which was started at the anniversary of Rev. H. Hoeksema last summer. We want to remind our people of this fund, for it is dependent upon the gifts and offerings of our people and churches. It will be a library devoted primarily to works in dogmatics since this is the main branch of learning in which Rev. Hoeksema was engaged. Any gifts, no matter how small—or large—will be deeply appreciated and used exclusively for this library.

Concerning students in our seminary, Synod made the following decision (Quoted from the report of the committee of pre-advice, which was adopted, H.H.): "Synod shall instruct the Theological School Committee to continue to make repeated appeals to young men to prepare for the ministry in our churches by means of our periodicals (*Beacon Lights* as well as *The Standard Bearer*), this appeal to be done by way of announcement and articles and by personal letter to young men who have been recommended by local Consistories to the Theological School Committee."

Our Consistories also are therefore urged to inform the Theological School Committee of qualified young men so that the School Committee can get in contact with them and encourage them in this most blessed and important calling. But, as always, this encouragement must come first of all from our covenant homes. Our parents are therefore also urged to encourage their young men to seek the high calling of the ministry of the gospel, that our churches may receive shepherds to lead them.

MATTERS OF MISSIONS

Concerning missions, there were several important decisions taken by our Synod.

1) We notice from the report of the Mission Committee that several areas were investigated this past year by our missionary. He worked extensively in the area of Pella, Iowa; he investigated the area of northern Missouri; he kept in contact with the people in Rock Valley. For the most part, however, he has labored in the Tripp-Menno area of southeastern South Dakota. Revs. Van Baren, Woudenberg and Kortering have assisted him in this area. Our missionary reports with enthusiasm concerning his work there, and we have every reason to believe that the Lord is using Rev. Lubbers very fruitfully among these people. We perhaps sometimes fail to realize the difficulty of the work of missions; it is well that our people be reminded to remember our missionary in their prayers.

2) The Mission Committee has long been seeking other

fields of labor. Something concrete is now being done about this by the Mission Committee, and this work was approved by Synod. All the correspondence of the Radio Committee of First Church is being turned over to a sub-committee of the Mission Committee for information and filing. The sub-committee hopes to purchase maps of the United States, pinpoint the correspondence exactly on these maps, and use this as a means to follow up radio mail and to determine other fields of labor. We are hoping to make contacts with believers in the southern states, perhaps among the Southern Presbyterians or Southern Baptists.

3) The Foreign Broadcasting from Monaco also goes on. Synod approved another year of broadcasting and decided to assess our people \$2.00 per year to pay for this broadcast. This is a good opportunity to inform our people that considerable response—some very favorable and encouraging—has already been received from across the ocean. Most letters come from the British Isles, and particularly England, but there is, to my knowledge, also a letter from Finland where our broadcast is also being heard. We urge our people to support this broadcast fully. Perhaps in the near future this column will carry quotes from some of the foreign mail.

SUNDRY MATTERS

1) This year there will be made available some of the new Catechism books to be used by our children in their final form. These books have been revised by the Catechism Book Committee several times; they were in the hands of a reviewing committee that went over them all carefully and suggested extensive changes; they will now be revised for the last time and be published. These books have been used by most of our churches already, but they were not in their final form—only in a form for trial and criticism. A tremendous amount of labor has been put into the preparation and publication of these books, and a word of appreciation is due this committee.

2) We hope to have a new copy of the Church Order available for our people this year. The last edition is no longer available, and has in fact, been outdated. A committee has prepared a new and up-to-date edition that is ready to go to press. It will include again all the pertinent decisions of the past Synods underneath the articles that are relevant; it will also include the new rules of Synod and of procedure at Synod, the revised Constitutions of the Theological School, the Theological School Committee, the Emeritus Committee, as well as all the other Constitutions and forms that now appear in our Church Order. One addition is the Declaration of Principles. Since this form was originally adopted to be used in our Mission work, the Synod decided to include it in the Church Order. This new "little green book" should be in the hands of all our people; so watch for its appearance and be sure to obtain your copy.

3) Finally, our people are probably wondering what happened to the proposed change to Article 69 of our Church

Order which deals with what shall be sung in the churches. This matter has been reported on extensively by a study committee (the report appears in the 1960 "Acts"), and has been discussed in our *Standard Bearer*. Synod took no action on the proposed change other than postponing action on it for a year and referring it to the general discussion of our people. We hope that our people will take the opportunity to read the report of the committee, and discuss this matter both in our papers and amongst themselves. Especially it would be profitable for our young people to discuss it in the *Beacon Lights*.

And so the Synod goes down in history — the history of the Church.

One remark by way of conclusion: I think that our people could show a greater interest in the affairs of the Synod. After all, this Synod is the Synod of our churches and belongs to our people. In it all of you have a vital interest. The lack of interest was shown in the poor attendance at the pre-synodical prayer service — poor if one considers that the church could easily have been filled to capacity if our people had been willing to come. But this lack of interest was also shown in part by the poor attendance at Synod's sessions. I know it is difficult to "get away" from the obligations of daily life; but our people should attend Synod if at all possible, and as much as possible. The fact that there were not many visitors however is also Synod's fault. There were times when visitors came but had to go back home because of executive sessions. No doubt, Synod itself should try to encourage more interest in their meetings — and one way to do this is to hold as few executive sessions as is absolutely necessary.

May God bless the decisions of our Synod to our churches; may we go on in the faith that our cause is the cause of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that it will certainly be victorious.

H. Hanko

AN EVALUATION OF THE MODERN EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

(Continued from page 426)

tagonists against religion in the public schools. What then? Shall we there teach Christianity? *Which* Christianity? Romanist "Christianity"? Modernist "Christianity"? Baptist Christianity (p. 709)?

No, religion must go, and especially every form of supernatural religion. But if we bring about this complete disappearance of the dogmatics of theology, that would not be a sign of growing irreligion. It would be a sign of increasing knowledge of nature and of natural piety. *Organized* religion must have a short-lived influence, since it lacks cohesion. But this does not mean that *religion* is on the decrease. Monopolistic religion is on the decrease. But the religion of democracy produces a fruit of a broader humanism (p. 715). What is the support and stay of this "broader humanism"?

The state schools (p. 723)! But what is the future of education, according to this humanistic philosophy? It is fraught with much risk, no matter what course of action we may choose. For "fortune rather than our own intent and act determines eventual success and failure . . . We survey conditions, make the wisest choice we can; we act, (then) we must trust the rest to fate" (p. 279).

What admitted miserable failure in the modern educational principle and process! It proceeds from no better motive than the good of the state. This is far from the highest good. For whatsoever is not of *faith* is sin. It proceeds according to no standard, depending entirely upon human experience for guidance. This also is sin, for it rejects the standard of God's Word to revert to the wisdom of men. It moves to no purposeful end, because it does not know whence it is, why it is here, or where it is going. This, too, is sin; for the chief end of man is to glorify God and fully to enjoy Him for ever. It has no unifying principle, and so utterly lacks cohesion. *This* is sin, for the true unifying principle for all of life is the covenant of friendship in which God, our Sovereign Friend, makes us His redeemed friends. The unifying principle of true Christian education is the aim to have home, church and school train the covenant child to live as a citizen of the kingdom of heaven in every aspect of life. This is no abstract idealism. It means that the child is divinely called to love the Lord his God with all his being, and evidence that love in seeking the welfare of the church. In the Christian school he is to learn to devote his whole life to the church for the sake of God's kingdom. The school must train him to dedicate himself in total consecration to the cause of God and truth. His Christian training must lead him to know the truth, speak the truth, love the truth, walk in the truth with his family, in office, shop or farm, with his wages, in his contacts with the world, weighing every thought, desire and action in the light of God's glory and the good of the church. It is no education, if it does not prepare and enable the child of God to enter upon life with his wife and children, his money, his home, his possessions, his talents, his gifts, bodily and mental powers, his education, knowledge, prayers and love — all in the service of God's kingdom, as manifested in the church of Jesus Christ!

R.C.H.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On June 22, 1961, our parents,

MR. and MRS. MARTIN CASEMIER

have celebrated their 45th wedding anniversary.

We are thankful to our Heavenly Father for giving them these many years together. It is our prayer that He may continue to bless them in their remaining years together.

Their children:

Mr. and Mrs. Richard Taylor

Mr. and Mrs. Albert Casemier

Mr. and Mrs. John Casemier

Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Casemier

Mr. and Mrs. Alvin Dozeman

Mr. and Mrs. Lavern Casemier

The grandchildren and great-grandchild

Holland, Michigan

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

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

June 20, 1961

The 1961 Synod is history. The immediate effects of the meeting were felt in all our churches, with the exception of Lynden, perhaps. Pulpit supplies were arranged and rearranged, with reading services and two and three-way pulpit exchanges not uncommon. The result of Synod's decisions upon the denominational life of our churches is not yet known, except that we will keep the \$5,000 radio station in Monaco for transmitting our European radio broadcasts. The entire report will be in the Year Book, of course, which you will all want to read.

Did you know that a pre-Synodical prayer service was held in First Church, with the Rev. C. Hanko officiating? and, undoubtedly many of our people heeded the various bulletins' pleas to pray *for* our Synod and our churches, but —

Do you know why so very few of us pray *with* the Synodical delegates in those pre-Synodical prayer services held each year?

Our beloved Rev. Ophoff suffered another slight stroke and has been hospitalized. Plans are to have him complete his recuperation at home as soon as it is advisable. Your greeting cards may be sent to him in care of Pine Rest Hospital, 6850 S. Division Ave., Grand Rapids 8, Mich.

One of Hope's bulletins announced a special congregational meeting and mentioned some proposals of the consistory regarding some building plans. The next bulletin announced that the proposals were adopted, and resulted in an increase in their monthly building fund assessments from two to four dollars. Do we jump to conclusions when we judge that they are going to build an addition to their auditorium which is now serving capacity duty?

The results of a special congregational meeting of South Holland's church were, among others, these decisions: To install a public address system with a loud-speaker in the basement for overflow audiences; to install an exhaust fan in the attic for cooling purposes; to appoint a committee out of the congregation to work with the consistory to investigate various phases of *building a new church*.

This joyful announcement was found in Lynden's bulletin: "The consistory has made a down payment on the former Gospel Hall building. We expect to obtain a permit from the city council to move the building to our plots adjacent to the parsonage property. We are grateful to God for the progress made in this direction, and our prayer is that we shall soon have the joy of worshiping in our own meeting place." We pass this bit of information along to you that we, the "Haves," may rejoice with the "Have-nots" as they count their many blessings, one by one.

The Program Committee of the Reformed Witness Hour announces the following schedule for the month of July: Prof. H. C. Hoeksema will be the guest speaker. Under the general theme, "The Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures" the speaker will broadcast five sermons entitled, "All Scripture Inspired," "The Wonder of Divine Inspiration," "Organically Inspired," "The Authority of Holy Scripture," and concluding with, "The Perspicuity of Scripture." Printed copies of these sermons can be procured by request. The address — The Reformed Witness Hour, P.O. Box 8, Grand Rapids 1, Mich.

Commencement exercises of Adams St. School were held in First Church, June 9, with the Rev. M. Schipper of Southwest Church giving the message to the graduates.

Rev. A. Mulder, of our Kalamazoo Church, was the speaker at the Commencement Exercises of Hope's School held in the Hudsonville Unity High School gym.

All of our consistories in Classis East received an official visit from the Church Visitors, Rev. G. Vos, of Hudsonville, and Rev. C. Hanko, of First Church, as stipulated by Article 44 of the Church Order.

Our Missionary, Rev. G. Lubbers, is currently working in South Dakota, using the Tripp City Hall for public worship services each Sunday morning. Before these 10:30 services Rev. Lubbers conducts a Sunday School at 9:30 for young and old. In the Sunday School a rather thorough and basic study is being made of the Book of Genesis: Creation, The Fall, The Great Promise in Christ, the History of the world before the Flood. Rev. Lubbers thus advertises: "Come one, come all! Learn about the Reformed world-and-life view!"

Lynden's parsonage housed two Rev. Harbachs for a few days in June. Lynden's Pastor was host to his brother, Clark, Pastor of the First Baptist Church in Stafford, Kansas, who was touring the Northwest with his family.

To you who celebrate a birthday in July we offer this poem of birthday dedication by Chas. Wesley, quoted in Lynden's bulletin:

God of my life, to thee
My cheerful soul I raise;
Thy goodness bade me be,
And still prolongs my days;
I see my natal hour return
And bless the day that I was born.

My soul and all its powers,
Thine, wholly Thine, shall be;
All, all, my happy hours
I consecrate to Thee;
Whate'er I have, whate'er I am,
Shall magnify my Maker's name.

. . . . see you in church.

J.M.F.