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MEDITATION

THE GLAD TIDINGS OF JESUS' RESURRECTION

"And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: He is risen; He is not here: behold the place where they laid Him." Mark 16:6

A few days ago I had to spend a few hours in a church and chapel that is wholly modern, and everything there loudly proclaimed its "freedom." I paged through their songbook, walked through the lobbies and corridors, and had occasion to see the photographs, the busts, the bulletin boards, but everything was a commentary on the theme: "We are entirely free!"

It lacked just one thing, and it is the most precious thing in heaven and earth, in this world and the world to come: Jesus Christ! It was religion without God and without Jesus, and without His blood and resurrection!

Outstanding was this: they have no place for the blood! They know not what to do with the Crucified Jesus. You can feel that the crucifixion is to them a thorn in their sides: it should never have happened! Jesus is such a lovely example to follow.

And, of course, since Jesus was killed and buried, they have no resurrection. When they *talk* about the resurrection of Jesus, they mean that Jesus still lives in the minds of His followers, even as Abraham Lincoln still lives in the hearts, minds, and lives of the Americans. But the bodily Jesus is dead. There is no mistake about that. To speak of the historical, bodily, real resurrection of Jesus is folly!

In a word: they have lost the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

If Christ is not risen we are of all men most miserable.

* * * *

But, thanks be to God: Christ is risen indeed, and was seen of Simon!

That was the glad chant of the church at the evening of the day when Jesus arose Triumphant!

We think here on Isaiah, the Royal prophet: God's ways are higher than our ways, and His thoughts than our thoughts. The resurrection of Jesus is the thing that was not seen, not heard, and never would have entered the hearts of men.

I think I am allowed to say that the resurrection from the dead is the most impossible thing a man could think of. Death is so absolute, so thoroughly final! The heart stands still, the brain is the first to decompose, the rest slowly turns to a fetid effluvia, and after the years of death we gaze on the bleached bones of the erstwhile king of creation.

Resurrection from the dead? Nonsense! And the world continues on its dolorous journey. Make the best of it while you may. Eat, drink and be merry(?) for tomorrow you die!

How wonderfully changed is man when he receives the faith of Jesus.

If there is anything sure in my life it is that Jesus is risen from the dead, and that I shall rise from the dead. The grave, indeed, has lost its victory. I can look on the grave, see myself lowered into it, and . . . smile.

* * * *

Come, let us look at a few women of the Holy Scriptures. Carefully counted there are seven: Mary the Magdalene, the two other Marys, Salome, Susanna, Joanna, Mary the mother of Mark. A blessed company of the lovers of Jesus.

Oh, how they loved Him! They wept at the cross, and they are still weeping at the morning of the Sabbath. With broken hearts they had prepared the spices: they will pay their last homage to their great Friend. No, they had made no plans to return to Galilee. It is very plain that Jesus was their life.

And God knew.

I cannot ever forget how God from all eternity decided that the first to see the glorious Son of God in His exaltation is a woman. And that the second appearance is likewise to

women! And, true to the same style, the first man to see Him is the most despised among the true church: Peter, of all men.

Yes, there is a peculiar, beautiful style in all of God's works.

Why the Magdalene first, and then the lowly women?

It is because they loved Him most. We know this style, for we have preached on it often, because we find it often in the Bible. A clear example: the woman who was a sinner!

Imagine: a whore, a harlot, a woman of ill repute. Yes, we have a catalog of names for that sorry breed.

But Jesus says of her: Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much!

And then there is David! The man who loved much, was very humble, and whose name testifies of the love of God for him: the beloved of God! Yes, David was a vivid type of the Son of God of Whom God said: This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased!

Weeping, these women went to the garden of Joseph.

At the rising of the sun.

But they have barely eyes for that wonderful spectacle, a spectacle which every morning preaches exactly the resurrection from the dead.

They are worried.

They have planned everything, and are ready to pay their last respects to the body of their beloved Master.

But there is one thing which troubles them: Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? for it was very great.

A thing like that would have kept millions of women away from this blessed garden. And it shows how deep, how vibrant, how wonderful is their love of Jesus.

Yes, the stone is rolled away, and there are no watchmen: they became as dead men, and they had taken to their heels to Jerusalem.

And the women saw the open grave!

They hurry on; they stand before the open door; they enter, and see "a young man"!

And what a man! He must have been beautiful to behold: he is an inhabitant of the heavens; he is clothed in a long white garment.

The women note the wondrous appearance of this heavenly herald, and, as is to be expected, are very much affrighted.

And then they hear his speech. O, to hear a heavenly being speak.

What sound, what modulation, what music in every tone!

"Be not affrighted!"

Yes, the heavenly things are a cause for fear and fright, and that for two reasons.

First, because we are earthy.

Second, because we are sinful.

And therefore we always read of fright and dread when the heavenly beings appear, or even when heavenly glory is seen, such as on the skin of Moses when he returned from a wondrous interview with God on the Mount.

There is only one instance in the Bible (as far as I know) where this habitual fear is absent, and that is when the Magdalene saw the heavenly Christ. And I think that I know the reason: her overwhelming love for Jesus drove away fear.

But these simple women are affrighted, and the angel bids them to be at ease. There is no reason for them to be afraid of God, or of His messengers. It is all peace and tranquility which he brings to them. He is ready to give his version of the wonderful, glad tidings of the ages.

Yes, the world has reason to be affrighted at heaven, the heavenly messengers, the story of the resurrected Lord.

For God, heaven, Christ and all heavenly things condemn them.

And Christ is the God-ordained Judge of the whole world.

But not these women.

They are the beloved from all eternity. God saw them come to the grave during all the quiet wakes of eternity before the world was ever made. Always God saw them coming, bearing the spices, with hearts that were broken because of the love for His Son. Indeed, it was this same God who implanted this love of God in their hearts. "For they are His workmanship, created unto Good Works in Christ!" And here they are, "walking in these good works."

Lovers of Jesus!

You say: a dead Jesus!

Yes, but it makes no difference to God. They love Jesus nevertheless, alive or dead.

Will you, please, once more listen to this beautiful herald of heaven? "Be not affrighted! for I know that ye seek Jesus!" Is that enough proof? "For I know that ye seek Jesus who was crucified!" This last is the key. If you are a stranger at Golgotha, the resurrection of Jesus means nothing to you. The worldly church hates the blood-theology. It is well. Therefore, the resurrection of Jesus shall damn them in nethermost hell. Even the Japs and the Chinks shall condemn them in the awful day of judgment. They were so near to the Blood and yet so far. They had churches and pulpits and ministers: they always read a chapter or so at the beginning of their worship: and the members rested comfortably in their plushy seats. But Jesus was not there.

The minister was preaching his motley story to the dead. They hated the Blood, and God hates them.

* * * *

These women?

They returned to the men, and told their story.

And the men were so happy to hear it! They thanked the women, and began to sing their hallelujahs: Jesus is risen indeed!

Don't you believe it.

They believed not: the words of these saintly women seemed to the apostles as idle tales! But the Bible says: they departed quickly with fear and great joy. Matt. 28:8.

But the women believed, and the Lord showed Himself to them on the way to Jerusalem: first to the Magdalene and then to the rest of them. Matt. 28:9.

* * * *

Glad tidings of the resurrection!

Why?

His resurrection is our own resurrection. His rising is the approval of God on the price He paid on the cross. If Christ had not paid fully for all the sins of God's elect, God would never have raised Jesus. But now He did raise Him, and that shows that all our sins are gone, that we have a right to eternal life, that we have the adoption unto children, and that we have peace with God.

God is silent in His love.

O the blessed resurrection of Jesus. Are you filled with trembling, amazement, fear, and love that throbs within you when you think on this Jesus?

G.V.

Announcement

Classis East of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet, D.V., on Wednesday, April 5, at 9 A.M. in the Hope Protestant Reformed Church.

Consistories will please take note of this in the appointment of their delegates.

REV. M. SCHIPPER, *Stated Clerk*

Office-Bearers' Conference

will be held Tuesday, April 4, at 8 o'clock in the Hope Protestant Reformed Church. Prof. H. C. Hoeksema will be the speaker. Topic: "Should the Form for the Lord's Supper be revised?" All present and former office-bearers are urged to attend.

John De Vries, Sec'y

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EDITORIALS

Calvin and Common Grace

I will adduce a few more passages which Dr. Kuiper quotes to show that Calvin also taught a well-meant offer of salvation to all that hear the gospel preached unto them. First, there is a quotation from Calvin's Institutes, Book III, 24, 15:

"Experience shows God so wills the repentance of those whom He invites unto Himself, that He does not touch the hearts of all those who are called. Still it cannot be said on this account that He acts deceitfully, for though the external Word only renders those, who hear it and do not obey it, inexcusable, it is still regarded as a testimony of God's grace by which testimony He reconciles men to Himself. Let us therefore bear in mind the doctrine of the prophet that God has no pleasure in the death of the sinner, in order that the godly may feel confident God is ready to pardon them as soon as they repent and that the wicked may feel that their guilt is doubled, when they do not respond to so great clemency and willingness on the part of God."

Thus far the quotation.

Now, in the first place, I cannot see in this passage from Calvin's Institutes any common grace nor any well-meant offer of grace and salvation to all that hear the preaching of the gospel. What does Calvin teach here? He is explaining here the text in Ezek. 18:23. And he teaches: a. That the external call comes to all that hear. b. That this external calling is not accompanied in all by the internal call to repentance and faith: "He does not touch the hearts of all those who are called." c. That this does not mean that God acts deceitfully, for the preaching of the gospel, even though the wicked do not profit by it, seeing that He does not touch the hearts of all the hearers, is nevertheless a testimony of the grace of God, and this testimony comes also to those that do not repent. d. That the godly, through the preaching of the gospel, may know that God is ready to pardon as soon as they repent. e. That the wicked may feel that their guilt is doubled when they do not respond to the testimony of the grace of God.

In all this I cannot discern any common grace or well-meant offer on the part of God to all men.

In the second place, this is also plain from the context. I will quote only the immediate context:

"How comes it, then, that if God would have all to be saved, he does not open a door for repentance for the wretched, who would more readily have received grace. Hence we may see that the passage is violently wrested, if the will of God, which the prophet mentions, is opposed to his eternal counsel, by which he separated the elect from the reprobate. Now, if the genuine meaning of the prophet is enquired into, it will be found that he only means to give the hope of pardon to them who repent. The sum is, that

God is undoubtedly ready to pardon whenever the sinner turns. Therefore, he does not will his death, in so far as he wills repentance."

And in the context which follows the passage which Kuiper quotes (and I do not understand why he himself does not quote it) Calvin writes:

"The mercy of God, therefore, will ever be ready to meet the penitent; but all the prophets, and apostles, and Ezekiel himself, clearly tell us who they are to whom repentance is given."

Let us consider one more quotation made by Kuiper from the Institutes of Calvin:

"But why does He mention all men? God does this in order that the consciences of the godly may rest more secure . . . and that the ungodly may not pretend that they have no asylum to which they may flee, from the bondage of sin, while they ungratefully reject the asylum which is offered them."

This passage is part of an explanation which Calvin offers of the texts in II Tim. 2:4; and II Pe. 3:9.

Let us remember that when Calvin uses the term "offer" it simply means "to present." If we bear this in mind, there is nothing in the quotation which Kuiper makes of Calvin to which we cannot subscribe. To be sure, in the preaching of the gospel, an asylum is presented to the ungodly as well as to the godly, though the wicked reprobate always ungratefully reject it.

Moreover, it is not true that Calvin allows that there is any contradiction between the immutable decree of election and reprobation and the general preaching of the promise of the gospel and of the presentation of the salvation of God to all without distinction. Always he emphatically denies that there are two contradictory wills in God, the will of His decree and the will of His command. It is exactly this which Calvin tries to make plain in the context of the passages which are quoted by Kuiper.

This is true also of the last quotation of Calvin by Kuiper which we are now discussing. In the immediate context of this passage we read:

"But if it is so (you will say), little faith can be put in the Gospel promises, which, in testifying concerning the will of God, declare that he wills what is contrary to his inviolable decree. Not at all; for however universal the promises of salvation may be, there is no discrepancy between them and the predestination of the reprobate, provided we attend to their effect. We know that the promises are effectual only when we receive them in faith, but, on the contrary, when faith is made void, the promise is of no effect. If this is the nature of the promises, let us now see whether there is any inconsistency between the two things — viz. that God, by an eternal decree, fixed the number of those whom he is pleased to embrace in love, and on whom he is pleased to display his wrath, and that he offers salvation indiscriminately to all. I hold that they are perfectly consistent, for all that is meant by the promise is, just that his mercy is offered

to all who desire and implore it, and this none do, save those whom he has enlightened. Moreover, he enlightens those whom he has predestinated to salvation. Thus the truth of the promises remains firm and unshaken, so that it cannot be said that there is any disagreement between the eternal election of God and the testimony of his grace which he offers to believers" . . .

Here follows the quotation made by Kuiper. After this, in the same paragraph, there still follow the following sentences:

"Therefore, since by the Gospel the mercy of God is offered to both, it is faith, in other words, the illumination of God, which distinguishes between the righteous and the wicked; the former feeling the efficacy of the Gospel, the latter obtaining no benefit from it. Illumination itself has eternal election for its rule."

Thus Calvin explains the apparent contradiction between the general preaching of the Gospel and the eternal decree of election and reprobation.

But where, in Calvin, is the offer of grace and salvation, well-meant on the part of God? And that, for all that hear the preaching of the Gospel?

The only possible answer to these questions is that Calvin nowhere teaches anything of the kind.

In fact, everywhere he teaches the very opposite. I emphatically state this in opposition to all the quotations which Kuiper adduces from Calvin and which, as I have shown, are taken out of their context.

* * * *

For the rest, I will not further investigate into the rest of the quotations which Kuiper makes from Calvin's works.

I will rather conclude by making some quotations from Calvin of my own and that, too, all from the work which is probably not so generally known, namely, from "Calvin's Calvinism."

Most of this work is written against those who deny divine predestination and the sovereign grace of God, and especially against Pighius, the heretic.

In answer to the contention of the latter that Adam could not have fallen according to the counsel and will of God, Calvin writes: "What we maintain is this: that man was so created, and placed in such a condition, that he could have no cause whatever of complaint against his Maker. God foresaw the Fall of Adam, and most certainly His suffering him to fall was not contrary to, but according to His divine will. What room is there for shuffling or quibbling here? and what does such quibbling profit or effect? Yet Pighius denies the truth of this position, *because* (he argues) the *before* conceived counsel of God concerning the salvation of *all* men still stands unaltered. As if no solution of this pretended difficulty could be found. The truth of the matter is, that salvation was not offered to all men on any other ground than on the condition of their remaining in their original innocence. For that the decree of God concerning the salvation of all men was decisive and absolute, no one of a sound

mind will hold or concede. For when man was placed in a way of salvation, his having willingly fallen therefrom was sufficient ground for his just condemnation. But it could not be otherwise. Adam could not but fall, according to the foreknowledge and will of God. What then? Is Adam on that account free from fault? Certainly not. He fell by his own full free will, and by his own willing act." pp. 92, 93.

I make this quotation only because it teaches that the fall of man was decreed by the counsel of God. There was no other will or decree of God. And the fall of Adam was absolutely necessary for the coming of Christ. To ask what would have happened if Adam had not fallen is, to my mind, nothing but pure philosophy, not only because this is contrary to the decree of God, but also because this stands in opposition to actual history.

In reply to Pighius, Calvin further writes:

"That the Gospel is, in its nature, able to save all I by no means deny. But the great question lies here: Did the Lord by his eternal counsel *ordain* salvation for *all men*? It is quite manifest that all men, without difference or distinction, are *outwardly called* or invited to repentance and faith. It is equally evident that the same Mediator is set forth before all, as He alone can reconcile them to the Father. But it is as fully well known that none of these things can be understood or perceived but by faith, in fulfilment of the apostle's declaration, that 'the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth;' then what can it be to others but 'the savour of death unto death'? as the same apostle elsewhere powerfully expresses himself.

"And further, as it is undeniably manifest that out of the multitudes whom God calls by His outward voice in the Gospel very few believe, if I prove that the greater part of these multitudes remain unbelieving (for God deems none worthy of His illumination but whom He will), I obtain thereby the next conclusion, that the mercy of God is offered equally to those who believe and to those who believe not, so that those who are not divinely taught within are only rendered inexcusable, not saved. Some make a distinction here, holding that the Gospel is saving to all as it regards its power to save, but not in its effect of saving. But they by no means untie the knot by this half-way argument. We are still rolled back to the same great question point, whether the same power to believe is conferred upon all men! . . ."

Then Calvin refers to the reason why all do not believe. He does so, first, by a reference to Isaiah as quoted by Paul in Rom. 10:16. Then by a quotation from the book of Acts, and now we quote Calvin again:

"Of this fact Luke places before our eyes a memorable proof, who, after he had recorded the sermon preached by Paul (Acts XIII:48), says, 'And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.' Now, why was not the same doctrine of Paul received with the same mind and heart by all who heard it? Luke assigns the reason and defines the number of the receivers: 'And as many as were ordained to eternal life

(Continued on page 297)

OUR DOCTRINE

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

PART TWO

CHAPTER XIX

Revelation 19:11-21

The Final Victory of the Lamb Over Antichrist

As I have said before, the pictures of the marriage and of the marriage supper symbolize the same thing; and they both signify the final and complete union of the church of all ages with Christ. It is a picture of eternity, or, if you please, a picture of the inauguration of eternity. In connection with that view, we stated that chapter seventeen, verse 1, to chapter nineteen, verse 10, belong together and constitute one vision. The words of the angel who is evidently the medium in revealing these things to John, "These are the true words of God," did not merely refer to the marriage and the marriage supper, but to the entire vision in these chapters, from chapter seventeen on, and constitute the close of the vision. It was a vision that pictured to us the destruction of the false church, but also the glory of the true church—a vision that is based upon and finished with this contrast. And in our text a new chapter really ought to have been begun, for the simple reason that it introduces a new vision, as is plain from the very introduction, "And I saw the heaven opened."

Let us, therefore, in brief review the entire context. In chapter sixteen we were given a picture of the seventh vial, which was characterized by the fact that it finished all things. Naturally, when that last vial is poured out, there is nothing left any more; history is finished. The book of Revelation might have been closed there, except for the picture of the new heavens and earth and the New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven. With this seventh vial Babylon is destroyed, the battle of Armageddon is fought, Antichrist is consumed, and Gog and Magog are judged. The whole picture of that seventh vial is very plainly the picture of the end. After that nothing remains any more of history. And therefore it is plain that the chronological order cannot be maintained as the true one. What now is the case? In the rest of the book we are given separate pictures of the end of various agencies and powers that are destroyed by the seventh vial. First of all, we are given a picture of the harlot, the false church, and her end in the great city. Then in our text we are given a detailed picture of the end of Antichrist and the false prophet and the victory of the Lord over them. In the next chapter the vision pictures the history of Gog and Magog and of the devil. And finally, after the judgment is pictured, we see a picture of the new heavens and earth, especially of the New Jerusalem that comes down from

God out of heaven. And when this is all finished, the book closes with an epilogue. All these things belong to the seventh vial. They all carry us to the end. They are all closely connected; but they simply are detailed pictures of the same scene and the same time.

Our vision, then, that is, the vision in the words of the present text, carries us to that end, and pictures the battle of Armageddon, as a comparison with previous passages will immediately show. Of this battle we receive a brief announcement in chapter fourteen, verses 17 to 20, where we were told of the great vintage and the picture was given us of the treading of the winepress of the wrath of God, enveloping a vision of a tremendous battle, so that the blood even reaches to the very bridles of the horses. Further, we found the preparation of this battle pictured to us in the emptying of the sixth vial, when the great river Euphrates was dried up, and the evil spirits proceeded out of the mouth of the dragon and of the beast and of the false prophet, in order to gather the people together for the great battle of God Almighty, and the nations were gathered together for battle on the field of Armageddon. And finally, we also received a picture of this battle itself in the pouring out of the seventh vial, when all is finished and great hail falls upon the terrible battlefield. It is of this same battle that we receive a more detailed picture in the passage we are now discussing, especially with a view to the victory of Christ and the judgment of Antichrist and of the false prophet.

Also in regard to this portion of Revelation there are interpreters who delight to understand the entire passage in the literal sense of the word. They refuse to see any symbolism in the whole scene. What we have here, according to them, is the literal description of the coming of Jesus and the literal picture of the attempt of the nations under Antichrist to strike at Him and to subdue Him. He shall come exactly as pictured, seated on a real, white horse, or at least the real appearance of one, with a real diadem on His head, and with garments sprinkled with blood. In a word, He shall come exactly as described in the text, according to this view. The saints too shall follow Him from heaven, as described, being seated on white horses, riding behind their great Captain to meet the enemy. But in the same way we must also take the order of the text and understand the purpose of the nations under Antichrist to be no other than to fight against and overcome the Lamb and the glory of His coming. There are interpreters who take the most extreme delight in that concrete picture. The Antichrist also knows that Jesus is coming. And therefore he hurriedly musters his forces in the valley of Armageddon, in order to strike down the living and glorified King as soon as He sets His feet on the earth. For the text says that they are gathered together for the purpose of making war against the Christ and His people. However, this is not our view at all. Mark well, this is not because we think anything is too great and too wonderful for the Lord to accomplish, as some of these literal interpreters love to accuse us, but simply because, in

the first place, the text tells you that again you have a symbolical representation of things, and, in the second place, because there is nothing so wonderful in that literal interpretation of what is meant to be symbolism. Let us notice, in the first place, that John once more sees a vision. He does not directly prophesy, but he plainly informs us that he receives a vision: he "saw heaven opened," he "saw the angel standing in the sun," he "saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together." He saw this all. It is therefore a vision. And the entire form in which the vision is presented shows very clearly that it is symbolism. If nothing else, the portion that describes the angel standing in the sun and the portion that tells us of the supper of God prepared for the ravenous birds of the air should be sufficient to emphasize the truth of this conception, that is, the truth of the conception that here we have symbolism. Surely, we too believe that here we have a picture of the final return of Jesus Christ. But the picture is clothed in the form of symbolism that must be interpreted.

Especially the view that the nations of the earth under Antichrist must be conceived of as being purposely assembled here for the purpose of fighting against Christ when He comes from heaven in His final appearance in glory must be condemned. First of all, let us notice that it is against the Word of God. The Scriptures never leave the impression that all the world shall, as it were, expect the coming of Christ. Nor do they leave the impression that the people of the world shall be bold enough to strike at Him or assemble for battle against the Christ in His second coming. On the contrary, we are given to understand that the world does not believe in the coming of Jesus. They marry and are given in marriage and merrily live along from day to day, even in the midst of the terrible visitations of God on the earth. And they never expect that the end will come. So it was in the days before the flood and in the days of the destruction of the wicked cities of the plain. They are typical of these latter days. In the second place, history of the present day corroborates this presentation of Scripture. There is nothing from which the world as such weans away more and more than the idea of a second advent of the great King. And even now, in the midst of the visitations of God on the whole earth, people are blind to the fact and repent not. And, in the third place, it is simply absurd to suppose that even if they did expect the coming of Christ towards the very last of time, they would have the courage to gather their armies in order to fight against Him that shall come in glory. No, the nations of the earth shall be filled with consternation and fear, so that they shall never conceive of battling with Him that cometh in glory.

In order to obtain a clear conception of the entire scene that is here presented, we will do well to picture it before us in the historic order. We must understand that John does not do this. When his eyes open upon the scene, the things are prepared for the final struggle. The armies of the nations already have gathered in the valley of Armageddon for

the last battle; and the heavens are open already, from the which issues forth the Lamb with His heavenly host following Him. And the angel standing in the sun calls to the birds that fly in mid-heaven to gather themselves together for the supper of God. The entire scene presents itself as a painting appears before our eyes. Now John describes what he saw in that prophetic vision. And he does so, not picturing every object in the order in which it actually appears on the scene, but rather speaking first of all of what is most obtrusive and striking. In this scene the great King on the white horse, issuing forth from the open heaven, draws his attention first of all. Naturally, this is the most glorious, the chief element in the entire vision. And therefore, Him he mentions and describes, first of all. Next he has his attention fixed on the wonderful scene of the angel in the sun and his message. And last of all, he notices that the armies have been gathered for battle in the field of Armageddon. But we must not make the mistake of thinking that this is in reality the order in which these various powers appear on the scene. Then, if that were the case, the fact would be that the powers of the world expected and saw Christ in His coming and hurriedly gathered their hosts to battle against Him. But, as we have said already, this is absurd. That cannot be the order. On the contrary, we must understand that the armies of the nations have gathered in Armageddon first of all. This is clear from chapter sixteen. Let us recall this for a moment. The infernal trinity—the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet—have sent their missionaries into all the world, to the nations of Gog and Magog, the nations that live on the four corners of the earth, the heathen nations, in order to gain them for their cause and make of the whole world a kingdom of Antichrist (vs. 13). The result is, however, that under their influence these nations are aroused to battle against Antichrist, upon whom they look as being true Christianity. As I have said before, they think that they war against Christendom; but in reality they muster their forces against the powers of anti-Christendom. Thus the armies of the whole world are gathered for battle. It is merely a tremendous war that has broken out, a war far more universal than we have witnessed in the recent past. A war it is in which the outwardly Christian world will be pitted against the heathen world. The intention of the heathen is to strike at Christendom, at Christ and His people. And to do this they have been aroused by the spirit of Antichrist. Outwardly, then, this war shall appear like any other was. They do not expect Christ from heaven. Nothing of the kind can even be supposed here. The people of God on earth have been oppressed by Antichrist. And now the heathen imagine that they strike at those same people of Christ. That is their sin. In principle they intend to fight against Christ and His people. In principle they have always done this. But that Christ personally is to appear on this last battle-scene is far from their minds. But this is the last battle. What they did not expect at all happens. Christ comes personally with His saints from

heaven in order to give battle to Antichrist and to Gog and Magog both and to consume them by the breath of His mouth. And therefore, if we ask when Christ shall come for the second time, the answer of our text is that He shall come on the scene of one of the most tremendous battles that has ever been fought in the history of the world. Not when all is peace and the whole world is gained for the Savior and for His kingdom, but, on the contrary, when the people of God have been removed from the scene and all the nations of the earth have gathered for the great war, the Son of Man shall appear in glory to have the final victory over all His enemies. For the same reason I have no faith in the realization of a final and lasting peace in the world, no matter how beautiful this may seem from a natural point of view. Already the world begins once more to preach its idealism. And although one of the most disastrous wars the world has witnessed has just come to its close, the humanistic idealists assure us nevertheless that this will be the last war, and that after peace has been officially declared there shall be no war any more. But is this possible? Shall there be peace in a world that refuses to bow before the Almighty God? Shall there be peace in a world at war with the Holy One? Shall there be outward peace without the inward peace of reconciliation through the blood of Jesus Christ? No, positively not! It is impossible. Is it—and this is the weightiest of all—is it in harmony with the Word of God to expect a final and lasting peace on earth in this dispensation? Not at all: the Word of God tells us that we must expect war to the end. The final coming of Christ shall be to appear on the scene of one of the most terrible and universal battlefields ever seen in history.

For Christ appears on the scene. As the nations, rising in rebellion against the Christ but not at all expecting to see Him in person, are gathered on the field of Armageddon, of a sudden He appears. In glory He is arrayed, followed by a long train of attendants. He appears in every detail as a victorious warrior and as a righteous judge. For, in the first place, He is seated on a white horse. In a former connection we have called your attention to the fact that the horse is preeminently the animal for battle, the war steed, irrepressible in his onslaught, undaunted in courage. The Lord therefore comes for war. He does not come on the colt of an ass, but on a horse. When He comes again—and He shall come surely—it shall not be as the Man of Galilee, proceeding through the country doing good, meek and lowly, to save the lost sheep; but it shall be to offer battle to all that have opposed Him. On the horse He comes. And we also have said before that white is the color of victory. The white of the horse indicates that He comes not only to fight, but to gain the victory. That is the meaning of the color white throughout Scripture, as we have said in a former connection. He will meet His enemies as the great victor, Whose victory is assured. This is also plain, in the second place, from His personal appearance. His eyes are like a flame of fire. With them He penetrates the darkness and the

deepest corner of iniquity; and nothing remains hid before the Lamb when He comes for judgment. Upon the wicked world He comes. And He evidently comes to reign and to judge. And besides, these flaming eyes picture to us the holy wrath that burns in His bosom at this moment, now that the measure of iniquity is filled. On His head He wears many diadems, royal crowns, symbolic of victories won in the past. This is not the first time that He has won the battle. Spiritually He already has overcome sin, the devil, and his whole dominion. And therefore, many crowns that formerly belonged to the enemy He has already placed on His own head. The battle of Armageddon is only the grand climax of the holy war this captain has fought throughout the ages. The same idea is indicated by the fact that His garments are already sprinkled with blood. This does not refer to His former suffering: for the garb He wears is the garment of battle and of victory. But it symbolically indicates that the Man from Edom, with sprinkled garments as from Bozrah, has judged many an enemy before, all through the history of the world, while now the final scene has come, in which He shall tread the winepress of the wrath of God for the last time. And finally, this is also indicated by the sharp sword that proceeds out of His mouth. He shall surely not deign to fight as the princes and great of the earth fight, with their swords and spears in hand. No, as also is indicated in other parts of the Word of God, He shall simply consume the enemy by the Word of His mouth. His Word is His sword. For it is a word of power. By it the enemies are defeated. By it they are judged. By it their punishment is executed to the full. And therefore, He is now come as He was pictured long ago in Psalm 2, for the purpose of ruling the nations with a rod of iron and to tread the winepress of God all alone.

That it is really the Lamb, our Lord Jesus Christ, that here comes to battle is raised beyond all doubt by the names that are given Him here. He is called, first of all, the Faithful and True. Of course, He is *the* Faithful One as He now comes on the clouds of heaven according to His Word. All the saints have been looking for that coming. The coming of the Lord was the object of their hope. If He should not come, all their hope would be vain. For then their trials and tribulations have been in vain, and their every hope would come to nought. Of that coming all the prophets had prophesied ever since the time of Enoch. But that coming seemingly tarried. Century after century elapses, and generation after generation passes away. Dark and troublesome times ensued. And yet the Lord did not come. His church suffered persecution because they held the testimony and the Word of God. They were poor and despised. And the souls under the altar increased from year to year. Yet He did not come. Is He then not the Faithful One? Most surely He is: in His final appearance He shall prove to be what all the prophets of the Old Testament and the apostles of the New Testament have told us that He was. Faithful He is, and He shall surely avenge His people quickly. But He also is

True. In distinction from the powers that oppose Him He is the true Prophet and the true King. Antichrist claimed that he was the Christ, the prophet and the king of the whole world. He was the Christ, so they claimed. Many false Christs arose in His absence, according to His Word. But He is the True One, the fulfillment of all prophecy, the Christ. He is to come in glory, according to His own promise. Still more, He is to come as the Word of God. Especially in this name we do recognize our Lord and Saviour: the Word that denotes Him as the eternal Son of God, the express image of the Father, God of God, the manifestation of God's power and glory. As such He appears. He appears in the glory of His godhead, though also as the man Jesus Christ. For besides this name, the Word of God, He still has another name which no one knows but Himself. It is a name peculiar to Him alone. It is His Mediator's name, the name that exalts Him above every name that is named in heaven and on earth, among the creatures in the sea and on the land. The Mediator's glory is all His own. No one shares it. Not even His brethren can bear that name. And therefore He also appears here with that name in all the glory of His Mediatorship. As such He is the KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. Many a king and lord has appeared on the scene of history in His absence. Kings and lords have refused to bow before His sovereignty; and they have aimed at nothing short of the possession and control of the whole world. And the very incarnation and climax of all these worldly lords and kings is there in the form of Antichrist on the field of Armageddon. But now He appears. And He appears as KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. And His very appearance and names indicate that it shall go ill with the lords of the world that have refused to recognize His authority of the Word of God.

But He is not alone. We read that the armies that are in heaven follow Him. Who are they? Some have it that they are angels; and I have no doubt but that also the holy angels shall appear with Jesus on the scene of His final coming and victory. But it is not to be maintained that these are the only ones. Yea, it is not even to be defended that they are especially mentioned in this instance. The way they are described informs us differently. In the first place, like their Captain Who leads them, they also are mounted on white horses. And therefore, there is a certain similarity between them and their great King. But especially the fact that they are pictured as being clothed in fine linen, white and pure, makes us think that this army is not constituted of the angels in heaven, but much rather of the saints that are with Christ. For this garment of fine linen, white and pure, denotes that they have been washed in the blood of the Lamb, as well as that they have been faithful to their King and performed righteous acts. They are garments that have been given them of grace. And this is not applicable to the angels, but only to the saints of Christ. Nor is there anything new or strange in the idea that Christ shall come accompanied by His saints. Already to the faithful in Sardis the Lord had

promised: "They shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy." Rev. 3:4. And more particularly, unto those that overcame of the church of Thyatira the Lord had given the assurance, "And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father." Rev. 2:26, 27. Specifically, therefore, the promise is given to the saints of Christ that they shall share in His honor. And that this ruling of the nations with a rod of iron does not refer to a fancied millennium of a thousand years in which Christ shall exercise earthly dominion over imperfect nations is plain from the fact that in the text Christ is represented as coming to rule the nations with a rod of iron now, in the field of Armageddon. In I Corinthians 6:2, 3 the holy apostle writes to the congregation of Corinth: "Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world? Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" There is absolutely nothing new in the idea that the saints shall come with Jesus to judge the nations gathered for battle against Him. Exactly how this shall be we know not. But a little of it we can understand if we bear in mind, as I have stated before, that the transformation of the living saints and the removal of the church from the earth shall take place immediately before the coming of Christ and the turmoil of the battle of Armageddon.

Thus, then, the contending armies in this last battle are pictured: Antichrist and Gog and Magog, assembled for this final struggle and principally fighting against Christ and His people, on the one side; Christ and His armies, coming from Heaven in glory and unexpectedly appearing on the scene of battle, on the other side. The world-power is now face to face with the reality of all its aspirations, and they shall have a chance to meet in person the King Whom they have always opposed. What shall the outcome be? The question is absurd. H.H.

EDITORIALS

(Continued from page 293)

believed.' The rest did not believe *because* they were *not* ordained to eternal life. And who is the giver of this disposition of heart but God alone?"

I could make many more quotations of Calvin from the book "Calvin's Calvinism" for the whole book is simply full of the same sentiment.

Never, no not once, does Calvin teach that the preaching of the gospel is grace for all that hear.

Never, no not once, does Calvin speak of a well-meant offer, on the part of God, to all that hear the preaching.

And those that preach this, nevertheless, are certainly not Reformed, but preach heresy. They camouflage the doctrine of predestination, election and reprobation.

H.H.

A CLOUD OF WITNESSES

Jehovah's Power In Pharaoh

And the Lord said unto Moses . . . stand before Pharaoh, and say unto him . . .

And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth.

Exodus 9:13, 16

Each day it was becoming more clearly evident in Egypt that the God of Moses spoke truth. He is Jehovah, the I AM THAT I AM, the covenant God and Defender of His chosen people Israel. Each plague testified to that anew.

But Pharaoh was far from an objective judge of what was happening. The more clearly the truth was revealed before him, the more he was inclined to deny it. He was caught up in a personal passion for power. His pride would not allow him to acknowledge that there was anyone greater than himself. Every new demonstration of power only made him more determined to prove that his power exceeded that of Israel's God. Step by step he was being hardened in the way of sin. It was the normal reaction of a wicked heart to God's truth.

These same demonstrations of Jehovah's power which hardened the heart of Pharaoh were felt also by the children of Israel. At first under the threats of Pharaoh, they had lost confidence in the promises of Jehovah and had renounced the leadership of Moses. But now under the hand of the Lord in the first three plagues, they saw the folly of this sin. They saw clearly what Pharaoh refused to acknowledge, that Jehovah was much greater than all the kings of the earth. Faith revived and Israel repented from its sin. The seed of Abraham once more began to look unto its God and to wait for the promised salvation. The same Word which was hardening the heart of Pharaoh was restoring the people of God.

God heard Israel's cries of repentance and forgave. With the announcement of the next plague to Pharaoh He told Moses to say, "I will put a division between my people and thy people." Henceforth a new aspect of the name Jehovah would be made known. Not only is Jehovah a God of all power, able to control all of nature to the consternation and punishment of the wicked, He is also a God who is faithful to reward the righteous and to show favor to them that love Him. Throughout the rest of the plagues the favor of God to His chosen people would be clearly seen.

A second series of three plagues was soon to begin, and once again God told Moses to rise up early in the morning and go to Pharaoh and meet him as he went to engage in his daily worship at the Nile's brink. He was to say unto him, "Thus saith Jehovah, Let my people go, that they may serve me. Else, if thou wilt not let my people go, behold, I

will send swarms of flies upon thy people, and into thy houses: and the houses of the Egyptians shall be full of swarms of flies, and also the ground whereon they are. And I will sever in that day the land of Goshen, in which my people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there; to the end thou mayest know that I am Jehovah in the midst of the earth. And I will put a division between my people and thy people: to morrow shall this sign be."

The morrow came and just as Moses had said, swarms of flies settled down upon the land. They were mean, biting flies that lighted on a man's body with a piercing sting. There was no escaping them, for they covered the land and filled the houses. Every surface was covered with flies and they corrupted everything: the water, the food, the land. Once again Pharaoh found himself surrounded by the misery of another plague. Jannes and Jambres were powerless. There was nothing they could do. Gradually there emerged in the mind of Pharaoh the conviction that perhaps it would be best if he would seek a compromise. He would allow the children of Israel to sacrifice in his own land. It was a foolish idea. The sacrifice of animals, such as the Israelites practiced, was an abomination to the Egyptians. His people would become enraged if they saw the Israelites conducting such sacrifices in their land. But it was not this that concerned Pharaoh. He had to prove himself capable of influencing the God of Israel, and, if nothing else would do it, a compromise would suffice.

He summoned Moses and Aaron and said, "Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land."

To this Moses responded by exposing the folly of Pharaoh's proposition. "It is not meet so to do; for we shall sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians to the Lord our God: lo, shall we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, and will they not stone us? We will go three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice to Jehovah our God, as he shall command us."

The reasoning of Moses was only too evident, and Pharaoh knew not what to reply. All he could think of was to resort once again to subterfuge, to promise that which he had no intention of doing. The flies had to be taken away. He said with feigned humility, "I will let you go, that ye may sacrifice to Jehovah your God in the wilderness; only ye shall not go very far: intreat for me."

Moses was beginning to recognize the duplicity of Pharaoh's heart. Carefully he warned Pharaoh, "Behold, I go out from thee, and I will intreat Jehovah that the swarms of flies may depart from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people, to morrow: but let not Pharaoh deal deceitfully any more in not letting the people go to sacrifice to Jehovah."

On the morrow the flies were taken away just as Moses had said, but the heart of Pharaoh was hard as always and he would not let the people go.

Again the Lord sent Moses to Pharaoh to say, "Thus saith Jehovah, the God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me. For if thou refuse to let them go, and

wilt hold them still, behold, the hand of Jehovah is upon thy cattle which is in the field, upon the horses, upon the asses, upon the camels, upon the oxen, and upon the sheep: there shall be a very grievous murrain. And Jehovah shall sever between the cattle of Israel and the cattle of Egypt: and there shall nothing die of all that is the children's of Israel. To morrow shall this sign be."

For a fifth time the land of Egypt was beset by a plague from Jehovah. Step by step every different aspect of life was being touched by the hand of God. Jehovah was proving with many indisputable proofs that His power extended over all the earth; nothing can withstand His will. Pharaoh felt himself being driven to distraction. He had tried Jannes and Jambres and they had bolstered his pride for a while. Now even they were helpless. He had tried subterfuge, and he had tried compromise. Each time the hand of Jehovah descended to smite him once again; each plague seemed heavier than the one before. What was he to do? If only he could find one thing that could withstand, or limit, or in the least bit mitigate the power of Jehovah's hand, then he could maintain his pride. Desperately he sent to Goshen to find out whether Israel was actually being spared; but even that was so. It seemed that only one possibility remained. If he could wait out this plague and maybe another, perhaps the God of Israel would withdraw. So with a hardened heart Pharaoh waited until this plague subsided.

But it was not long before Pharaoh felt the hand of Jehovah yet again. This time it came unannounced. The Lord commanded Moses to take of the ashes of the furnace, to sprinkle it toward heaven in the sight of Pharaoh. Without one word to the king Moses did so, and when the dust descended upon Pharaoh's skin it brought forth boils. Quickly it spread throughout the land affecting man and beast. As always Pharaoh called for his magicians, hoping that they would be able to do something once again; but this time they could not come because of the boils that had already broken forth on their bodies. Nevertheless, Pharaoh was firm in his resolve. He would wait it out. Perhaps the God of Israel would tire and withdraw His hand. So with hardened heart he waited until also this, the sixth plague, subsided.

The second series of three plagues was ended. They had demonstrated more clearly than ever before the great power which belonged to the God of Israel. It was a power that included every phase of life. Water and land, animals and man, all were subject to his will. Pharaoh saw it all but would not believe. God was preparing him for the end. Yet three more plagues, and then the final judgment would come.

The third series of plagues, as the first two, was preceded by a special explanation of the intent of God. Pharaoh would never be able to say that God had not explained to him what was taking place. Each time it was explained more clearly than before. Before the first plague God had said, "In this thou shalt know that I am Jehovah." That gave to

Pharaoh the general significance of all the plagues. They proved that God is Jehovah as He said. Before the fourth plague God said to Pharaoh, "And I will put a division between my people and thy people." The power and judgment of Jehovah will show mercy upon His people even at the very time that it goes forth in consuming wrath upon the wicked. Now before the seventh plague God would say to Pharaoh, "For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth. For now I will stretch out my hand, that I may smite thee and thy people with pestilence; and thou shalt be cut off from the earth. And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth."

In this word of God to Pharaoh we have one of Scripture's clearest statements of the place of the reprobate in God's creation. They are there for the purpose of God. So was it very explicitly with Pharaoh. He was not a wicked and rebellious man who just happened to be upon the throne at the time, resisting the grace of God. He was not a king whom God would have liked to save, but who, because he would not, had to be destroyed. Many would like to say this, but the very clear teaching of Scripture is other. God knew long beforehand what Pharaoh would be like. God according to His own determinate counsel raised Pharaoh up. God had for Pharaoh a very definite purpose. That purpose was that Pharaoh's heart should be hardened in sin, that Pharaoh and his people might be justly smitten by Jehovah's hand and destroyed, and thus that the power of God might be revealed in him. Unto all generations Pharaoh remains the perfect example of the man who hardens his heart against the evident truth of God's Word to his own destruction and to the glory of God's name.

One marvels at the obduracy of Pharaoh's heart. Before this very explicit revelation of God it was made so very clear what a terrible place he was making for himself in history. When all was made so plain, could he keep himself from falling to his knees in repentance and tears? But no, Pharaoh only hardened his heart the more. God had ordained it so. No matter how clear it would be, he would resist the Word of God. He would do it unto the end.

B.W.

Announcement

The Free Christian School at Edgerton, Minnesota, will be in need of a Principal to teach its four upper grades for the next term, 1961-1962.

All interested in this position, please write H. Miersma, Woodstock, Minnesota.

H. Miersma
Secretary of the Board of the
Free Chr. School Society

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of I Timothy

(I Timothy 1:3-11)

c.

We now come to our concluding essay on this section of this chapter under consideration, to wit, the verses 3-11.

This eleventh verse reads as follows: "According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust." Thus it is rendered in the King James Version. A more literal, and, I believe, better translation is that given in the American Standard Edition of the Revised Bible which reads, "according to the gospel of the glory of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust." It is evident that in the King James version "*glorious* gospel" is interpretation and not simply translation. The German translation of Luther is like the King James version "*herrliches Evangelium*" while the Staten Vertaling in the Holland language follows the Greek text literally and translates: "*evangelium der heerlijkheid*."

So much for the translation.

It is quite obvious that Paul here emphasizes that what he is teaching, in this refutation of some who teach a different doctrine, is wholly according to the Gospel of God in Christ; it is, therefore, the last word in the matter, and all must bow before this instruction of Paul as it will be passed on by Timothy.

The question is: to what does Paul refer? What is it that is specifically according to the Gospel of the glory of the blessed God? Does he merely mean to show that what is "contrary to sound doctrine" must be measured according to the Gospel? Or does he have in mind the entirety of what he has been teaching in the verses 3-10? If the latter then Paul means that what he has commanded Timothy to charge "certain *not* to teach" is according to the Gospel of the glory of God. And, again, in this case, also the judgment of the lawful use of the law is according to the Gospel of the glory of God, as well as what Paul has alleged concerning the uselessness and the purposelessness of fables and endless genealogies. Now we believe that the latter is the proper interpretation. Thus also Van Oosterzee in the *Lange Series* and Huther in the *Meyer Series*.

All that Paul has thus taught is in accordance with the Gospel, the glad-tidings of salvation, from the blessed God to a poor and helpless sinner!

We learn from this verse, in general, that the correct starting-point in any matter is to ask: what saith the Gospel! Any teaching which is contrary to this "gospel" is erroneous. For when presently God shall judge even the secrets of men it will be "according to my Gospel." Romans 2:16. The deter-

mining factor of all things is the *truth* of the Gospel, and God's purpose in Christ Jesus, our Lord. That determines the meaning of the "law" in relationship both to believers and to unbelievers, to those without law and those under law.

Let us keep this in mind.

The following elements in the text call for a little closer study.

In the first place, we should notice the meaning of the term "gospel." The term literally means: good tidings. It is a *tiding* from God; it is news which is known and can only be known because it is revealed, uncovered by God with whom it was hid. It is the news concerning the mystery of God's will, the secret counsel concerning our redemption. It is official communication sent down to us from God's throne on high. It is wholly God's, this gospel. It is His glad-tidings. From the viewpoint of the relationship between the New Testament and the Old Testament it may be said that the Gospel is the glad-tidings concerning the fulfilment of the *promise* of God. This promise concerning the coming of God in the flesh is the theme of the entire Old Testament Scriptures. That is the *message* of Moses, the Psalms and all the prophets. In a sense this promise was glad-tidings. It was good news in promissory form. In Question 19 of the Heidelberg Catechism we have a very beautiful circumscription of the Gospel from the viewpoint of the giving and of the fulfilment of the promise in the Old Testament. This answer is: "From the Holy Gospel, which God Himself revealed first in paradise; afterwards proclaimed by the holy patriarchs and prophets, and foreshadowed by the sacrifices and other ceremonies of the law; and finally fulfilled it by His well-beloved Son."

That is the gospel. It is not a pin-pointed story somewhere in a hidden corner in the Old Testament, but it is the grand theme and message in the entire Old Testament Scriptures. Only those who have a covering upon their hearts, a covering of unbelief, fail to see this theme and to hear this glad-tidings upon every page of the Law and the Prophets. Such, when they speak, may confidently affirm their allegations; they are as wrong as they think they are good teachers, and may, therefore, not be condoned in the church of Christ.

Such is the gospel of which Paul here speaks and which he sets forth as being the standard of truth and orthodoxy.

Paul says some wondering things about this Gospel.

As we intimated above, there is, first of all, the truth that the Gospel is the "gospel of the glory of the blessed God." This should not be translated as though "of the glory" were equivalent to an adjective "glorious." Paul does not simply mean to characterize this gospel as being "glorious," but rather he teaches us the *source* of the gospel. This is a gospel which is rooted in and which is compatible with the *divine* glory. And this divine glory is the radiance and manifestation of all the virtues of God; it is the manifestation of God's love and mercy, his longsuffering and goodness,

his faithfulness and justice, his power and might, his endless riches of divine greatness in all his virtues. Only the gospel is compatible with this glory of the blessed God. Yes, that makes the gospel "glorious." However, Paul's rendering of the text emphatically sets forth that the gospel is rooted in and is the manifestation of this glory of God.

If the Lord has made all things for himself, and if also the law is for God's sake, then certainly it must be to serve the glory of God. However, the law cannot be to the greater manifestation of the glory of God! That is only true of the gospel. For the law cannot make a sinner alive and comfort him in his poverty. Such God does in the gospel. The gospel speaks of the "glory of God in the saints" and of the "super-abounding greatness of his power to usward who believe" which He wrought in Christ, having raised him from the dead, and set him (Christ) at his own right hand in the heavens, 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!

Such is the glory of God revealed in Christ. And in this glory the "gospel" is rooted and this glory the gospel proclaims.

In close connection with the foregoing observations it should be noticed that this "glory" is the glory of the "blessed" God. The term *blessed* here in the text is not "eucharistia" (praise-worthy) but rather "makaria," one who is inwardly content and self-sufficient. God is full of blessedness. Nothing is added to Him. He is the Fountain of all good and is the God of our salvation. He is the "I Am that I Am"; yesterday, today and forever the same, the Lord, God Almighty. Salvation as proclaimed in the gospel is from Him and from Him alone. Out of Him, and through Him, and unto Him are all things; to Him be the praise and the glory forever, Amen!

The manifestation of this "blessedness" is God's prerogative.

This is His glory; He gives it to none other.

Now the gospel is compatible with this glory and blessedness of God. Let "certain" men therefore be silent if they cannot teach this gospel, and the lawful use of the law as a consequence. If anyone teach another teaching, a different gospel, which Paul has not taught, though he be an angel from heaven, let his be accursed! Gal. 1:8. And again I say, if anyone teach a gospel which is not in accordance with the "gospel of the glory of the blessed God" let him be anathema!

God will have no strange fire upon his altar.

If anyone shall add to the words of this gospel, God shall plague him according to this gospel of the glory of the blessed God!

Of this reality Paul is deeply conscious.

For this gospel is not an indifferent thing to Paul. Rather the gospel is a sacred "trust" for him. God has com-

mitted it to his care! God has counted him faithful. It is looked for in a servant to be found faithful. He will keep this gospel willingly. He does not simply desire a stewardship but rather a reward of a faithful steward. And, therefore, he rises to the defense of so great a gospel of glory.

The phrase here employed in the Greek by Paul is a peculiar one as to construction. Paul employs this phrase repeatedly when he would express the reality of this divinely given "trust," the gospel.

In Romans 3:2, where Paul speaks of the advantage of the Jew, he singles out the chief advantage, namely, that to them were *entrusted* the divine oracles; the Jews were the custodians of the word of God. Sad to say, the very word entrusted to them they often did not understand; they often failed to read the "gospel," the glad-tidings of good things. But it was a sacred "trust" nonetheless.

Thus also in Gal. 2:7 Paul informs the readers that Peter, James and John recognized that God had "intrusted" him with the gospel of the uncircumcision even as Peter had been intrusted with the gospel of the circumcision. And this fact of God's having "intrusted" Paul with such a ministry placed him on equal footing and equal rank with the apostles of repute, as a bona fide apostle.

Once more Paul tells the readers of Thessalonica that, when he had been in their midst, he had spoken unto them the gospel not to please men, but God himself, whereas he had been "approved of God to *be intrusted* with the gospel."

And, finally, we would call your attention to what we read in I Cor. 9:17 from Paul's pen, where, speaking of his attitude toward his stewardship in the gospel, he says: "For if I do this of mine own will, I have a reward: but if not of mine own will, I have a stewardship entrusted to me." And this "trust," this stewardship, is something of which Paul must give account in that day when God shall judge the world in righteousness.

It is, therefore, well to take particular notice of this fact that Paul brings this "having been entrusted with the gospel" forward as the motive of his speaking to Timothy as he does concerning some who teach a different doctrine. He must keep the "charge" thus given him.

For only thus will the gospel of the glory of the blessed God come to its own!

Let all who disobey this command be anathema!

G.L.

Men's League Meeting

will be held, D.V., at South West Church on Thursday evening, April 13, at 8:00 P. M. The Rev. H. Hoeksema will speak on the topic "Sanctification." Musical numbers will be rendered. See your bulletin for further announcements.

K. Ezinga, Secretary

I N H I S F E A R

God's Royal Priesthood

(3)

Prophesying is not a lost art.

Indeed, if we mean no more by prophesying than telling the future and predicting what lies before us in the days to come, we will have to qualify that statement a little.

Yet we want to insist that even as far as predicting the future is concerned prophesying is not a lost art.

At the same time we wish to point out that the work of the prophet was a great deal more than foretelling the future. In the Old Testament times, of necessity the prophet was busy with such predictions. Enoch prophesied of God's coming judgment. Noah likewise predicted the Flood one hundred and twenty years before it became a reality. Saul's servant said to him, when they failed to find the lost beasts of his father, "Behold now, there is in this city a man of God, and he is an honorable man; all that he saith cometh to pass: now let us go thither: peradventure he can show us our way that we should go." I Samuel 9:6. Long before this in the wilderness God used even such a reprobate prophet as Balaam to prophesy the coming of Christ in very beautiful language. Isaiah, the first major prophet, predicted the captivity and the return of Israel decades before it took place. The very city where Jesus would be born was pointed out by Micah. John the Baptist is called the greatest of the Old Testament prophets by no one less than Jesus Himself. And this John was because his was the unique privilege of pointing out the Christ with the words, Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world.

But we want to begin right there. John was the greatest of all the Old Testament prophets; and yet he that is least in the kingdom is greater than John as an Old Testament prophet. He is not greater than John now, nor will he obtain a higher degree than John. John shall be very high in that kingdom, and you and I will not attain to that high position in God's kingdom that by God's grace is reserved for John. But as far as the truth in Christ is concerned we on this side of the cross, with the full revelation of the way of salvation, see far more than John did at that time, are greater in knowledge than he was in that day; and we can sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb, while John could but sing the song of Moses. We maintain that even our little children can prophesy more richly than even John the Baptist was able to do in his age and day. And we maintain also that we as parents and officebearers in the Church are so inclined to underestimate and to fail to appreciate what a wonder work God performs even in our little children. But we are running ahead and hope to come back to this later.

But let it now be stated that even our little children can foretell the future in a very rich and wonderful way.

To be sure we and our children do not predict the future in the same way that the prophets of the Old Testament times did. That is, we do not receive the knowledge of that truth which we predict in the same way that they did. They received from God direct revelation in vision and dream. Our source of information is indirect and from the Word of God. We can prophesy only that which we find upon the pages of Holy Writ. And the prophet in the Old Testament times could predict only that which was revealed to him by God. But whereas the saints in the Old Testament times did not realize that there would be a twofold coming of Christ into our world, the little child of God today can speak very sweetly and yet very richly of a coming of Christ in glory and in judgment to raise the dead and change our vile bodies into bodies like unto His Own glorious body. Our little children can predict a Church of God that is gathered from every nation, tongue and tribe, of a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness shall dwell and of various things which will precede all this and be signs of its realization.

All the predicting in the Old Testament times was an important aspect of the work of the prophet of God. Through him God revealed the fulfilment of His counsel. His glorious promise which He gave in Paradise when He Himself prophesied the appearance of two seeds, of a ceaseless struggle between them, of victory for the Seed of the woman, is being realized, and through the ages, step by step, He revealed more of that truth to His Church through the mouths and minds of His prophets. They, of necessity, spoke of future things. They pointed out the various steps in the realization of that promise especially as they pertained to the birth of that Seed of the woman. Now He has come, and the Scriptures concerning His coming and His work are now fully written. There is no more direct revelation. That last direct prediction of future things is in the Book of Revelation. To it we may not add, and from it we may not take away. And all the future things, in as far as we need to know them for our faith and salvation, are revealed. Therefore the work of the prophet today is rather in explaining and showing the meaning of these truths revealed in the complete Scripture than in predicting more in detail future events.

We wish to make another observation at this time. The chief work of the prophet is not that of teaching God's people. This too is a tremendously important work. And by the prophets in the Old Testament dispensation God did teach His people His fear. In as far as this phase of the work is concerned we may also say that today the prophet is the Minister of the Word of God in his pulpit and in all his instruction and exhortation. Speaking of Christ as the Anointed of God the Heidelberg Catechism also states that He is called Christ, "Because He is ordained of God the

Father and anointed of with the Holy Spirit, to be our chief prophet and Teacher, Who has fully revealed unto us the secret counsel and will of God concerning our redemption . . ." And we surely need not only His revelation to us as the Chief Prophet Who calls and instructs all the other prophets, but we also need this prophecy which He gives us through men. We need Him as our Teacher, and He is the teacher with Whom no other teacher can even begin to compare. This phase of the prophetic office is very necessary for us while we are in this vale of tears and see as in a glass darkly. But the Word of God also teaches us in I John 2:27, "But the anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him." Still more, in Isaiah 11:9 we read, "They shall not hurt in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." And once again from Hebrews 8:10, 11, "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least unto the greatest."

This teaching, as we said, is very essential, but it only serves a higher purpose and is the means rather than the end. One day that phase of the prophetic office shall recede while God's purpose in all this instruction will be reached. Even then, there are those in the office of every believer today who occupy no position of teaching. They may have no children to teach. They may have very little talent to teach and be greatly in need of being taught. They may be little children, and as regenerated children of God they already have the office of every believer. In that office they serve already in the early days of their childhood though they may not be able to teach at all and reveal to others the truth of the Word of God and the counsel of God in regard to our salvation.

No, the prophetic office as we already pointed out last time is that we "may show forth the praises of Him Who hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous light." I Peter 2:9. Then again in Isaiah that well known passage that speaks of God's purpose in all our salvation, the instruction instrumental in realizing it included, "This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise," Isaiah 43:21. That is the work and calling of the prophet: he must praise God, ever praise God and magnify His name. When he instructs God's people he does that. When he sings the songs of Zion and when he confesses God before men, he reveals himself as a prophet of God. In fact to praise God is to speak the truth concerning Him. Whatever you may say about Him in truth is to His praise.

How different that is with you and me. When we speak

the truth about each other, we certainly do not speak words of praise. Not when we speak the truth. We must say of each other that we are wretched, damnable sinners, totally depraved, inclined to all evil, filthy and corrupt. Only the false prophet can say something nice about man, for he cares not whether he speaks the truth or the lie. And the awfulness of the false prophet is that he will deceitfully say something nice about man, while he insists on speaking the lie about the Holy and Righteous God. He will lift man as high as he can in his humanitarian endeavours and will debase God to a foolish, weak and vile beggar, an impotent and vacillating would-be ruler of the universe. You may read of that in its most violent and devilish form in Revelation 19:20 in connection with II Thessalonians 2:4. In the former passage we read of the false prophet who served the beast. That beast is the antichrist, and the false prophet is the false church. And as the mouthpiece for that antichristian kingdom the false prophet is the one who in II Thessalonians 2:4 speaks the blasphemy to shew unto all men that this antichrist "is God."

But simply say that He is God, and you praise Him. Speak of His virtues—and vices He has not: all His attributes are virtues—and you praise Him. The prophet serves to point out to us these virtues or perfections of the Living God and to teach us to know Him. But the ultimate end of all that work of prophecy is, even as God Himself declares it, to form unto Himself a people that will show forth His praises. And in the office of every believer that is our calling. We are God's royal priesthood, delivered from the service of Satan. We and our children, yea even the little ones, are to speak and sing His praises. Consider the passages of Holy Writ that speak of heaven and of the New Jerusalem. And listen! You hear singing, the singing of God's praises. A Hallelujah Chorus swells to the thrice holy God. Your voice on earth is also raised to His praise?

J.A.H.

Ladies' League Meeting

The Eastern Ladies' League will hold their Spring meeting April 20, at Southeast Church at 8 o'clock. Rev. Herman Hanko will speak on "The Women of the Bible." All ladies of the denomination are invited to come and spend an evening of Christian fellowship with us.

Ruth H. Bylsma, Vice-Secretary

O Lord, for Thy Name's sake
Revive my fainting heart;
My soul from trouble take,
For just and true Thou art.
Remove my enemy,
My cruel foe reward;
In mercy rescue me
Who am Thy servant, Lord.

Contending For The Faith

The Church and the Sacraments

THE TIME OF THE REFORMATION

VIEWS ON THE CHURCH

MATERIAL PRINCIPLE

(continued)

The spark that ignited that great movement in the history of the Church of God which is known as the Reformation was Luther's nailing of the ninety-five theses to the church door at Wittenberg. And the incident which led to this act of the German Reformer was the shameless sale of indulgences as practiced by Tetzel, an eloquent Dominican Friar who peddled indulgences in an unusually scandalous and shameless manner near the Saxony border in the neighborhood of Wittenberg. Luther's nailing of the ninety-five theses to the church door at Wittenberg was the reformer's way or method making known his views to the public about indulgences and inviting public debate on them. This was a customary practice in those times. And it was also an effective way for Luther to publish his views. In fact, he published these theses on the eve of All Saints' Day, a holiday of the Church when the relics were solemnly and prominently displayed in the Castle Church of the city of Wittenberg. Naturally, many people read these theses as they came to the church that morning, went home after having read and thought about them, and told their neighbors about this action of the intrepid German Reformer. However, behind the posting of these theses lay a tremendous struggle which had raged in the soul of Martin Luther. And it is this struggle and Luther's victorious emergence from the same which constitutes the material principle of the Reformation. And we think of interest to our readers of this rubric that we give, **in brief**, a résumé of Luther's life which led to what he did on the eve of All Saints' Day in 1517.

Martin Luther and the Reformation are inseparably connected. It is the law of God that He effects great things by the smallest means, the things that are base, small, ignoble and despised. It appears that the Lord selected, sovereignly, His reformers of the Church from the same class whence He had also taken the apostles. He chose them from the lower ranks. Everything was thus intended to manifest unto the world that the work about to be unfolded was not the work of man but of God. The reformer Zwingli emerged from an Alpine shepherd's hut; Melancthon came from an armourer's shop; Luther was born in the cottage of a poor miner. God has chosen, not the rich and mighty, but the poor, the ignoble of this world.

Luther did not know and enjoy the joy and peace of salvation until the blessed gospel message resounded in his heart and soul: "The just shall live by faith." Luther was born in 1483, on St. Martin's eve, Nov. 10. On the morrow his father carried his infant son to the St. Peter's church, where the sacrament of baptism was administered to him, and the child received the name Martin in commemoration of the day. Martin Luther was a child of the Roman Catholic Church, the only church (at least in the West, inasmuch as the eastern section of the Church had broken with the western section of it in the eleventh century) of that day, and his parents were sincere and upright people. From earliest years there was present in Martin Luther an attentive and serious disposition, a desire to serve the Lord. And already in his early years he was conscious of his sin and of the holiness and righteousness of God. Christ did not loom before him as a gracious Saviour, but as a fearfully stern and righteous judge. Study came easy to him. The Lord had endowed him richly with intellectual gifts, which, incidentally, was also true of John Calvin. He made full use of the gifts the Lord had given him and advanced rapidly in his studies.

In his eighteenth year Luther entered the university of Erfurth. His father, John Luther, was a poor miner but was gifted with a more cultivated mind than most men of his class, and he loved to read and study. He was fully determined that his son, Martin, should make a name for himself in the midst of the world, become a doctor of law and of philosophy. While at the university of Erfurth Luther found a Bible. This book fascinated him. He did not know that there were so many books in the Bible, inasmuch as the parts of the Bible which the Church had selected to be read to the people were only a very few. The Bible was a rare book, unknown in those days. It was particularly the story of Hannah and Samuel that fascinated Luther, and also the Scriptural account of the evil and wickedness of the sons of Eli. What fascinated young Martin was perhaps the striking similarity between the wickedness of the sons of Eli and the corruption as exercised within the Roman Catholic church of his day. This book he read again and again while at the university of Erfurth.

While studying at the university of Erfurth he became dangerously ill. Recovering from this sickness, a great change had occurred in Martin Luther. But as yet there was nothing decided in his mind. Shortly afterwards another circumstance awakened serious thoughts within him. It was the time of the festival of Easter, probably in the year 1503. Luther was going to pass a short time with his family, and wore a sword according to the custom of his age. He struck his foot against this sword, the blade fell out, and cut one of his principal arteries. Finding himself alone, and seeing the blood flow copiously from the wound without being able to check it, he lay down on his back, and put his finger on the wound. But the blood escaped despite his exertions, and feeling the approach of death, he cried out, "O Mary, help!" At last a surgeon came and bound up the cut. Later, when

recalling this incident, Luther made the remark: "I should have died relying upon Mary." In 1505 he was admitted a doctor of philosophy. The university of Erfurth was then the most celebrated school in all of Germany. Luther was well on his way to becoming a man of distinction and renown in the midst of the world, and his father was envisioning the realization of his dreams.

It was during the summer of 1505 that an incident occurred which completely changed the entire course of Luther's career. While at liberty during the summer vacations he resolved to go to Mansfeldt to revisit the dear scenes of his childhood and to embrace his parents. It may be that he was considering already at this time the possibility of his becoming a priest. And he knew what the violent reaction would be of his father inasmuch as the priestly profession was not very lucrative in those days. What happened during Luther's stay at Mansfeldt we do not know, has not been recorded. Luther was returning to Erfurth and was within a short distance of that city when a violent thunderstorm overtook him. Such violent thunderstorms were common in those mountains. The lightning flashed and a bolt fell at his feet. Luther threw himself upon his knees. Again the thought of a righteous God and of impending judgment terrified him. He thought that his hour had probably come. Death, judgment and eternity summoned him with all their terrors, and he hears a voice that he can no longer resist. "Encompassed with the anguish and terror of death," as he says of himself, he makes a vow, if the Lord delivers him from this danger, to abandon the world, and devote himself entirely to the Lord. After rising from the ground, having still present with him that death which one day must overtake him, he examines himself seriously, and asks himself what he ought to do. He has tried, it is true, to fulfill all his duties, but what is the state of his soul? Can he appear before the tribunal of the righteous God with an impure heart? He must become holy. He has now as great a thirst for holiness as he had for knowledge. But where can he find it, how can he attain unto it? The university cannot satisfy his desires. To what school of holiness shall he now direct his steps? His decision is taken. He will enter a cloister: the monastic life will save him. There he will become holy. And so he leaves everything behind, and enters an Augustinian convent. His friends are amazed and dumbfounded. His father is furious when Luther later writes him out of his cell, having gone thither before discussing the matter with his parents. But his decision cannot be changed.

And now he applies himself to become holy and render himself righteous and just before God. If ever a true and obedient son of the Roman Catholic Church could have attained unto righteousness in the way of good works Luther was that man. When Luther entered this Augustinian convent he changed his name, and assumed that of Augustine. The monks received him with joy. They were not slightly gratified to see one of the most esteemed doctors of the age abandon the university for a house belonging to their order.

Nevertheless they treated him harshly and imposed upon him the meanest occupations. They wished to humiliate him, and teach him that his learning did not raise him above his brethren. Besides, they also wished to keep him from his studies, from which the convent could reap no advantage. The former master of arts and doctor of philosophy had to perform the offices of porter, open and shut the gates, wind up the clock, sweep the church, and to clean out the cells. And when he had finished all his chores he was bidden to go through the tower, and beg from house to house. And he put up with it all. All these tasks he took cheerfully upon himself. Nothing was too much for him. He had become a monk with all his heart and soul. He was determined to become holy and to render himself righteous before God. He was determined to make himself worthy of God and to be able to appear before the Judge of all the earth with peace in his heart and soul. Later he was relieved of all these duties and permitted the liberty to study once more with all the desire of his heart and mind.

However, all this availed him nothing. Luther's sin continued to plague and torment him. Even his fellow monks began to deride him because of his seriousness and dejection. He regarded the slightest fault as a great sin and endeavored to expiate it by the severest mortifications. But all this only served to emphasize the utter futility of all human remedies. It was toward the end of the year 1512. Luther was sitting in his cell in the tower of the Black Cloister in Wittenberg. He had come into possession of a Bible, and had begun to study Paul's epistle to the Romans. Coming to verse 17 he read: "The just shall live by faith." He paused and meditated. Suddenly the light flashed into his soul. The just shall live *by faith*. Then an unspeakable joy flooded his heart. The burden of all his sins rolled away. Until now he had been trying to make himself righteous before God by his own good works. Never did he feel as if he had done enough. Now God had spoken to him. He was righteous before God without his works, only through faith, solely because of the merits of Christ Jesus. The Reformation had been born and ignited in his soul by the word of the Almighty God. Nothing would change that. Later Tetzel came with his shameless indulgences. He attacked Tetzel with his ninety-five theses. Still later he came into conflict with Rome. As a true son of his church he still attempted to purify that church. But it was all to no avail. Luther was excommunicated. But, he held his ground. Because, materially, the fundamental principle, as within the soul of the German reformer, was this: Justification by faith and completely without works.

H.V.

Let the trumpet, far resounding,
This our festal day proclaim,
By our fathers' God appointed,
When from bondage Israel came.

The Voice of Our Fathers

The Belgic Confession

ARTICLE I

We all believe with the heart and confess with the mouth that there is one only simple and spiritual Being, which we call God; and that He is eternal, incomprehensible, invisible, immutable, infinite, almighty, perfectly wise, just, good, and the overflowing fountain of all good.

"We all believe with the heart and confess with the mouth. . . ."

It is of the utmost importance that we understand the meaning and implications of the above expression from the outset. Especially is this necessary because you will find that the various articles of this creed are introduced by this same expression in one form or another: "We believe," or, "We believe and confess," or "We confess," or, "We believe and profess." You will readily recognize that this is an expression borrowed from Holy Scripture. In the form in which it occurs in this first article it is borrowed undoubtedly from Romans 10:9, "That if thou shalt *confess with thy mouth* the Lord Jesus, and shalt *believe in thine heart* that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

In these significant words several elements are expressed. In the first place, we learn that here is a *confession*. In the second place, we learn that this confession is not a mere ecclesiastical "statement of position," nor a coldly objective dogmatic declaration, but emphatically a confession of *faith*. In the third place, we learn too that this faith is *personal*: "*We* believe . . . and confess." Moreover, this faith, personal in character, is held in a community of believers: not merely "I" believe and confess, but I believe and confess together with others who unitedly have the same faith and make the same confession, "We all . . ." In the fourth place, there is the element that this faith is *saving faith*, belief with the *heart* — strictly speaking, the only true faith there is. All these elements are important and hold in them several important implications. For, first of all, we have here what may be called both the *inclusive* and the *exclusive* principle of the entire creed, and, therefore, of the church which holds this creed. Inclusive these words are: for they receive into the community of the church all who have a like faith and confession. Exclusive they are: for they exactly bar every unbeliever, all who do not believe with the heart. Exclusive too they are in that they bar all those who pretend to believe with the heart but do not confess with the mouth. If you personally cannot join in the expressions of these articles of faith, you have absolutely no business in the church that holds them; you belong to a different community. And, secondly, in close connection with the preceding, these introductory words, which recur so frequently throughout the

thirty-seven articles, serve to emphasize something that is easily forgotten, especially when we busy ourselves with an objective explanation of the contents of the confession, namely, that in these articles we have the objective contents of a *subjective, personal faith*. This is a rather practical implication, which, I fear, we are often inclined to overlook, especially in the consideration of a symbol such as our *Belgic Confession*. As we have observed, this creed follows the so-called dogmatic order in its treatment of the truth of the Word of God; it is objective. For this reason we are all the more inclined to look upon this confession as a mere document, a piece of religious literature, setting forth the official doctrinal position of a certain church or group of churches. That document may have a certain authority, and we may appeal to it as an authoritative statement, much as we might cite this or that authority in a certain field in our rather academic arguments. Thus, if we want to back up our position in the field of history, we seek out some prominent historian to quote in support of our statements. If we want to find support for a political theory, we turn to recognized political theorists. If we want backing for some economic view, we ask what authoritative economists think. In much the same way, if we want to show that our doctrinal views are correct, we appeal to theologians or to the church, to the creeds. And while this method may have much merit as far as an objective study and exercise in the science of dogmatics is concerned, it overlooks the important fact that the confession is and is intended to be much more than a document, an archive. In fact, we may say that such an outlook is a sure path to **dead orthodoxy — an orthodoxy that is dead**, devoid of life and of faith. No, the creeds are *confessions*; and they are confessions of *faith*. And the question therefore is not what someone else believes or believed in the past. It is not the coldly impersonal question of what "the church" or "my church" believes, as though that church were someone or something in distinction from its members. That may be a convenient device to attempt to avoid the crucial and after all unavoidable question, "What think ye of the God and the Christ of the Scriptures?" Or perhaps at times it may serve as an apron of fig leaves to cover our shame when men require of us an answer concerning the hope that is supposed to be in us and we are ashamed of our "unscientific" view or the "narrow-mindedness" of our doctrine or the "other-worldliness" of our calling and our walk. "Well," we may say, "my church believes this or that," or, "This is the stand of my church." And the implication really is: "I can't help it. I wish it were otherwise. I'm really a bit ashamed of it, and consider it rather narrow and unreasonable and unnecessarily strict. But that's the way it is; and if I go contrary, I might be disciplined." Thus, for example, some "pass the buck" when they are confronted with the question of membership in an illicit union: "My church doesn't believe in it," is the excuse. But the language of our confession is the language of a personal conviction of the heart: "*We all believe with the heart!*" The question there-

fore is a strictly personal one: "What do *you and I*, as members of this Christian church individually, and as a community of such members collectively and institutionally — what do *we* believe and confess?"

What then is this believing with the heart?

The most fundamental answer to this question is that faith is preeminently *faith in God*, and that too, as the God of our salvation in Jesus Christ our Lord. The initial article of our confession brings this out very clearly, as we shall see when we consider the contents of this first article proper. Paradoxically, while the wonder is "faith's dearest child," faith is itself in every sense of the word a wonder. It is divine. It is faith *in God*, and for that very reason faith is from beginning to end *of God*.

This is true, in the first place, as to the objective principle of faith, namely, *revelation*. This must be emphasized now at the risk of entering somewhat into the material of Article 2 and succeeding articles that deal with this subject. Faith is not unreasonable; but it is not founded on human reason, nor reached in the way of a process of reasoning. Faith is not illogical; but it is not the product of a logical process of thought. The only and solid basis of faith is God's own revelation in Jesus Christ. And this is at the same time the rock on which all unbelief suffers shipwreck and is dashed to pieces. Without now entering into detail, we may say that revelation means that the incomprehensible God, Who alone knows Himself with an infinitely perfect and eternal Self-knowledge, imparts the knowledge of Himself to the creature in such a form that the creature can receive it, on a creaturely level and in a creaturely measure, through His Son Jesus Christ. Even as water cannot climb any higher than its own level, so the creature cannot climb any higher than the level of the creature. Man of himself cannot know God; God must make Himself known. Man cannot reach out and climb up to God; God must condescend to him. And so in revelation God in His infinite majesty comes down to us. He gives His Word finite form in and through His Son in the flesh, Jesus Christ our Lord.

But, in the second place, there is a subjective principle in faith. And also this is of God. For the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God. They are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. The mere fact that God objectively reveals Himself does not and cannot produce faith. And this is true whether you refer now to God's revelation in the things that are made and in history, or whether you refer to His revelation in the face of Jesus Christ our Lord. For the natural man stands in enmity over against God and over against the speech of God. He does not want God. He hates God. He always contradicts God. And the difficulty is not at all an intellectual and rational one. The trouble is not that faith in God is so irrational. The problem is not that the living God is essentially unknowable. No, in this sense of the word God's revelation is quite adequate; and He has never left

Himself without witness. Moreover, He has also taken care that intellectually man has quite enough light to receive that witness and to know that God is and that He is God indeed. But the question is one of the *heart*! "The fool hath said *in his heart*, There is no God." Psalm 14:1. And natural men "when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish *heart* was darkened," so that they "changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like unto corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things." Romans 1:21-23. And make no mistake. What is true with respect to God's revelation in nature is still more emphatically true with respect to His revelation in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Unbelief is not due to the inadequacy of that revelation. Nor is it due to the fact that the gospel is contrary to reason. Did not Christ show himself alive after His passion "by many infallible proofs"? Acts 1:3. And does not Paul say to Agrippa, Acts 26:8: "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?" And if it were a matter of reason and of mere, natural, human intellect, how is it to be explained that Christ crucified is to the Jews, who seek after a sign, a stumblingblock, and to the Greeks, who desire wisdom, foolishness, with the singular exception of those who are called, to whom He is Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God? I Corinthians 1:18-24. No, faith is a *heart*-question. The world by wisdom knows not God because its wisdom is from below, earthly, carnal, devilish. The faith of the church, that which it believes with the heart, opposes the philosophy of man, and the latter opposes faith, *spiritually*. The antithesis is not that of Faith and Reason, but that of Faith and Unbelief. And Unbelief is sin! It is a matter of the heart. The antithesis is not one of Grace and Nature, but of Grace and Sin. And for that reason not faith is unreasonable, but unbelief is guilty of an irrationality of the profoundest and most hopeless kind.

H.C.H.

IN MEMORIAM

The Ladies' Society of the South Holland Protestant Reformed Church wishes to express its heartfelt sympathy to our fellow member, Mrs. A. De Young, in the passing away of her mother-in-law,

MRS. ANNA DE YOUNG

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Matt. 5:3.

South Holland Ladies' Society
Rev. J. A. Heys, President
Mrs. F. Van Baren, Secretary

Let Israel trust in God alone,
The Lord Whose grace and power are known;
To Him your full allegiance yield,
And He will be your help and shield;
All those who fear Him God will bless,
His saints have proved His faithfulness.

DECENCY and ORDER

Presentation For Baptism

"The Ministers shall do their utmost to the end that the father present his child for Baptism."

— Article 57, D.K.O.

In a divided home where the father and mother belong to different churches, the question as to who shall have the children baptized is a very touchy one. It causes bitter arguments, strains relationships, stirs up ill feeling and in some cases leads to the spiritual ruination of the family. Not infrequently such questions are resolved by compromise rather than by principle. Sometimes one of the dissenting parties will simply give in and join the other's church in order that an outward show of unity may be presented in baptism. Seldom is a matter of this nature that has been left unresolved until the late date when children have to be baptized ever settled on the basis of truth and principle. Practical considerations press to the foreground and the utilitarian motive usually prevails. At that late stage it is no longer a question of what is the right and God-honoring way but rather what is the most convenient way for me out of the difficulty? Such a solution is only an invitation to still more serious evils because it is impossible that the blessing of God rests upon us when we walk in the way of our own convenience rather than pursuing the course of His commandments even though the latter course may involve us in many undesirable difficulties.

With this problem as such we are not at present concerned. That it is a very serious matter follows from the fact that it not only may but often does lead to apostasy and denying of the faith. Because of this the matter may never be taken lightly. It is for this reason alone that we mention the problem here. Sometimes a very simple solution to the difficulty is sought by appealing to the above quoted article of the Church Order. This article says that *"the father* shall present his child for baptism." Hence, there is no room for argument at least where both parents are members of some Reformed church. The matter, so it seems, is settled for them by the church itself which has decreed that *the father*, not the mother, shall present the children for baptism. The mother has no choice in the matter. She is bound by the Church Order and must, therefore, submit her desires to those of her husband.

We must show, however, that this argument is not at all legitimate. It is understandable that such a conclusion is reached by a superficial reading of this article for it appears on the surface that this is what it teaches. A careful study of the background and history of this article will reveal, however, that this conclusion is entirely unwarranted.

In the first place, the article we have in our present

Church Order is only half of the original article. The article originally in its entirety read as follows:

"The ministers shall do their utmost to the end that the father present his child for baptism. And in churches where the child is sponsored by a godfather or witness (which usage is optional and cannot easily be changed) it is right that such persons be of a pure faith and godly walk."

This throws an entirely different light on the matter. It shows that the term *"father"* in this article is not intended to stand in contrast to the implied term *"mother"* so that the meaning is that the father in distinction from the mother shall present the children for baptism but the term *"father"* is in contrast to the term *"godfather"* or *"witness."* The meaning then is that the *"father"* (or parents) in distinction from the sponsors in baptism shall present their children for baptism. If this is kept in mind it will be evident that the Church Order cannot be used to support the contention that one parent has an automatic right to have the children baptized as overagainst the other parent. Baptism is a *parental* responsibility that must be met by the parents and cannot be laid aside.

In the second place we must point out that this original article of the Church Order was designed to combat a certain practice that in those days was prevalent in the Reformed Churches and which had been carried over from the Roman Catholic Church. This practice allowed sponsors to take the place of the parents when the children were baptized. In the Romish Church this was considered mandatory for it was held that the natural parents were really unfit to present their children for baptism inasmuch as children are born in a sinful state by reason of the sinfulness of the parents. The act of procreation was regarded as a necessary evil. Rome held to a false antithesis between nature and grace and applying this to the marriage relationship arrived at the erroneous conclusion that the bearing of children is a naturally evil act.

The Reformed fathers rejected this antithesis and maintained the Scripturally correct antithesis of sin and grace. Although they readily admitted that the children of believers are conceived and born in sin, they repudiated the theory that marriage and procreation are in themselves inherently evil. Every relationship in life is contaminated with sin. This cannot be denied but this actuality does not exclude the fact that the believer's marriage relation is sanctified by grace in Christ. In spite of this, however, many did not immediately see anything objectionable in the practice of having sponsors in baptism and so this was allowed in the Reformed Churches at first.

The fifty-seventh article of the Church Order was originally designed to discourage this practice. We notice that the wording of the article does not expressly forbid the use of sponsors in baptism. It is rather stated parenthetically that *"this usage is optional and cannot easily be changed."* Estab-

lished customs and practices are difficult to uproot. It requires considerable time accompanied with continuous and sound instruction. The members of the church must first be brought to see why certain practices are undesirable. To accomplish this the ministers (teaching elders of the church) are exhorted to do their utmost to bring the fathers (parents) to see that they should have their own children baptized. They should not be set aside or given a secondary place in this matter. As the parents themselves would be brought to understand this, the undesirable practice of sponsors in baptism would naturally lapse into oblivion.

Thirdly, it is important to observe that where this practice was still allowed the sponsors chosen had to be persons of *"pure faith and a godly walk."* They had to be worthy sponsors. The churches had to be careful to see to it that only well-qualified persons were given this role so that when they promised to help the parents to instruct their children in the way of sound doctrine and piety, they would prove to be of real assistance.

Finally, as this practice more and more fell into disuse, it was no longer felt necessary to retain these provisions in the Church Order. The Reformed Churches of the Netherlands as late as 1905, however, still maintained the clause concerning sponsors in baptism in their revised redaction of the Church Order. In 1914 the Christian Reformed Church in our own country dropped it and, consequently, it is also omitted from our Church Order. The Church Order Commentary by Monsma and Van Dellen expresses the opinion that "it might have been well to have retained this stricken provision concerning sponsors." The reason cited for this is that in cases where the parents have both died or where both mother and father are incompetent to assume the baptismal vow it is sometimes still necessary to have sponsors in baptism. With this opinion we disagree. The cases cited are certainly such as may be classified as *"exceptional"* and we do not believe that the Church Order can or should be designed or aim to cover every exception. It is sufficient to state the rule that is to prevail in every normal circumstance (*i.e. parents are to have their children baptized*) and then where and when the exception arises it can and must be decided on the basis of its particular merit.

In conclusion it may be stated yet that Article 57 of the Church Order in its present form does not touch upon various irrelevant matters that are related to the administration of the sacrament of baptism. In light of the foregoing it should be evident that the main element in this article is that it is the responsibility and place of the parents to present their children in baptism. Thus, the question as to whether the father should have the child baptized immediately, that is, before the mother is sufficiently recovered to be with him in the presentation of the child for baptism, is not touched upon here. This was the common practice in the Reformed Churches in the early years but today this custom has changed so that both parents are generally present at the

baptism. Article 57 gives no support to either view of this question.

Likewise the question may be considered here as to whether it is mandatory that the father hold the child when the latter is presented in baptism. This is the generally accepted custom but is there any principle involved in this. On the surface Article 57 may appear to teach that this is mandatory but in actuality that is not the meaning nor the implication of *"presenting the child."* This phrase in the article means that the father, as the head of the family, shall ask for baptism for his child at a meeting of the consistory and he shall answer to the questions that are put to him in baptism with respect to the training and instruction of his children. We agree with the Church Order Commentary when it states that it is really immaterial as to who holds the child at the baptismal font although it is generally agreed that there is some symbolism in the presentation of the child at the font by the father because he is the God-appointed head of the family and first responsible party for its training.

G.V.d.B.

From: NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES —

A men's quartette from Hudsonville Church is planning to sponsor a hymnsing in their church Easter Sunday evening, at 8:30.

Oak Lawn's Men's Society was host to the men of South Holland, March 6. Rev. Heys of South Holland gave a speech on "The Healing of the Wound of Babel."

An anonymous quotation (Oak Lawn's bulletin) which reads: "For wolves to devour sheep is no wonder; but for sheep to devour one another is monstrous and astonishing" reminds one of the admonition in Gal. 5:15.

IN MEMORIAM

The Martha Ladies' Aid Society of the Hull Protestant Reformed Church wishes to express its sincere sympathy to our fellow member, Mrs. Henry Hoekstra and family, in the loss of her

INFANT SON

who lived only a few hours.

"The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Job 1:21.

Rev. Jason L. Kortering, President
Mrs. T. Jansma, Secretary

My heart is fixed, O God,
A grateful song I raise;
Awake, O harp, in joyful strains,
Awake, my soul, to praise.

ALL AROUND US

THE VIEWS OF AN ECUMENICAL LEADER

Recently the name of Bishop James A. Pike, a bishop in the Protestant Episcopal Church, has appeared repeatedly in the news. He became prominent at the time of the election campaign of last year through his fierce opposition to the election of John F. Kennedy as a worthy president of the United States. His views were based upon Kennedy's Catholicism.

More recently, he made the headlines once again in connection with the ecumenical movement. It was in Bishop Pike's Grace Cathedral in San Francisco that Dr. Eugene Blake made his startling proposals to merge into one large denomination the Protestant Episcopal Church, the United Presbyterian Church in the United States, the Methodist Church and the United Church of Christ. This "super-denomination to which we have referred before in this column, if formed, would number about 20,000,000 people or about one-third of the Protestant population of this country. It was Bishop Pike who immediately jumped to the support of Dr. Blake by calling the proposal the most inspiring suggestion he had heard from any Protestant source in a long time. He thus put himself and his bishopric on record as being in favor of it. Since then he has worked to put in motion the ecclesiastical machinery which will produce such a merger.

But now again Bishop Pike appears in the news. Only this time he is being charged as a heretic, and that by his colleagues — ministers with him in the Protestant Episcopal Church. These clergymen, mostly from Georgia, have accused the Bishop of "disbelief in the virgin birth of our Lord, the doctrine of the Holy Trinity as stated by the church, and the necessity of salvation through Jesus Christ alone." Pike has turned on his critics with a pastoral letter in which he attempts to defend himself. But his defense clearly shows that the charges made against him are true in every respect.

First of all Pike attempts to defend himself by emphasizing that within the Episcopal Church there is enough freedom to maintain his views without being judged a heretic. He writes:

We, unlike most principal Christian traditions, are not bound to a particular set of concepts or form of words . . . It is true that we have a rather skimpy set of propositions, printed in the back of the Prayer Book, called the Articles of Religion; but they are not a Confession of Faith; they represent the allergic reaction of our Church to "papists" on the one hand and "puritans" on the other at a singular point in our history . . . Actually we take seriously the views of theologians and synods of all centuries — and precisely because we "sit loose" to all of them.

It is evident from this that Bishop Pike wants nothing to do with any creed except as these creeds may perhaps be interesting museum pieces to look at occasionally to learn what others once before may have said concerning their

faith. By the "Articles of Religion" he evidently refers to the "Anglican Catechism," a brief Catechism adopted by the Anglican Church in England in 1549 and officially revised in 1662. It is true that this Catechism is very brief. But it was intended as a short exposition of the main points of the doctrine of the Reformation over against the Roman Catholic Church to be used by young people in confession of faith. It is put into question and answer form and contains the main points of the truth which Pike denies, such as the doctrines of the trinity, the divinity of Christ, the work of atonement, the doctrine of the sacraments. It is undoubtedly because it maintains these cardinal doctrines that Pike speaks sneeringly of it.

But the Bishop goes on to define and defend his own views with respect to these truths. He speaks of the Gospel as set forth in Scripture appearing in the form of a myth. The story of the garden of Eden is a myth, and Pike writes:

I do not know a single member of the Anglican communion — Bishop, presbyter, deacon or layman — who believes this story literally.

The ascension of Christ into heaven is also a myth:

We no longer believe in a three-level universe: a flat earth, Hell below and Heaven above . . . And as for "sitteth on the right hand of the Father," I simply remind you that in certain Oriental areas of the Church the phrase is "on the left hand of the Father," since in their cultures the latter is the place of honor.

So is the doctrine of the virgin birth of Christ and even the truth of the trinity only a myth.

The 4th century church leaders, imbued with a dated Greek philosophy, tried to organize God's revelation of himself into categories which thoughtful people of that time could grasp. They did a good job. They gathered up God's true revelation of himself as Creator (we might say "Evolver"), Redeemer (we might say "Healer"), and Sanctifier (we might say "Community-Builder") into "hypostases" or "personae" in one "substance." But nobody has thought in these terms for a long time.

It is obvious from all this that Bishop Pike has put himself into the camp of the Modernists. He has no faith left at all. He does not accept the Bible as the Word of God. He does not believe in the virgin birth, nor even in the truth of the trinity. He believes nothing. His description of the trinity is repulsive, and a denial of every point of the Christian faith. The colleagues of Bishop Pike in Georgia have every right to accuse him of heresy. And yet he claims that, although his mind has changed on these matters in the last ten years, and that he has moved away from the orthodox position, his views are more true, or at least nearer the truth than the orthodox views.

There are several remarks that are in order.

In the first place, it is obvious that heresy always must first of all dispose of the creeds. This is true also of the efforts of Pike to supplant the truth with some strange views which are really no beliefs at all. He is deeply conscious of the fact that he must get rid of the confessions if he is to be successful. Therefore the creeds are certainly the prized possessions of the church to ward off all kinds of false doctrines, and ignorance of the creeds is a first step in the way of apostasy.

In the second place, departures of the truth necessarily lead to Modernism. It may take many years and decades, but the road is straight and sure and from it there is no return. When a church denies one of the truths of Scripture, it necessarily starts the long but inevitable way to a denial of all the truths.

In the third place, that Pike should be among the leaders of this ecumenical movement inaugurated by Dr. Blake bodes ill for the movement. Not that the churches which Dr. Blake and he suggested should be merged into one are much stronger than he. But a merger will certainly be the result of adopting a basis which is the lowest common denominator of all participants. If such a merger is ever consummated under Pike's influence, it will certainly be nothing else but the false church. And it is reasonably certain that the church does not have the moral and spiritual strength and courage to purge itself of him and those who agree with him. What the apostle John writes is uniquely applicable: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is in the world." I John 4:1-3.

THE CHURCH IN EAST GERMANY

At the time of the Reformation the stronghold of Lutheranism and one of the citadels of the Reformed faith were in what is now known as East Germany, and are therefore under the political control of the Communists. In recent times the Lutheran and German churches have united in East Germany to form The Evangelical Church in Germany, which denomination embraces five-sixths of the population. Since World War II and the take over of Communism, this church has had an intense struggle which has increased with the years.

In a recent issue of *Christianity Today* there is a report of how the Communists are attempting to take over the church and the church's functions. For one thing, the Communist regime has substituted its own ceremonies to take the place of the ceremonies of the church. It has what is called a "socialist name-calling ceremony" which is meant to take the place of baptism. This was introduced in 1955, and since that time the number of those who are not baptized by the church but who participate instead in this government ceremony has steadily grown. In 1955 about 15% of the children were said to have taken part; in 1956 about 25%; last year about 65%.

In the place of confirmation or confession of faith and first communion, the Communists have substituted what they call "youth dedication ceremony." The Communists claim that about 88% of the young people now follow the Communists and no longer make confession of faith in the church.

Because of their success in these attempts to turn the

church membership from the faith, the regime has also begun to promote socialist marriage vows and burial services as well. The result of this is that the church is diminishing rapidly in size.

Besides there are many subtle pressures exerted against those who are members of the church. It is very difficult to obtain jobs if one has not participated in the Communist ceremonies; those who maintain their faith are usually put on the bottom of the list to be placed in adequate housing as it becomes available; they are sneered at by the more "forward" looking citizens of the state. Thus only the older people usually attend church faithfully on the Lord's Day and the new generation that is coming up is turning its back on the faith of their parents and leaving the church.

According to the church leaders of East Germany there are several reasons for this. One reason is said to be that the leaders have not emphasized strongly enough the duty of the young people to remain faithful to their calling. They have, up to this point, been looking forward to the time when East and West Germany would be reunited and when the problems the church must now face would be solved. But reunification now seems to be farther away than ever, and the church will have to face the fact that it must instill into its young people a deep sense of devotion to the church over-against the Communist Party.

Another factor is said to be that there is a continual stream of members of the church flowing into West Germany. In one week alone in January, 3,085 refugees asked for asylum in West Germany. And although many Germans are staying because they feel a responsibility for their church, nevertheless it stands to reason that this steady exodus weakens the church. But as the Communists are more successful in luring the youth away from the church, and as the church is weakened through this exodus, the danger of overt persecution grows. Now already the church meets resistance at every turn and finds recognition virtually impossible in any phase of life involving the government. In the words of *Christianity Today*: "This situation may well be the making of martyrs."

It is difficult to determine how far the church in East Germany has drifted from the truth of the Reformation, especially in its affiliation with the Lutheran Churches. But it is evident that the church there is in deep trouble, that the battle against atheistic Communism is in danger of being lost. And it seems that at least part of the trouble lies in the fact that the church has not trained its covenant youth in the fear of the Lord, nor inspired its children with a zeal for the cause of Christ.

There is no doubt a note of warning here — a warning which the church in America can very well take to heart. Already now the dark clouds of trouble loom on the horizon of history, and it appears as if the storms which the church is undergoing in other parts of the world will soon break forth in fury over our own heads. It is well that in these days of comparative peace and quietness we prepare ourselves and

the youth of the covenant in God's church — prepare them intensely and faithfully in the truth; prepare them to fight the good fight of faith armed with the weapons of spiritual warfare so that when this storm does break our youth will not be led to depart from the ranks of the saints and from the cause of Christ to join with the enemies of Christ's kingdom.

H. Hanko

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

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

March 20, 1961

Year Book changes: Hope Church, Clerk: David Meulenbergh, 1743 Moelker, S. W., Grand Rapids, Mich.; Treas., John J. Dykstra, 3343 Flamingo, S.W., Grand Rapids, Mich.; Kalamazoo, Sec'y-Treas., William Clason, 1317 Pinehurst, Kalamazoo, Mich.

The last issue of *The Reformed Witness* was written by Rev. G. Van Baren of Doon, Iowa. The subject of the pamphlet was, "Hold Fast To The Truth." The Society for Protestant Reformed Action has decided to begin another project of larger scope. Besides distributing pamphlets, like that mentioned above, in the community of Hull, Doon and Edgerton, they are planning to distribute them in the areas of Tripp, Menno, and Scotland, South Dakota. Two more pamphlets are scheduled to come off the press in the immediate future, one by Rev. Woudenberg of Edgerton, and the other by Rev. Kortering of Hull. This work of their Society is of considerable help to our Home Missionary who is working the South Dakota area mentioned. After the successful lecture given by Rev. H. Hanko recently the Society plans to sponsor more lectures of that type and quality.

Classis West met in South Holland, March 15 and 16. Rev. H. Veldman presided and Rev. G. Vanden Berg recorded the minutes. The rather lengthy meeting was in part due to the treatment of a protest of a member of one of the churches which was treated in great detail — another indication of the truth that we continue to struggle in the midst of the church that is very imperfect in the world. Various subsidy requests were received and treated, and Classis adopted a form to be submitted to the coming Synod in connection with the travelling expenses of our Synodical delegates. Classical appointments were scheduled as follows: For *Pella*: April 16 — J. A. Heys; May 14 — G. Van Baren; June 11 — G. Vanden Berg; July 9 — B. Woudenberg; Aug. 13 — J. Kortering; Sept. 17 — H. H. Kuiper. For *Isabel-Forbes*: April 9, 16, 23 — G. Van Baren; April 30, May 7, 14 — B. Woudenberg; May 28, June 4, 11 — J. Kortering; June 25, July 2 — H. H. Kuiper; July 16, 23 — J. A. Heys; Aug. 20, 27 — G. Vanden Berg; Sept. 10, 17 — H. Veldman; Sept. 24, Oct. 1 — R. C. Harbach. The next meeting of Classis West will be held in Doon, Iowa, the third Wednesday in September, D.V. Rev. H. Veldman, reporter.

Hope's Consistory's last news letter regarding the work of their Pamphlet Committee reported that they have published and mailed out six pamphlets to date. The mailing list has grown to 325 addresses in three states and four foreign countries. The responses are coming in at a satisfactory rate. Letters asking questions or criticizing the contents are answered by the committee. It's certainly heartening to learn that our churches, either singly (as in Hope), or in combination (as in Doon, Hull and Edgerton) are zealous in the work of witnessing for the Truth — Mission work in the highest sense of the word.

April 6 is the scheduled date for the Oak Lawn's Men's Society sponsored lecture by the Rev. H. Hoeksema in Oak Lawn Church.

The Priscilla Society of First Church sponsored a "Benefit Coffee" in the church parlors for the Christian Foundation for Handicapped Children Wednesday morning, March 15. The proceeds go towards the purchase and upkeep of busses used to transport the students to the Children's Retreat School.

The Sunday School Teachers' Board meeting was held in First Church parlors March 12. The Mass meeting was held in the same church March 17. The speaker was Rev. H. Hoeksema who spoke on the Sunday School, its teachers, and the attention which must be obtained from the children in the classes. It truly was an inspirational speech and will, no doubt, serve the teachers well because of the instruction embodied in the speech.

Seminarian D. Engelsma has been given permission to speak "a word of edification" in our churches. His assignments have been reported in many of our church bulletins, and by word of mouth we learn that his messages have been well received and appreciated. This fact has relieved the minister shortage in our denomination to a degree. *Young men* — are you remembering the need for ministers in our churches?

The Ladies' School Auxiliary of South Holland-Oak Lawn Churches scheduled a program centering around the theme "The Covenant." From Oak Lawn's bulletin we gather that the children of their church aged 6 to 8 were to take part in that event for they were to meet at Rev. G. Vanden Berg's house to be transported to South Holland for rehearsal of that program to be given March 17.

From the Reformed Witness Hour Program Committee we received the following schedule for the last four Sundays in April: Rev. M. Schipper, pastor of Southwest Church in Grand Rapids, will fill the "radio pulpit," the first message, April 9, being, "The Binding of Satan," and will be followed with, "The Reign of the First Resurrection Saints," "The Loosing of Satan and the Battle of Armageddon," and, "The Judgment of the Resurrected."

. . . see you in church.

J.M.F.